

BRSWG - Draft Communications Strategy for approval by Beech Parish Council Meeting 23 August 2021

Aim - To provide targeted support for the proposals set out in the BRSWG report, as adopted by Beech Parish Council at its meeting on 8 February 2021.

Strategy - Our approach to decision makers can be characterised as 'step by careful step'. Thus our communications strategy will set out to ensure that messages are delivered to our key audiences in a targeted and disciplined way so that, at each step of the route towards the achievement of a comprehensive road safety solution for Beech, an environment is created which is supportive towards the achievement of that aim which is encouraging for decision makers, making them more likely to support, approve and fund our proposals.

Audiences

External - HCC - Officers and County Councillors; Mark Kemp-Gee; HH officers; Safety Audit Team; Alton Town Council; Alton rural parishes(16); EHDC; Forestry England; Home Office, Kit Malthouse MP, Minister for Crime Reduction and Policing; Donna Jones, Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner; Hampshire Constabulary; Chief Constable; Assistant Chief Constable - rural crime; Community Speed Watch; 20's Plenty for Us - Adrian Berendt, Southern Head of Campaigns; green and environmental campaigners; the Green Party; Lib-Dem Party; Labour Party; Hampshire Chronicle; Alton Herald; Alton news outlets, including FB pages for Alton; Nextdoor and other social networks;

Internal - Parish Council; village; individual villagers;

Key messages

External

- Medstead Road and Kings Hill are residential roads that are part of a traffic through route, but have not been designed as such. As a result, for 25 years, road safety has figured as the main concern for villagers in Beech. It is now time to address these concerns.
- Traffic volumes have increased in recent years, are still increasing and can be expected to continue to increase as a result of further planned housing development in Medstead and Four Marks.
- There is a serious problem in Beech which involves through traffic speeding through the village in too-close proximity to vulnerable road users, particularly pedestrians. This problem must now be addressed
- Even where drivers are travelling within the speed limit, too often they are driving too fast for the road conditions and come too close and do not slow down when pedestrians are on the carriageway, which also serves as the footway.
- For lack of any footway, except near the A339 junction with Medstead Road, pedestrians have no option but to use the road as a footway. This gives them right-of-way under the highway code but drivers often do not recognise this.
- The failure to address the problem of road safety is damaging the cohesion of the community in Beech, for which Medstead Road/Kings Hill is the principal thoroughfare.
- Villagers have a right to walk, without fear of danger from road traffic, from one part of the village to another. At the moment, residents tend to drive 150 metres to the village hall (or not attend at all) rather than take a walk perceived as hazardous.
- Supporting our proposals would put HCC (and EHDC) in line with central Government policy designed to encourage active lifestyles, particularly walking and cycling.
- EHDC's Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan acknowledges the requirement for improved walking infrastructure within Beech village, potentially to include a 20mph speed limit zone.

- There is an urgent need for driver education around pedestrians' right of way when walking on the carriageway due to lack of any footpath, particularly in rural areas. HCC should help fund such a driver education campaign.

Internal

NB The internal comms roll-out would not start until Beech PC receives in principle support for our proposals from the HCC's Safety Audit team, which may lead to changes in the proposals. We would then seek feedback from the Village.

- The proposals developed on behalf of the Parish Council by BRSWG are now with Hampshire County Council. We await in-principal approval for those proposals.
- The village will have the opportunity to comment on these proposals once we are fully out of lock-down.
- We will need on-going vocal support for our scheme including with regard to fund raising.
- We are still in listening mode and wish to hear of any ideas for improving our proposals.
- The decision of HCC not to install a footpath in the village as part of a larger road widening scheme planned in the 1970s should leave them with no alternative but to support our proposals as it is clear that an attempt to install a footpath on the basis of dedications of land made 50 years ago will fail.
- The introduction of an on-road footway, where proposed, will have the effect of narrowing the road and leading to traffic slowing down. This will create the environment in which a lower speed limit (20mph) could be introduced.
- We are separately investigating the feasibility of speed cameras in one or more selected locations, but speed cameras will only be worthwhile if the police are able and willing to apply an appropriate level of enforcement against offenders, which we cannot yet be sure would be the case.
- Road humps, build-outs and other similar physical traffic calming measures are not supported by HCC as a matter of policy.

Sir Charles Cockburn Bt.

Chair, Beech Road Safety Working Group
17 August 2021