

REPORT TO OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

August 2021

Cllr Jess Bailey

Devon County Councillor

20 MPH SPEED LIMIT

At Devon County Council's full council meeting on 22nd July, I submitted a formal written question to Cllr Hughes in relation to 20mph speed limits. I then followed this up with a supplemental question.

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BAILEY Re: 20mph speed limits

This year the UN Global Road Safety Week calls for policy makers to act urgently to implement low speed streets worldwide for people and planet, specifically 20mph limits. "On our streets, worldwide, where we walk, play and live, we call for action on speed. Low speed, liveable streets are essential and urgent".

The UN is calling on policy makers to sign up to an open letter (copy attached) which recognizes that this is an urgent issue; urgent because low speeds saves lives; urgent for public health; urgent for global goals and our climate; urgent for social and racial equality and urgent for our children and youth and vital for their wellbeing. Yet to my communities in the Otter Valley there appears to be a lack of urgency on the part of Devon County Council in dealing with this important issue.

The communities of Ottery St Mary, Newton Poppleford, Otterton and Colaton Raleigh have submitted requests for 20mph zones some time ago and are currently being blocked by Devon County Council from achieving their aspiration of lower speeds and safer streets. The reason given is that the Newton Abbot pilot needs to be completed to inform policy and all requests for 20mph zones are deferred pending the completion of the trial.

I understand Cabinet agreed to progress the Newton Abbot trial some two years ago and is still in the pre-trial phase. Please will the Cabinet Member of Devon County Council:

- a. Agree to sign up to the UN's open letter recognizing the importance and urgency in achieving 20mph zones.

- b. Commit to implementing urgently 20mph zones where there is a stated aspiration on the part of communities for 20mph zones without delay including Ottery St Mary, Newton Poppleford, Otterton and Colaton Raleigh (rather than defer pending the results of the Newton Abbot pilot)

WRITTEN REPLY FROM COUNCILLOR HUGHES

As you are aware the Authority is committed to reviewing its approach to the setting of speed limits and is receptive to the wider application of 20mph restrictions where there is shown to be benefit.

The Authority set up a Speed Limit Scrutiny Task Group who made a number of recommendations which were endorsed by Cabinet. One of those recommendations was the trial of a community wide default 20mph restriction in Newton Abbot. If this scheme delivers the benefits that many of us expect this will then inform our future Policy on the setting of 20mph restrictions. Officers and Members are currently developing the Newton Abbot Trial working with colleagues with specialisms in public health, road safety, air quality and sustainable travel. Along with community representatives and the Police.

This project is a huge undertaking both in terms of finance and officer time. We must ensure we understand the impact of the trial with appropriate data collected throughout the 1 year trial period, and we have asked that officers collate their findings and report on the trial within 6 months of the close of the trial period.

Whilst we expect the trial to provide a positive outcome, we cannot ignore the fact that we are seeking to learn from the trial and there may be learning points or unintended consequences to consider. Therefore, we will not be rolling out any similar speed restrictions during the 18-month study period.

FOLLOW ON QUESTION AND RESPONSE

At the meeting itself I raised a supplementary question.

I noted that there needed to be 'learning' from the Newton Abbot trial although I did not understand why at least some of the 'learning' could not be done from the 20mph zones closer to Newton Poppleford, Ottery St Mary, Colaton Raleigh and Otterton.

My supplementary question was that I wanted to know, bearing in mind 12 month trial and then the 6 months period for report preparation, when did Cllr Hughes realistically expect communities could have 20 mph bearing in mind some communities have already been waiting quite some time.

Cllr Hughes' response was in essence that once the 18-month trial has been completed then DCC will be in a better position to know when DCC can start rolling the zones out to those communities where there has been an expression of interest. He said that we have a lot to learn from the data and, for instance, some communities want an increase speed limit.

The recording is available here. This item can be heard from 24 mins and 50 seconds
https://devoncc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/565276

I feel frustrated that the Newton Abbot trial is resulting in a long delay for communities such as Ottery St Mary when there are already examples of 20mph zones closer to home eg Sidford and West Hill. My fear is that in reality it is going to be a very long time before the 20mph zones can actually be implemented.

TIPTON ST JOHN SCHOOL

A meeting was arranged between myself, Colin Butler and the Environment Agency. Cllr Green requested that a representative from the Town Council Tipton St John working group attend and Cllr Faithfull attended in order to report back to the working group.

We had an initial brief discussion before walking along a short length of the Metcombe Brook.

EA provided me with some background about the flooding in 1968. The flood which washed away both Fenny Bridges and Tipton St John bridge happened during the summer and sadly five people died in the floods. The EA emphasised their concerns about extreme weather events being set to increase by 30-40%.

I was advised that the narrow catchment of the Metcombe brook means that it is vulnerable to flash flooding and that it has been more by luck than anything else that the flooding has not had a worse impact on the school (eg the flooding events which took place twice in 2012 both happened over weekends.)

The outcomes from the discussions are as follows:

1. I was to write to DCC flood officers raising concern about the bunching of pebbles at the mouth of the culvert under the road at Tipton Vale, which I have now done.
2. The Environment Agency emphasised the importance of there being a community flood plan for Tipton St John and I said that I would report this back to the Town Council. I have a copy of a draft that the school started preparing a few years ago which I have sent to the Town Council.
3. There are various ongoing 'maintenance' obligations which would be helpful - such as landowners cutting back the vegetation at the edge of the stream (EA are going to do a letter drop about this, having previously done one several years ago). I agreed to put a comment about this in the Tipton Times.
4. Apparently, the culvert under the entrance to the village hall car park is blocked and I was asked to draw this to the attention of the Town Council who could then raise it with the village hall.

ROAD REPAIRS AND ROAD SAFETY

Yonder Street

As you are aware I was advised that the resurfacing would take place on 21st September which is disappointing as I had hoped it would be over summer. When I asked Cllr Hughes the cabinet member for highways at DCC if this could be brought forward he responded:

“From the photos you have supplied the scruffy nature of the appearance is due to the failure of the thin surface treatment previously laid to extend the life of the carriageway. While no one would accept the current condition of the road I am pleased to see there does not appear to be any safety defects.

This scheme was identified as part of the trial Doing What Matters project in February this year, it was assessed for treatment during March and discussed with the Neighbourhood Engineer for approval in April. Considering the time required to plan and prepare the design, including on site coring and that works of this nature require a minimum of three months’ notice to occupy the road space there is very little that could have been done to undertake these works any sooner.”

This is disappointing. However, I have now written to Cllr Hughes and asked him to come to Ottery for a site visit so that he can have a look at the road and also so that we can discuss road safety issues.

The road safety issues are as follows:

FOOTPATH BETWEEN BUTTS ROAD AND OTTER NURSERIES

We have spoken about the fact that OSMTC would like to progress the footpath between Butts Road and Otter Nurseries. I have been liaising with Tom Vaughan neighbourhood highways manager on this matter. The stumbling block is that the landowner was not willing to accept in 2016 the offer that was made by Devon County Council and required a substantially larger payment.

I did ask Tom whether part of the footpath could be achieved the road-side of the hedge but I was informed that the position of the drainage assets and ditches meant that this was not possible.

NB I note that at the OSMTC meeting on 2nd August we discussed the potential of a permissive path and I will follow this up with Ros Davies.

SPEEDING TRAFFIC FROM DAISYMOUNT

I see that a Vehicle Activated Sign has been introduced at the entrance to Thorne Farm Way. I would like to see whether it is possible to identify any other sites further up the hill.

ROAD SAFETY ISSUE AT TIP HILL

Residents have contacted me about road safety issues at Tip Hill and I have raised this with Mike Brown. He has responded *“There have been previous site meetings between officers and councillors to look at the footway on Tip Hill. Due to the junctions and poor visibility it would not be practicable to narrow the carriageway at the point where the footway is at its narrowest.”*

Nevertheless I remain concerned and would like to re-visit this, even though it has been discussed before particularly because it is a major route to and from the primary school