

STRETTON COMMUNITY SPEED WATCH 5 TO 18 JULY 2021

Introduction. As co-ordinator for the Parish of Stretton in Rutland, I have been asked to comment to RCC, on behalf of my team of 12 volunteers, on the aspects highlighted in the following headed paragraphs. Having consulted my colleagues, the views that follow are a group perspective, on which we are all agreed.

What went well. The entire exercise went well, especially as it has produced a large body of evidence which shows the extent to which the speed limits are being ignored. Most particularly, the team agree that we need now to use the information to press the case for further speed restriction measures and to build on this evidence; both directly with the police and through both Stretton Parish and Rutland County councils and the prison authorities at HMP Stocken. Such suggested measures are listed at the

Recommendations section at the end of this document. As for the equipment, it was easy to use and the recording sheets were well produced. Guidance from Ms Caldicott, PC Appleton and Mr Crouch was clear and unambiguous, as was that from PC Mottershaw at Headquarters on the subject of daily computerised returns.

Areas for improvement. At times the chosen locations were not busy whilst, in the opposite direction, we could see that there were more people speeding. For example, standing at the pump, monitoring west-bound traffic at HMP Stocken changeover time where most of the traffic, and speeders, were travelling east. There were also areas that we were not allowed to monitor. Two were especially significant. First, east-bound (towards Clipsham) traffic between the Stocken turning and George Henry Wood and, secondly, movements at the south end of Stocken Hall Road, heading downhill towards Stretton. There was also a concern that we were not starting early enough, as many high speed vehicles have been observed well before the 0700 authorised start time. Overall, the lack of flexibility was highlighted by the insistence on rigidly sticking to one location and traffic direction for each of the three daily sessions, and any changes having to be made formally, 24 hours in advance. There was also a suggestion that, rather than doing a stretch of two weeks, could we not do short, sharp monitoring periods of just a couple of days? These could be at random periods covering, say, 10-15 days per year overall and, if sensibly spaced without too long gaps between, perhaps without the need for additional training?

Surprise? Overall, most were not surprised by the speed levels but there were a few cars at 45 mph+ which caused real *concern* rather than surprise. Those who had been involved in a similar exercise 15 years ago remarked that little had changed. What was surprising was that there was not a single quarry lorry logged at doing more than 25 mph, the anecdotal evidence being that the drivers had been allegedly warned not to speed through Stretton for the period of the CSW exercise. There was also surprise at the sheer number of quarry lorries, some of which were unsheeted, allowing aggregate to spill on to the

roundabouts, and the noise they generate throughout the day, but particularly in the early morning, prompting the observation that a daily limit on transits would be appropriate.

Take part again? Every member of the team would be happy to take part again, provided that the added flexibility alluded to earlier could be investigated.

Other comments: Observing from P&A Gate (Clipsham Road Location 6) shows that the east-bound traffic starts to speed up once past the Stocken turn and there are no repeat warnings, nor indeed anything to suggest this is anything other than a de-restricted road. This is a potentially extremely dangerous area, as dog walkers and horse riders moving to and from George Henry Wood are at appreciable risk. The situation is also exacerbated by the overgrown hedge, which forces walkers towards the road and reduces visibility for drivers around the corner. Ideally, the situation should be addressed by the installation of a Speed Indicator Device (SID) but there are other measures which should also be considered. For example, additional road markings (30 mph painted on road, SLOW); 30 mph repeat warnings; Pedestrians/Horses Crossing triangle warnings in both directions. Similarly, were the 30 mph limit to be extended as far as the Stretton Lakes junction and a speed reducing chicane installed opposite George Henry Wood, the previously described risks to horses and pedestrians would be further reduced. There is also enough evidence, in our view, for a further SID facing west-bound traffic coming from Clipsham near the crest of the hill and just before the bend and Manor Road junction, where the hedging also needs to be cut back.

The lack of any speed limit between Stocken and Stretton was also raised by many and moving from 30 to 60 and back to 30 mph again in less than half a mile surely encourages increased speeds in both directions, with the consequent danger to pedestrians and horses. We should therefore ask the police to reconsider their objections to put a 40 mph speed limit on the Stocken to Stretton road, their earlier reasons being that it was “unenforceable.” However, the team believe that, if it was set at 40mph, there would be far lower transit speeds along that stretch of road and, in the future, the CSW team would be able to monitor its effectiveness.

Recommendations

The following safety measures should be discussed, as a matter of urgency, by representatives of Rutland County Council, Stretton Parish Council; HMP Stocken and Leicestershire Constabulary:

Purchase of two SID for the Clipsham Road. One facing east-bound traffic just beyond the Stocken turn and one facing west-bound traffic approaching the Manor Road junction. The ones currently in place at Castle/Little Bytham would be ideal. Whilst RCC should be lobbied to install the SID, Stretton Parish Council should meet the cost if necessary.

Pedestrians/Horses Crossing signs should be erected on the approaches to George Henry Wood in both directions, with "30 mph" reminders on the tarmac. The 30 mph limit should be extended as far as the Stretton Lakes junction and a speed reducing chicane installed opposite George Henry Wood,

Discussions should take place with the landowner about formally cutting back the vegetation so that there is clear line of sight to the Stocken turn from the George Henry Wood footpath. This is really important for those crossing the road back into the village, often with dogs. For the past three years at least, villagers have been cutting back the vegetation which encroaches onto the footpath, but this is hard work and a machine could probably do the job in 20 minutes. It is therefore recommended that Stretton Parish Council consider hiring someone to cut the hedge on a regular basis, perhaps investigating sharing the cost with the land-owner. A similar process could also be put in place for the hedging on the left, coming in from clipsham, approaching the second junction with Manor Road

Consideration should also perhaps be given to sending a letter to HMP Stocken management, pointing out that a large number of their employees were caught speeding (our evidence is that on the first Monday morning we monitored speeding east-bound traffic at Hollytree Cottage (Clipsham Road Location 3) and most turned left. Also, many of those found speeding were wearing prison officers' uniforms.)

Could we also recommend that Leicestershire Police monitor those areas we were not allowed to, which were the southern end of Stocken Road and east-bound traffic alongside the footpath to George Henry Wood? Also that future CSW operations should be more flexible as regards timing and positioning, but not at the expense of safety.

Lastly, because we were not allowed to back up our observations with photographs, problems identifying car makes, colours and registration numbers could be solved by a device which takes speed measurements whilst capturing real time video footage. We recommend that RCC investigate purchase such speed monitoring equipment to take some of the guesswork out of CSW operations.

Epilogue

Since discussing the matter with CSW colleagues, we have received a congratulatory email from PC Mottershaw, Casualty and Speed Reduction Co-ordinator, Traffic Management Department, Leicestershire Police headquarters.

Whilst complimentary to the team and the good news that 194 letters were sent to culprits, he made a few statements, on which we respectfully request clarification:

He stated that “16 vehicles were from out of town – outside our neighbouring force areas so they won't get a letter.” We would like to know why not?

Also “12 came back as no trace PNC”. We wonder therefore whether these might have been false plates?

He then said “19 we have listed as “other” - these include lease/hire vehicles where there is no realistic prospect of tracing the driver.” We wonder why the hiring firm's records can't be analysed to find out who hired the vehicle?

Conclusion

All in all, those Stretton residents who volunteered for the Community Speed watch found the exercise worthwhile but ask that our recommendations for improvement are given close consideration.

Richard Foster
Stretton Parish Councillor

29 July 2021