

TRAFFIC SURVEYS IN RUSHLAKE GREEN & BODLE STREET GREEN

A Note for the Environment Committee

Introduction

At the request of Parishioners through the Parish Survey and agreed by the Parish Council, I arranged for Traffic Surveys to be conducted by the East Sussex Highways Traffic Monitoring Team in Rushlake Green and Bodle Street Green between 26th November and 3rd December 2021. The aim was also to confirm the data that had been produced by the Parish sponsored Community Speed Watch Group over the preceding 3 years with statistics indicating a potential 140,000 vehicles speeding in Rushlake Green in a year.

The Traffic Survey results were produced on 3rd December and circulated to Parish Councillors. I asked the Traffic Monitoring Team to provide an interpretation of the data but they said that this had to be done by the Road Safety Department. Ian Johnson, the Road Safety Manager has been asked 3 times for his interpretation of the results, but at the time of writing he has yet to do so.

Traffic Surveys are important as I had been assured that Highways will not consider any changes to speed limits, signage or any other road safety measures without data from them. In reality I am not sure that this is so as Ian Johnson, at our meeting on the Green, rebuffed any proposals from the Council in terms of physical traffic calming measures, better signage etc as we have not had any serious road traffic injuries or deaths.

The Traffic Surveys

As you will have seen, the surveys contain a mass of data which can be helpful in determining where and when the weight of traffic occurs and the speeds of various vehicles.

In the absence of a full report from Ian Johnson, I have done a little research to interpret that data in layman's terms.

It seems to me that the two important pieces of information are the Mean Speeds and the 85 Percentile Speeds.

Mean Speeds

The Mean Speeds recorded are the average speeds of all traffic passing the survey point.

In general terms, for both villages, this was 32 mph. My research suggests that this indicates that the 30 mph limit in both villages is roughly correct.

85 Percentile Speeds

The 85 Percentile Speeds recorded are those that 85 percent of the traffic is travelling at or below. The closer these are to the Mean Speeds indicates whether or not the road is "allowing or encouraging" drivers to adhere to the speed limit. In both villages, the 85 Percentile Speed was 39 mph which, in crude terms, means that the road isn't doing its job and that further traffic calming measures are required.

A comment from one website I looked at was:

"So if the 85th percentile speed on a 30mph road near you is (under free flow conditions) closer to 40mph, that should tell us that action is needed to bring driver behaviour more closely into line with the posted limit, through, for example, pinch points, speed humps, illuminated signage etc" .

Conclusion

Obviously we may not wish to consider some of these physical measures but with the increasing number of walkers, cyclists and riders on unlit streets in the parish, and the congestion around the Green in Rushlake Green, I believe that pressure should be put on Highways to review the Parish's Road Safety Plan.

In the short term, consideration might be given to the purchase of a mobile "Speed Indicator Device (SID)" which the Road Safety Manager highly recommended and which is proving to be effective in other parishes with similar speeding problems.

Councillor Michael Smythe OBE

16th March 2022