

THESE NOTES ARE FROM WIDWORTHY PARISH COUNCIL WHICH ARRANGED THE MEETING.

A35 Parishes Group

Notes on the meeting at Wootton Fitzpaine Village Hall on October 13th 2023.

Those present :- Representatives from the following Councils Bere Regis, Char Valley, Chideock, Dorchester, Honiton, Litton Cheney, Shute, Stinsford, Symondsbury, Uplyme, Widworthy, Winterbourne Abbas and Wootton Fitzpaine.

Apologies were received from Affpuddle & Turnerspudde, Charmouth, Kilmington and Winterbourne St Martin PCs.

Cllr Philip Webber welcomed all those who had attended. He advised we had called the meeting as other parishes had requested this and it was felt we needed to exchange information and update on the progress of the project. It has been a year since our first meeting in Kilmington. The project to install average speed cameras on the A35 from Bere Regis to Honiton was proposed in 2018 and is going through the continuous auditing process. It is hoped that the project will be installed in 2025. Any mitigating improvements will be done after this is completed. We thank Sal Robinson (previously Chideock PC) for her notes on the last meeting – they have been very valuable.

Cllr Gordon Mowatt explained the National Highways project and how the budgets are split and spent. The “Safety and Congestion” budget is reactive to accident clusters and casualties. Not all casualties count – they have to have occurred due to the road not any other factor. The “User and Communities” budget is more proactive and can use anecdotal evidence from communities. It can cover issues with severance, crossings, walking and cycling.

All those present supported the implementation of the average speed cameras, consistent road signage and improved methods to allow residents to cross the carriageway.

There was then a general discussion involving all those present covering topics such as much improved signage for diversion routes when the A35 is closed. The use of satnavs can cause chaos in the surrounding villages. The replacement of old streetlights cowed LED ones to stop flare. It was noted that Ben Hampson has now left National Highways and Jonny Hill has taken over responsibility for the A35 in Dorset as well as the Devon section.

The Group felt that we need to become more organised to allow the Communities voices to be heard and have influence to moderate the effects of the A35 on the communities living along its length. A ‘top down’ approach may be more effective whereby we deal with the Department of Transport, top civil servants, parliamentary committees and MP’s etc in pressing our case for improvements.

We need to find out the criteria and scoring system used by NH for projects (FOI request to be made) and the hierarchy of decision makers which is very opaque at present.

To achieve our aims the group agreed the following needed to be done:-

Detailed Questionnaire

To gather the necessary data in a co-ordinated way to present our case that a detailed questionnaire covering all aspects of the effects of the road that each parish could complete. These would then be collated and analysed to present our case. Topics covered for example include the perceived impacts – noise, air pollution, drainage / flooding, public transport, movement of residents, road markings, on the community – businesses, schools, residents, bio-diversity.

Detailed Mapping

To gather information in a co-ordinated way that can be used to back our case. To be marked with for example – accident black spots - not all accidents are reported back to NH often only those involving the emergency services, bad visibility, bad signage, locations for residents to cross (desire lines/movement mapping).

Anecdotal information

Statements from residents of the direct effects on them.

All arguments should be supported by factual data and evidence.

This will be a considerable amount of work – too much for any single Council to bear. The following was agreed:-

- Create a suitable Gmail address that correspondence is channelled through.
- Create a Google Docs account so documents can be shared and worked on by several individuals.
- Several clerks/individuals could share the workload on a task by task basis.
- It may be in order for the participating parishes to contribute £50 into a kitty to cover this administration cost.

A Lead Group was set up to co-ordinate the Group

Ann Dunn (Chideock)

George Dunn (Chideock)

Paul Hartman (Symondsburry)

David Taylor (Winterbourne Abbas)

Philip Webber (Widworthy)

(possibly Chris Noone (Char Valley) if he consents ?) ** Mr Noone has now agreed to join **

It is hoped that a first meeting of the lead group could be held early in 2024.

Contacts that could provide information or be lobbied by the Group

Local government departments - Highways, Ecologists, Environmental Health, Tourism, Economy etc

County Councillors, Portfolio holders.

MP's

Government ministers, shadow ministers.

AONB's

Transport companies – ie bus (Stagecoach etc)