

Brief Notes of Meeting Held on Thursday 27 October 2022 in Kilmington Village Hall
between National Highways and Local Parish Councils

Present:

Ben Hampson (NH - Route Manager)

Jack (NH - Technical Lead)

Representatives of several Parish Councils

Representatives from Chideock Parish Council (CPC)

Sal Robinson - Clerk CPC

Cllr Anna Dunn

Cllr George Dunn

1. Peter Ball (Kilmington PC) introduced the Meeting and welcomed Ben Hampson (BH) and Jack (J) from National Highways who went on to outline NH plans for the A35. Questions were taken throughout the meeting.
2. Generally the feedback from Parish Councils (PCs) was one of extreme frustration with many Studies having been carried out over many years (dating back to the period of the Highways Agency) and yet very little ever having been implemented. Wilmington PC put the case that their village was literally “dying” as no-one wanted to move into the village because of the severance caused by the A35.
3. BH agreed to make their slide Presentation available to the PCs although excluding some design information which is in development and could be sensitive to future plans and could change..
4. NH accepted that overall little had been achieved to improve the A35 explaining that their brief was for improvements to the existing A35 and was not for Major Works - a separate part of the organisation with much larger budgets.
5. NH can tap into two separate funding streams:
 1. Safety and Congestion - Safety depends upon accident data ; and attention is prioritised by ”cluster sites” based upon traffic accidents looking at the whole of the 68km of A35 from Honiton to Bere Regis. The chief statistic considered being “Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI)”. This budget is largely “reactive” to accident data.
 2. User and Communities - This budget is largely “pro-active” and can address Severance issues for example how long to cross the A35 / How many people are

trying to cross the A35. Schemes will be developed by Route Studies commissioned by NH although often “anecdotal” evidence received from Stakeholders may be used to initiate spending.

6. NH explained that the A35 is currently subject to a Design; Build; Finance and Operate (DBFO) form of Contract from 1996 to 2026 at which point the A35 will be looked after directly by NH.

7. NH said that there are 12 Severance Schemes ongoing and that safety was always the first priority considered in severance schemes. However NH admitted that it would generally take 5-6 years for a proposed scheme to come to fruition through the lengthy process of identification / financial justification / design and finally construction. There is also the issue of getting funding allocated to a particular scheme.

8. Average Speed Cameras are being considered for several villages and NH confirmed that the “infrastructure” is installed by NH but enforcement is by the Police. However NH emphasised that no one specific safety solution suited all sites and that the consideration would always be for the route overall not specific bits. Once installed all ASC equipment, both on the road and “back office” systems used by the police is passed to the police. NH covers the initial capital expenditure only.

9. NH said that historically HA always considered keeping the traffic flowing as fast as possible as the first priority but NH now consider village situations as well.

10. NH were asked about the works proposed for improvements to the A358. NH replied that these works were not within their remit but are being carried out by “Major Projects” which have a far larger budget. NH added that their schemes cannot fundamentally change the route and that they must work within “their own land”.

11. NH explained that whilst major route changes (e.g. local bypasses) were not within their remit that nevertheless “Strategic” issues such as these are fed into the DfT consideration via the RIS Consultation Process.

12. NH were asked specifically about their involvement at the Miles Cross junction relative to the Vearse Farm development. NH confirmed that this scheme is “Developer led” via the Planning Authority and NH input is strictly limited to checking for compliance to their road standards NOT design.

13. NH explained that the interaction between PCs and NH is always best initiated by the PCs coming forward to NH with their problems / proposals, and requested feedback from individual villages via their link “info@nationalhighways.co.uk”

14. NH remain confident that their budgets are “ring-fenced” for the current RIS spending (2020 - 2025) and that budgets will continue to be allocated in future RIS periods of 5 years and not annually.

15. NH admitted that the impact of their improvement works on traffic volumes was nil but felt that there could be some small impact on noise and pollution.

16. PCs expressed concern that minor accident statistics do not feed into NH calculations for safety spending, and villagers are often aware of many dangerous situations for potential serious accidents which are effectively ignored.

17. Proposed "Village Walk-throughs" with NH as a good basis for informing problems. Although it was pointed out that in Wilmington NH had refused to walk on certain stretches of the road since there was no pavement which they considered would have been too dangerous for them. This was because they had not brought hi-vis jackets with them!!!!

18. NH were asked to consider warning signage at strategic locations (e.g. Monkey Jump roundabout / Hunters Lodge) advising "A35 Liable to Delays" in an attempt to de-congest the A35.

19. NH were asked about changing speed limits e.g. introducing 30mph limits for all villages. However this would have to be considered for impacts upon journey times and upon accident statistics.

20. Chideock PC raised the problem of the excessive pollution in the village and that slower traffic would lead to greater pollution. BH said that figures had been obtained during a trial showing an improvement to NO2 pollution from the introduction of the 30mph limit on Chideock Hill. CPC contested this since results were taken during the lockdowns when traffic was only a fraction of normal levels.

21. NH will shortly provide a summary of the meeting for advising the public.