

Overview of Ashover Parish Council Public Meeting held Thursday 09 May 2024.

Present

Parish Councillors Ed Willmot (Chair), Richard Fidler (Vice-Chair), John Cook, Steve Dronfield, Mrs Rosemary Early, Edward Hayward, Chris Miller, Mike Thomas
Apologies were given by Parish Councillors Jim Daykin and Mrs Lucy Hunter-Bott
Sara Atkinson - Ashover Parish Council Clerk

Lee Rowley MP (arrived 7pm)
Derbyshire County Councillor Barry Lewis (Leader)
Derbyshire County Councillor Charlotte Cupit (Highways & Transport)
Derbyshire County Council Officers Simon Tranter and Steve Alcock (Highways)
Police Inspector Greg Hunt
Sergeant 2479 Mark Smith
Traffic Management Officer (TMO) Steve Hughes
Police Community Support Officer 4412 Mike Coates
Environment Agency Officers Geoff Craig and Matt Gibbons
North East Derbyshire District Councillor Helen Wetherall

Members of the Public - 60

The following were invited but did not attend:-

Police & Crime Commissioner Nicolle Ndiweni
Casualty Reduction Enforcement Support Team (CREST)
Severn Trent Water

6.30pm – Cllr E Willmot welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was a follow-up to the public meeting held in September 2022 as data was now available from the recently installed Speed Indicator Devices at Kelstedge. Representatives of the various bodies introduced themselves to members of the public.

6.40pm – Cllr E Willmot invited members of the public to put questions to the representatives on issues relating to the safety of the A632.

Those present heard of the tragic loss of a wife and son in December 2023 in an accident witnessed by the husband. The distress and impact on both himself and his remaining son had been intolerable and he pleaded with the authorities to recognise the dangers of the A632 'flying mile' and to do something about it.

PI Greg Hunt responded that he fully sympathised with sentiments and that further speed checks were needed, but that this would be within the limited resources available.

Cllr Barry Lewis highlighted the erratic driving and speeding along the route. This behaviour seemed to be a fundamental issue and it was by no means clear that average speed cameras would have prevented the recent fatalities. Nevertheless, the data being collected would build a picture of the speeding issues to produce an appropriate scheme for a Government funding bid.

Representatives were asked what is being done to improve safety now?

DCC Officers outlined the work already undertaken along the A632 over recent years and emphasised that the limited budget available for improvements, has to cover the whole of the Derbyshire Highways network. Additional road markings, rumble strips, photovoltaic signage at Span Carr, lowering of speed limits etc. have enhanced safety. Officers reiterated the need to accumulate data to support a bid for Government funding, possibly for a camera system along the A632. DCC Officers referred to recent data from a radar survey and this had been requested by a member of the public present, under a Freedom of Information Act request to DCC.

Cllr Helen Wetherall offered that whilst NEDDC had no jurisdiction over highway issues, it would work with DCC to support Highways' responsibility to keep the A632 safe and requested a commitment that action would be taken.

The public asked what would happen next?

DCC Officers responded that it currently had £295,000 available for the whole of the county and average speed cameras were approximately £110,000 each; the A632 requiring quite a few along its length. A minimum £1million investment would be required to provide a suitable scheme.

The public asked how much the new cycle lane along Chatsworth Road in Chesterfield had cost?

DCC Officers said this had been a Government funded scheme at a cost of £1.6 million and had this not been taken up, then the funds would have been spent elsewhere in the country.

A victim of an accident at Span Carr crossroads spoke of the dangerous and fast driving along the road and the poor visibility at the crossroads. Another member of the public suggested that the road itself was not inherently dangerous, it was the standard of driving.

The public asked why the speed limit at Kelstedge had not been dropped from 40mph to 30mph when legislation seemed to support a 30mph?

The DCC Officer responded that the speed radar equipment results had indicated a good compliance. The TMO had checked the data and the average at Kelstedge was 43.1mph. The radar results would indicate the most beneficial times for the Police enforcement to take place, with evenings and weekends more likely for speeding/poor driving to take place.

The public suggested to Lee Rowley MP that average speed cameras were required along the length of the A632 in Ashover Parish, otherwise speeding would continue. Government support is needed and enforcement required.

Lee Rowley MP responded that there was clearly a problem and just dropping speed limits often gets to a threshold where people ignore them. Lee emphasised the erratic driving and the need for more Police monitoring and highlighted the SIDs data showing a speed of over 130mph at 8.15am on a weekday recorded at Kelstedge. A process of justification would need to be followed to present a case to central government. Lee pledged his support to help make a case to Government for an A632 Road Safety Scheme and that shouts of frustration (though understandable) would have no effect on progress and we must follow the process. Cllr Barry Lewis pledged his support for Average Speed Cameras and data collected would continue to support a grant bid to the 'Road Safety Foundation'. In the meantime, DCC would write to the 'Road Safety Foundation' to make it aware of the safety issues along the A632.

At this point some members of the public, the Police and DCC Officers left the meeting.

(A 'timeline' of action taken by Ashover Parish Council regarding the A632 may be found at the end of this report – Appendix I)

7.40pm – Cllr Ed Willmot invited members of the public to put questions to representatives on issues relating to the water quality in the River Amber.

Severn Trent declined their invitation to attend the meeting (sent to them 3 months ago), citing various reasons, including resourcing issues. The Parish Council challenged their rationale but they would not relent. An intervention by Lee Rowley had the same outcome. Members of the public expressed their disquiet at the lack of presence from Severn Trent Water.

In lieu of their absence, Severn Trent provided a statement, read out by Parish Councillor Mike Thomas, which they said would demonstrate how it was reducing its footprint in the River. It may be read [here](#).

The Environment Agency Officer made a power point presentation which may be viewed [here](#).

EA Officers were responsible for water quality across Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. Following the last public meeting in September 2022, a site visit had taken place and monitoring of water quality had been undertaken at Ashover and Kelstedge sewage treatment works and sondes installed upstream. The survey would be repeated in 2027. Four farm inspections had been undertaken at the upper Amber and a further six were scheduled; this was to monitor run-off from farms.

The public asked what progress was being made to prevent discharges into the River Amber and examples of sewage spill data was put forward detailing the number of spills and hours e.g. in 2023 there were 93 spills at Kelstedge, 59 at Overton and 150 at Ashover. Three Members of a community group 'Friends of the Derwent' offered to meet with Severn Trent, Environment Agency and the MP to discuss possible solutions.

Both Lee Rowley and Cllr Barry Lewis supported the involvement of the Friends of the Derwent and would help facilitate their engagement with Severn Trent and the Environment Agency.

Meanwhile, Lee thanked the EA for the work undertaken to date and would suggest a meeting with ST in the Autumn, once the Reasons for Not Achieving Good Ecological Status (RNAGS) were presented.

The member of the public requested that the meeting concentrates on sewage overflow and said that the Government target was for 77% of waterways to be good by 2027, however, it was learned that this figure was more likely to be 21%.

Lee Rowley MP said that the problem was countrywide due to the inadequate Victorian systems and as monitoring only commenced in 2013, rectifying the issues would take time.

The public asked why Severn Trent did not state the problems when planning applications for new developments were put forward?

EA Officers had limited resources and the quality monitoring now in place provided more informative data.

Funding had increased to provide for more Officers to be appointed and trained. This is especially important in Enforcement where, owing to scarcity of resources, enforcement has gone down in recent years though fines have gone up. A dilemma for EA is releasing tight resources to prepare prosecutions while water companies have the luxury of expensive lawyers. In the coming years, more enforcement will take place and new employees will allow for more water company inspections. The EA aims for 10,000 compliance checks visits nationally to be undertaken by the end of 2026.

The public asked that the meeting with members of the community group investigates funding measures to help farmers with water recycling.

Further holding tanks were suggested and it was noted that a holding tank had been installed in the field along Narrowleys Lane some year ago.

Cllr Helen Wetherall asked Lee Rowley MP to bear in mind what had been put forward in any vote relating to overflows into rivers and waterways. Lee responded that currently, no overflows would mean sewage backing up into domestic toilets.

'Friends of the Derwent' said that it would take more than 10 years to clean up rivers etc. and for wildlife to recover and therefore 5 year business cycles for water monitoring were not suitable.

8.30pm – Cllr Ed Willmot thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at **8.35pm**.

APPENDIX I

Approx 2004/5	Hardstanding installed at Span Carr, later bollards installed to prevent HGVs parking.
May 2005	Newsletter – APC requests DCC to undertake further traffic calming measures between Kelstedge and Spitewinter. Suggesting a roundabout or speed cameras. DCC did not intend to undertake further traffic calming at that time.
2013 2014	APC holds meeting with DCC. Traffic lights, lower speed limit, 'Stop' sign not an option under Highway Regulations Photovoltaic signs and rumble strips to be installed at Span Carr crossroads.
2014	APC joins 13 other Parish Councils and purchases a speed camera for Police use.
October 2016	APC requests DCC to extend 40mph from Kelstedge to Span Carr.
April 2018	Concern expressed to Police & Crime Commissioner about speeding and safety of A632.
Autumn 2019	Newsletter calls residents to back a campaign for further safety measures along the A632 and to write to Leader of DCC.
Autumn 2020	DCC Traffic Regulation along A632. APC reinforce to DCC and Police, the need to monitor speeding and issue fines.
September 2021	A632 Speed Limit consultation – APC requests reduction to 30mph through Kelstedge and supports reduction in speed limits along A632.
2022	Kelstedge resident attempts to set up a 'CREST speed watch group', didn't get off the ground. (CREST = Casualty Reduction Enforcement Support Team)
September 2022	Public Meeting attended by APC, Lee Rowley MP, Leader of DCC, Highway Officers, Police.
Autumn 2022	Successful grant bid to Police & Crime Commissioner for matched funding to install 2no. Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) at Kelstedge.
Winter 2022	Object in the Highway Licence awaited from DCC for SIDs.
July 2023	SIDs trial and speed awareness highlighted in the Annual Report.
Autumn 2023	DCC install new signage at Span Carr and more rumble strips on approach. 2no. SIDs purchased by APC from Coeval. APC supports installation of hard verges at Alicehead/Birkin Lane and Hut Lane.
Winter 2023/4	Two SIDs installed. Data to be collected and submitted to DCC Highways for analysis.
Spring 2024	Further Public Meeting held in Spring 2024 attended by Parish Councillors, MP, DCC Leader, DCC Cabinet Member, Senior Police & Traffic Officers with the benefit of data collected from SIDs.

NB: The table does not include minutes of parish council meetings referring to the A632.