

Notes from a meeting held at the Lockgate Café
On Tuesday 12th March 2019

Present:

Cllrs Ray Mould, Mike Turner – Tiverton & Tilstone Fearnall Parish Council

Cllrs Mike Harrison, Tom Platt – Beeston Parish Council

Dave Reeves (DR) – Cheshire West and Chester Highways

10 residents from the parishes, particularly from George's Place

Cllr Mould chaired the meeting which had been called to raise with Cheshire West Highways various issues with the A49 road and the railway bridge which crosses it.

1) Speed of vehicles

Residents and both Parish Councils raised the issue of the speed that vehicles travel along the A49 despite there being both static and flashing speed limit signs. DR responded that the Police are aware of concerns and do carry out speed monitoring on both sides of the bridge. It was felt that this did not give a true reflection of speed as vehicles could see the police officer and slowed down and warned other vehicles by flashing. DR did concede that this was true and he said that the Police were trying to find an area where they could safely park the camera van. And if people did speed the Police would take enforcement action.

It was agreed that the Police presence did help to slow traffic down whilst they were there but drivers soon increased speed again once they were gone

Residents felt that the flashing 30 sign was not a lot of use as many drivers ignored it. They asked if a permanent speed camera could be installed. DR said that the criteria had changed and he didn't think that the road would meet the new regulations. He advised that contact be made with the Cheshire Road Safety Partnership who install the cameras.

It was also felt that the speed limit was confusing as there were three different speed limits between the Four Lane Ends traffic lights and the bridge and coming from Beeston there were two different speed limits.

It was also mentioned that the static 30mph signs were not clear enough and would be more visible with a yellow backing

2) Flashing Bridge Signs

Residents and both Parish Councils raised the fact that the flashing over-height signs are problematic as they are often not working correctly and have been reported on several occasions.

It was also mentioned that some of the non-flashing road signs were missing or damaged, eg, one lying on the grass verge just past George's Place

3) Bridge Strikes

It was raised that there were regular strikes of the bridge. Some are serious and result in the road being closed for vehicles to be removed; others are clips or scrapes and in fact there had been three accidents in the last 5 months – two involving lorries and one where cars ended up on the pavement in the armco. DR was not aware of all incidents as only accidents where there are serious injuries or fatalities are logged (KSI data). DR said that all bridge strikes must be reported to Network Rail (NR) no matter how small, using the number on the plate on the bridge. One resident said that the number was incorrect so didn't call NR.

DR reported that following the recent lorry strikes Highways were working with Network Rail and everything was to be renewed. This included prior warning signs both interactive and static and signage on the bridge as the fluorescent chevrons were damaged or missing (on the grass verge) and the height signs were out of date.

One resident complained that they had been told the new signage was in storage but there were no contractors to fit it. DR said that as soon as Highways and Network Rail had agreed a programme of works it would be carried out.

4) Overtaking

There were complaints about vehicles overtaking on both sides of the bridge. DR said that this was illegal as there were double white lines and assured people that the Police would take action if they were aware of it taking place.

It was stated that many of the lorries crossed the double white lines because they moved to the centre of the road to get under the bridge.

5) Debris

There were complaints about debris that was left on the footpaths after accidents had occurred. This had been reported on several occasions to an officer who hadn't responded. It was pointed out that he had been on long term leave; however it was felt, rightly, that there should either have been an "out of office" message or someone else should have monitored the emails. DR said that highways issues should be logged on highways online portal. The Parish Councils said that items could always be reported to them and they would log them on the portal.

There were also complaints about road work signs being left once works were completed. DR said this had been raised with the Highways contractor as it was embarrassing that it happened, but again to report them on the online portal

Several suggestions were put forward that were felt might help the situation with the road and the bridge. These included:

30 mph painted on the road in roundels

Pink tarmac on the road to highlight the 30 mph area.

Rumble strips on the road although there was concern about noise with this measure

Countdown markers warning of the 30 mph zone

Street lighting 150 metres each side of the bridge although there were concerns about light pollution and about urbanisation of a rural area

Reduce the speed under the bridge to 20 mph

Lower the bridge so that large lorries couldn't get under it. However this would not be possible because the bridge is on an "A" road

A fence along the footpath. Unfortunately the footpath is not wide enough to meet the spacing criteria for this.

Travel under the bridge be controlled by traffic lights. One long standing resident said that there had been lights some years ago when the bridge was an arch. More recently it had been modified and the lights removed. DR said that again there was a criteria for this which would include speed sensors and would default to red if there was no traffic.

DR pointed out that many of these were good suggestions but unfortunately there were strict guidelines laid down by the Department of Transport that dictated much of what the Highways Dept could and couldn't do. He also agreed that in cases where there were measures that could be taken there were also funding constraints.

Concerns were also raised about the number of access points to the A49 in close proximity to the bridge. It was pointed out that planning permission had been granted for further housing on the auction site which would mean more vehicles accessing the road at these points

ACTIONS

Highways and Network Rail to work together to replace all the faulty or missing signage

Both Parish Councils and residents to monitor the bridge and report any strikes to Network Rail.

Both Parish Councils to lobby Police to regularly carry out speed monitoring

Contact Cheshire Road Safety Partnership to discuss a permanent speed camera

Dave Reeves to provide the Parish Councils with the results of the latest speed surveys carried out using the "box and wires"