

Ilketshall St. Andrew Parish Council

Top Road – Speeding and HGV issue.

Summary of actions and events, as at October 2021.

1. A [Vehicle Activated Sign \(VAS\)](#) has been regularly positioned at 2 points (one westbound, one eastbound) for approximately 3-week intervals. The VAS is shared with Ringsfield & Weston, and therefore the normal cycle is that it is located at positions in Ringsfield & Weston for 9 weeks, before returning to Ilketshall St. Andrew for 6 weeks. The first time it was deployed in Ilketshall St. Andrew was in September 2019.

When a device was positioned by the police that just recorded speeds (and did not display the speed) for a period in 2021, the results were very similar to those recorded on the VAS, which suggests that the VAS results are accurate.

The positive impact of the VAS may be that some drivers will slow down **once** they have been alerted to their speeding by the VAS. Drivers travelling at crazy speeds along Top Road (say 50 mph plus) will have already passed the 30mph signs, and will probably not be deterred by the VAS.

2. At a meeting with a Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk, Rod Apps raised the issue of speeding in the village, and the fact that when the Police had been given the information from the VAS, they were uninterested. The Commissioner undertook to get it looked into, and as a consequence the Police installed a speed recorder (operating in both directions) for a week earlier in 2021. The outcome of that survey was that the incidence of speeding within the hours (roughly 9.00 – 6.00, it seems) that a Police Speeding Enforcement Team (or similar title) could be positioned on Top Road was below the threshold needed to justify such a deployment. The problem is that the worst incidences and frequency of speeding are outside of the 9.00-6.00 hours. The end result is that the Police are **not** prepared to deploy a Speeding Enforcement Team on Top Road.
3. [Community Speedwatch Teams](#). The principle here is that a group of people (minimum of 6) form a team to make use of speed cameras. Other things being equal, members of such a team would position themselves at appropriate sites on Top Road and, using the hand-held speed cameras, would manage to record the speed, registration number and time of the speeding vehicles. The Police then contact the offenders. The recommendation from the Police is that would be a worthwhile addition to other initiatives to reduce the speeding problem.

Such a team has to be trained (by the Police), and in order to make it worthwhile, a (minimum) group of 6 is required. Equipment is provided by the Police.

The **locations** for the team to make use of the hand-held speed cameras have to be approved by the Police, and they are required to be at least 300 metres from the start of the 30mph limit. The locations have to be appropriately safe for the team to operate from.

Rod Apps was in contact with PC Simon Green (the Community Engagement Officer for the Halesworth locality) regarding this, and PC Green visited Top Road in order to identify possible sites. He was only able to identify TWO possible sites; one being Great Common Farm, the other being the field entrance by the post box a little further west on the opposite side of the road. These are only 95 metres and 124 metres from the eastern start of the 30mph limit, so could only be used to monitor **eastbound** vehicles. There could be no monitoring of **westbound** traffic. PC Green did point out, though, that this was perhaps not as serious a constraint as it might appear; the presence of a Community Speedwatch Team is a significant deterrent, since it is not apparent to drivers which direction (east or west in this instance) is being monitored.

If we went ahead with this, the Police would need to speak to the owners of the two sites to get their approval. The Police generally do not like to make use of private entrances for Community Speedwatch Teams, since the residents can end up being harassed by drivers.

A Community Speedwatch Team **can** be formed that includes people from other villages. The idea is then that the team rotates around the different villages involved, It is understood that Ringsfield & Weston have already established a CSW team, having identified the minimum of 6 people.

4. [Automatic Number Plate Recognition \(ANPR\)](#) There is a pilot scheme in Suffolk which is operating ANPRs. There is an application process (which is not too straightforward), but it would appear that Top Road would be eligible. The cameras are placed in a location for only a week, although it seems that this can be extended or repeated. The information provided says: "An ANPR device identifies a speeding vehicle by capturing an image of the number plate of the vehicle. Data will then be shared with the Police and the County Council. The County Council will write to the owner of the vehicle on behalf of both parties explaining that their vehicle has been registered as speeding. Repeat offences at a particular location could prompt the deployment of SafeCam (the Police's enforcement team) and the issuing of fines to those who breach the speed limit." The Parish Council is intending to take this forward.

5. Following the completion of the Beccles Southern Relief Road, there was a "Beccles Southern Relief Road Working Group" (or a similar title) created to discuss the ramifications of the Southern Relief Road. Most of the focus was upon the benefits to Beccles, rather than the negative consequences to places like Ilketshall St. Andrew and Ringsfield. As a consequence, a sub-group was formed, which focuses **just** on the implications for surrounding villages, but in practice it is just Ilketshall St. Andrew & Ringsfield. There was a meeting of this sub-group at the end of July, chaired by Peter Aldous (the constituency MP), and attended by Judy Cloke, the District Councillor.

The central outcomes of this meeting was that Judy Cloke (District Councillor) contacted Mark Nichols, the Community Liaison Engineer for Suffolk Highways, requesting an on-site meeting to address the twin issues of speeding and HGVs. A meeting has been set up for 26th November at which the Ilketshall St. Andrew Parish Council will be represented. The starting point at the moment is that a range of possible measures need to be considered, including (but not limited to) weight limits (these would have to apply from the start of Top Road to the west, right through to the junction of Cromwell Road and London Road on the eastern side of Ringsfield), chicanes, 5-bar-gate type structures at either end of Top Road,

road humps . . . but obviously there would need to be consultation with residents of Top Road once some proposals from Suffolk Highways is forthcoming.

Peter Aldous undertook to e-mail Richard Smith, SCC Councillor with (it seems) particular responsibility for roads/transport. The Parish Council is not aware of Peter Aldous getting any response, despite Peter Aldous writing a lengthy e-mail including a lot of suggestions for possible ways forward for the 2 problems. Rod Apps e-mailed Richard Smith, referring to Peter Aldous' e-mail, and essentially just got a brush-off (suggesting that it was a policing issue and therefore I should contact them, which has already been undertaken – see above.)]

6. Rod Apps sent the “Flying HGVs” e-mail from Tony Brown to PC Simon Green. [This e-mail is reproduced below]. Amongst other comments and suggestions that PC Green made, the following two are notable:
 - a) If the incidences of 80mph (and other crazy speeds) are sufficiently regular that they are therefore predictable, it might be the case that the Police would be prepared to deploy officers at those times, in order to catch the offender(s). The impression from the VAS data is that the crazy speeding instances were not sufficiently routine for this possibility to be pursued at this stage.
 - b) With regard to the “Flying HGVs” particularly, he noted that the really good evidence to pursue prosecutions with is the data and images provided by dashcams. I don't have familiarity with this technology, but it occurred to me that one or more could be left running in parked vehicles on Top Road, so that when someone **does** witness “Flying HGVs” or similar, by noting the time, it might be the case that one or more dashcams would have recorded the incident and it could be identified.

Rod Apps
29 October 2021

“Flying HGVs” e-mail:

Speeding and "Ratrunning" by HGVs on Top Road

Dear Mr Apps

I am writing to you following some incidents that I witnessed this morning involving HGVs using Top Road.

I had to drive into Beccles this morning and as I pulled out of my drive in Top Road I saw an arctic coming from the A144 direction obviously travelling in excess of the speed limit. The vehicle passed my drive and I pulled out. As the vehicle reached Gerald Godfrey's driveway it braked sharply and pulled in partly leaving its trailer sticking out. I then saw a rigid HGV travelling from Ringsfield direction clearly being driven at an inappropriate speed for the road. This vehicle appeared to make no effort to slow down and mounted the verge on its nearside to avoid the trailer sticking out. Because of the speed that it was travelling, the Rigid hit the verge and actually TOOK OFF with all wheels in the air. I have never seen an airborne HGV before and it was clear that the driver had lost control of the vehicle and I feared that it would collide with my car.. The rigid came back to earth before carrying on towards the A144 and I could see in my mirror that it was still speeding.

Meanwhile the Arctic carried on towards Ringsfield being driven in an inappropriate manner for the road taking up the whole road width. As it passed Corner Farm it forced a car to mount the verge and then it reached the narrow section of road with SLOW and bend signs. No effort was made to slow down and the next thing I saw was a 4x4 mounting the verge and ending up virtually in the hedge to avoid an accident. The HGV continued on regardless speeding through Ringsfield before reaching London Road Beccles and turning onto the industrial estate there. It was quite clear that the HGV had used Top Road as a short cut instead of following the by-pass round to Beccles. This is one of the worst incidents of driving that I have seen and the situation can only get worse as HGV drivers are clearly under pressure to deliver. Unfortunately there were no markings on the vehicles involved and I could not get any index numbers of vehicles.

As you know speeding and the manner of driving in Top Road is a current topic and I believe that unless a meeting can be arranged between police Highways and local representatives so that there can be a coordinated approach to solving this problem, especially rat running by HGVs, this problem will only get worse, culminating in serious accidents.

Kind Regards

Tony Brown