

Atworth Traffic Action Group (ATAG)

Email: atag@email.com

Website: <http://atag.99k.org>

Report of the Inaugural Meeting of the Group

At a meeting held on Monday 14th November, a new community group was inaugurated by the 14 attendees from Atworth, Purlpit, Neston Estate and Whitley, who all agreed to join the group as founder-members. Apologies were received from five other residents.

The group agreed that the name Atworth Traffic Action Group, ATAG, would be adopted, and that the group's objectives would be as follows:

"The Atworth Traffic Action Group will act to protect the residents of Atworth from the effects of traffic through the village.

The group will use all agreed approaches open to it, to the limit of the law, to influence the responsible authorities in the limitation of the volume of traffic, especially heavy goods vehicles, and of its speed."

An outline of the reasons for the suggestion of the formation of the group was given by one resident, including the potentially harmful effects of heavy goods vehicles, and the quality of life issues suffered in rural communities.

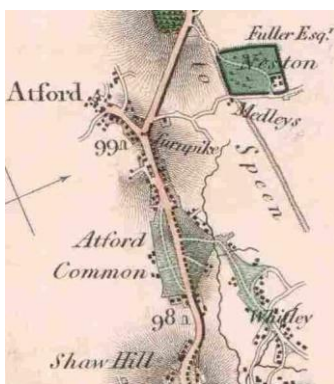
A report of the traffic issue discussions within the Neighbourhood Police Tasking Group was given by another.

Each of the remaining attendees gave a short statement of their personal experience with regard to dangers faced daily on roads near their homes around Atworth, Purlpit and the Neston Farm Shop and Lodge areas. Some of the issues mentioned included:

- the absence of pavements through Purlpit limits protection of pedestrians to speeding vehicles and 'buses travelling close to the verge;
- too many narrow pavements and insufficient lowered kerbs for the disabled;
- householders at both ends of the Bath Road within Atworth spoke of vehicles blatantly exceeding the speed limit down the hills, and of poor driving behaviour;
- noise pollution caused by HGVs applying brakes heavily, and accelerating without regard for the community through which they are travelling;
- one resident criticised the moving of the small roundabout to allow large vehicles to enter/leave Atworth Business Park more easily. The alteration has allowed drivers to ignore the roundabout and thus keep up their speed creating a highly dangerous area;
- Bradford Road, Church Street, and the Village School, all suffer from near-miss incidents, congestion, speeding and poor driving behaviour;
- some residents highlighted the Atworth Clock Tower 'bus stop as dangerous;
- some residents were seriously concerned that from Wadswick Lane to the Bear Garage in both directions on the A365, speeding and poor driving behaviour had caused many accidents;
- the speed of HGVs near to narrow pavement is a constant worry;
- speeding from Atworth Clock Tower down the slope to Bear Garage was another frightening hazard.

The group's attention was then drawn to the proposal by Bath & North East Somerset Council that in the City of Bath the direct link between the A36 and the A4 via Cleveland Bridge was to be closed to HGVs. This would cause a significant increase in traffic through Atworth as vehicles would turn east at the A4 / A46 roundabout onto the A4, and then bear right at Box to join the A365 on their way to the A350 south. Displacement of traffic flow from urban to rural communities in this way was not considered to be acceptable.

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The Group then considered a range of actions for future consideration and discussion to achieve its declared objectives. These were:

- pavements could be widened where very narrow so as to alleviate the unpleasantness and hazard caused to persons with children and pushchairs walking along the A365 and where needed, additional lowered kerbs installed;
- the installation of speed activated traffic lights at each end of the A365, at the entrances to the village via Church Street and Purplit;
- a 20mph speed limit throughout the village to reduce noise, wet spray and hazard, and to discourage long distance through traffic from passing through the village. All members were encouraged to review the "<http://www.20splentyforus.org.uk/>" website, and apply pressure to Wiltshire Council;
- the installation of double white lines on both entrances to the village on the A365 so as to discourage reckless overtaking when entering and leaving the village;
- a new 50mph speed limit from Box Fiveways to the bend by the gamekeeper's lodge and a 40mph limit from that bend down to the village entrance.

Three other suggestions were considered which might be more controversial:

- the creation of dummy speed cameras, possibly erected by residents;
- inconvenient car parking to slow down traffic as reportedly practised in Holt and Groughton Gifford;
- the strategic use of the pedestrian crossing to restrict traffic flow as recently and successfully practised in a Hampshire village to reduce through traffic.

The Next Steps

It was unanimously agreed that a Public Meeting will be organised early in 2012, when a strategy will be formulated embracing all the areas of concern, and a Committee will be elected to steer the new group into ACTION.

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