

Atworth Traffic Action Group (ATAG)

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**ACTIONS,
RECOMMENDATIONS
AND
REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**FOLLOWING A PUBLIC MEETING
HELD ON 18th MAY 2012
IN THE NESTON PARK FARM SHOP**

**ATAG Organising Committee
June 2012**

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A. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns the outcome of a Public Meeting organised by ATAG and which took place on the evening of 18th May 2012 in the Neston Park Farm Shop, Atworth. It is the culmination of ATAG's work during the past year, in which sufficient public debate has been held, and opinion surveys performed, to enable pursuit of the actions which Atworth's residents have requested.

The Public Meeting was called following a successful Residents' Meeting held in February 2012, at which attendees selected five of the twelve key traffic issues for early action with the appropriate authorities.

For those readers who may be unfamiliar with ATAG's evolution and history, a summary is provided at the end of this report.

In addition to this Introduction, this report is arranged in the following sections:

ACTIONS

This section explains how ATAG will take forward, with the appropriate authorities, the issues which were supported by vote at the Public Meeting. ATAG is a community group, and so, as well as taking these measures, we will be organising additional community actions and events in order to raise the awareness of residents' views amongst road users who pass through our community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It has become clear to the ATAG Organising Committee during its meetings with residents, and during the Public Meeting, that there is scope for improving the way in which the relevant authorities act, communicate and consult, with the residents to whom they are responsible. A series of recommendations are given which we hope will be taken up by the authorities, and which will improve the quality of life for residents, and give authorities confirmation that they have the support of residents in their decisions, attitudes and actions.

The spirit of all this is that Atworth's residents need action to resolve their traffic issues. This requires co-operation of the responsible authorities and organisations whose regulations and policies often seem to result in making solutions more difficult and unobtainable. We expect the authorities to be more creative and imaginative so that we are enabled, not obstructed, in achieving our aims.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

A report of the proceedings of the Public Meeting is given in this section. Where a speaker from the floor represents an organisation, that person is named. Otherwise, only speakers who identified themselves are personally identified.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

This section is for those who may not be familiar with how ATAG came into being or with its aims and objectives.

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B. ACTIONS

B.1 Speed Indication Devices and Village Gates

Using a combination of Department for Transport (DfT) and Metrocount figures or traffic volume and speed, it is plain that approximately 36,000 road traffic infringements are perpetrated each year in Atworth. It is surprising that such a rate of infringement is tolerated by the authorities. Atworth residents are firmly committed to persuading the authorities to enforce the existing speed limits.

There was support for fixed indication devices, rather than mobile which have to be shared on an infrequent basis with other locations.

There were also comments at the meeting, and communications received from some unable to attend, indicating that only the only effective enforcement of speed limits would be by reversion to the punitive Speed Camera Van as previously provided in Atworth.

As the meeting voted virtually unanimously in favour of speed indication devices in the village, this will be pursued as a request using the Melksham Area Board (MAB) mechanism for raising such items.

Before the request is made, formal endorsement of Atworth Parish Council (APC) will be sought.

Village Gates There was also discussion regarding the request, not arising specifically from ATAG, for village gates. Recent discussion at the Community Area Transport Group (CATG) had approved the pursuit of the installation of village gates in Atworth, 33% funded by the parish council, 33% by the county, and 33% by the CATG.

However, it should be noted that the meeting indicated a definite priority for speed indication devices, especially if both were not affordable.

It will be beneficial to have further discussions with APC to see how the "Gates vs SIDs" balance might be struck, in the interest of obtaining what is most desired by the community.

B.2 Speed Limit Changes - Approaching the Village - Vote 1

The meeting voted 75% in favour of pursuing changes of speed limit extents on approach to the village. In particular, there was support for extending the 30mph limit beyond the Farm Shop entrance, and for a 40mph zone beyond that.

There was limited support for reducing the national limit status of the Wadswick Straight to 50mph, notwithstanding its possible beneficial effect of slowing down traffic on approach and through the village.

As a result of the discussion, and the 75% majority vote, ATAG will raise a request using the MAB mechanism for the extension of the 30mph limit to beyond the Farm Shop, and for a 40mph limit from beyond the Keeper's Cottage bend to the 30mph limit.

Formal endorsement from APC will be sought for this proposal.

ATAG will hold further discussion on the way to proceed regarding the 50mph reduction on the Wadswick Straight.

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B.3 Speed Limit Changes - In Village - Vote 2

There was little support for 20mph along Bradford Road, as the speed in that zone was considered self limiting by congestion.

There was much greater support for a reduction along the School Travel Route on the Bath Road. Several persons were very concerned about the dangers to school children and others along the A365, including on the approaches to the pedestrian crossing, and raised the need for 20mph during school travel times.

ATAG will give the matter of the School Travel Route speed limit along the A365 further consideration to ascertain support and actions.

B.4 Deterring Dangerous Overtaking

The meeting voted virtually unanimously in favour of the provision of double white lines on the western approach to the village. This followed discussion on highly dangerous overtaking which occurs from the Clock Tower 'Bus Stop right up to the bend by Keeper's Cottage. This takes place despite the lack of visibility caused by the dip in the road and the brow of the hill, by the bend, and by the Farm Shop entrance. Many attendees reported serious and frequent near-misses, in addition to those collisions which have occurred but which seem to be missing from the relevant official databases, possibly because of lucky escapes from serious injury.

It must be noted that Sir James & Lady Venetia Fuller have indicated that they would be willing support this measure financially.

As a result of the discussion, and the virtually unanimous vote, ATAG will raise a request using the MAB mechanism for the provision of double white lines along the western approach to the village. ATAG will also take up the offer of a site meeting with the Wiltshire Traffic Engineers to review.

ATAG will seek the endorsement of Atworth Parish Council in dealing with this issue.

B.5 Footpath to Neston Park Farm Shop

Although this item was given a very high priority at the Residents' Meeting, there was not a majority in favour of pursuing this by those present at the Public Meeting.

No further action will therefore be pursued on this issue at this stage.

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C. RECOMMENDATIONS

It has become clear to ATAG, during its investigations, that there is scope for improving the ways in which the authorities represented at the meeting seek and respond to residents' views and requests and communicate with those who pay for the services provided. We will present some of those desired improvements here.

C.1 Comments to All Participating Organisations

ATAG hopes that our comments will be taken in a constructive spirit, because we are most grateful for the willingness of organisations to provide participants in our panel. Having said that, ATAG has found many aspects of getting the voice of residents heard frustrating.

We are told that communities now live in a time of the "Big Society" and of "Localism". These two terms imply that communities will be encouraged to identify and act on local issues, and that they will be supported by authorities and organisations in their search for solutions. This represents exactly what ATAG desires. To summarise: please try not to keep telling us why our proposals cannot be carried out; rather, tell us how we can get them implemented.

C.2 The County Council

ATAG has slowly formed the view that too many decisions of priority and interpretation are left to officers, and that more control of these matters should be taken by elected representatives. It may be true that officers of the council are expert in their field; however, elected members must question them thoroughly and be more willing to direct them to certain actions.

It is plain to an observer watching the interaction between officers and elected councillors that the lack of input of elector-residents' views placed through their elected councillors results in actions that are not always in line with what is desired by those electors. Always remember: it is residents who pay for all the services, and for the council's staff and facilities, be it via central government tax receipts or through the Council Tax.

Thus, when an officer advises that what one authority does to benefit its residents with regard to speeding deterrence measures cannot be replicated in Wiltshire, elected representatives must be more willing to ask "*Why not?*" and to pursue the question with more resolve. This may involve an examination of the root causes of the differences between different authorities, such as how budgets and funding are prioritised, and how regulations may be interpreted to suit the authority rather than their electors. If the council's own rules result in the prevention of a course of action that would be for the good of its residents, then the council should be brave enough to amend those rules accordingly.

Elected representatives should also ensure that consultations really are consultations and that they are made as widely as possible: this point is further explored in the next section.

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C.3 Traffic Engineering Department

ATAG has encountered several instances where a little more willingness to respond to requirements rather than to stick rigidly to one interpretation of regulations would be of such great help.

Examples of this include:

1. If B&NES find "roundels" help to make drivers aware of a sustained speed limit along a route, why not Wiltshire? If B&NES interpret the rules so as to permit such indication and have not been brought to task for it, surely Wiltshire is safe to adopt the same action.
2. There may be advice issued centrally regarding when double white lines may be applied. But when residents report persistently bad driving behaviour which endangers other road users, be more willing to let common sense prevail and take the action requested by residents. Responding to valid requests from electors, supported by elected representatives is surely one of the key reasons for having a Traffic Engineering Department.
3. When the county, or central government (involving the council) decide to conduct a consultation, make sure that the consultation is effective. For example, the consultation by the county on speed limits along A-class roads in 2008/9 was mentioned at the Public Meeting. Yet is very difficult, if not impossible, to find a resident who was aware that this consultation was taking place. Why did the department not arrange public meetings, provide leaflets to each house, and use publicity mechanisms such as local magazines and newsletters and the county newsletter, in order to seek resident opinion when the consultation was undertaken? Taking that approach would persuade elector-residents that their views were indeed being taken seriously, as well as providing the department with proper information regarding residents' traffic issues and their wishes regarding solutions.

C.4 Police Authorities

It has already been mentioned that it would seem that some 36,000 traffic offences are committed by speeding vehicles each year in Atworth. Surely the police authorities are not content that these offences are left uninvestigated, and the perpetrators escape with no kind of punishment. It is difficult to imagine that 36,000 instances of some other misdemeanour would be permitted to go unpunished by the police service.

Part of the problem is due to the removal of the Speed Camera Van which used to be provided in Atworth. The threat of being photographed by the van, and of being fined, provided a clear deterrent against speeding.

Safety in village communities is vital, yet speed cameras are placed out on the open road where there are no pedestrians, no young mothers with children by their side and in pushchairs on narrow pavements whilst large 44 tonne six axle lorries thunder past at 35mph and more. If democracy means anything at all, there must be a better response to the wishes of residents that this issue be addressed.

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C.5 Atworth Parish Council

A community's first level of representation in the democratic process is its Parish Council. All members of the Parish Council must participate fully in ensuring that the needs and wishes of their community are met, and where that requires communication further up the democratic chain to a county authority then that must be done effectively by elected members.

Attendance at Group and Board Meetings

We have noted at our attendance at various meetings, for example, with the Neighbourhood Police Tasking Group (NPTG), and with the CATG, that there has never been an elected member of APC present. The Parish Clerk has been present from time to time, but never an elected member. Yet other parish councils have sent elected members to these meetings. We are of the opinion that having two APC representatives at each NPTG, CATG and MAB meeting would ensure that Atworth's interests are fully represented in the most convincing way, raising Atworth's profile and making the groups better aware of our views and requirements.

At least two of these groups have budgets which can be bid against for local projects. Such bids cannot be made if Atworth is not represented by its councillors at these meetings.

Seeking Elector Opinion

On several occasions during the Public Meeting, lack of funds was quoted as a reason for some amenities being unaffordable. When this occurs it is very important indeed that APC seeks the opinion of elector-residents before deciding exactly how funds should be spent, when two or more possibilities compete for the same resources. But this has not happened in the past. One example of where this should have been done is with regard to the £8,600 which was spent on the two new 'bus shelters. We do not wish to go over old ground, but it is plain to see that speed indicators, village gates and 'bus shelters were competing for funds at the same time, having been listed in the Parish Plan, but no proper assessment was made as to how each option might be seen by electors.

Much more use of direct communications with elector-residents should be used - deciding on which spending decisions meet local community requirements is a crucial duty of a parish council, and getting those decisions correct warrants the use of leaflet publicity and surveys. Getting a good debate started also stimulates local involvement and improves poor attendance at meeting such as the Annual Parish Assembly, which is mainly attended only by those reading reports on behalf of community organisations.

Speed Indicators versus Village Gates

The Public Meeting presented evidence that residents favour speed indicators over village gates. A proper determination of how to decide on whichever scheme should gain priority must now be made and proper consultation of residents will be required to do that.

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D. PROCEEDINGS OF THE PUBLIC MEETING (Meeting reference 20120518)

A Public Meeting was arranged by the Organising Committee of ATAG and held at 7:30pm on Wednesday 18th May 2012, at the Neston Park Farm Shop, Atworth. The primary purpose was to ascertain and record the opinions of residents regarding the set of traffic issues identified at the Inaugural Meeting held in November 2011 and prioritised at the Residents' Meeting held in February 2012 in the same location.

More than forty five persons signed the attendance list, while several others who arrived a little early or late did not. As well as members of the panel, who represented organisations and authorities, Melksham Community Area Partnership (MCAP), Melksham Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT), Atworth Neighbourhood Watch (ANW) and Atworth Parish Council (APC) were represented in the audience.

D.1 Welcome and Introductions

Co-chairs

Kenneth Spencer welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked the Neston Park Estate, and Lady Venetia Fuller in particular for kindly making the Farm Shop available to ATAG for the meeting.

He then introduced Alan Lee, explaining that together they would co-chair the meeting on behalf of ATAGs Organising Committee.

The Panel

Kenneth introduced the members of the Panel, thanking them in advance for giving up their time to come and answer questions from attendees on traffic matters in Atworth. Kenneth passed on apologies from Jonathan Seed, County Councillor and Chair of MAB, who was unable to attend owing to illness.

The Panel were:

Councillor Alan BagnallAtworth Parish Council
Councillor Mark Griffiths .. Wiltshire County Councillor, Vicechair Community Area
..... Transport Group
Mr Duncan Hames MP for the Chippenham Constituency
Insp. Lisette Harvey Sector Commander, Melksham, Trowbridge and
.....Bradford on Avon
Mr Mitch Roberts Atworth Parish Clerk
Mr Mark Stansby Senior Traffic Management Engineer, Wiltshire Council

D.2 The Reopening of the Park Lane Quarry

Kenneth explained that this item had been placed on the agenda as there had been discussion in the village and communication received by ATAG concerning articles in the press on this subject.

Kenneth recounted a telephone conversation with Ham & Doultling Ltd, who will be undertaking the mining. Quarry vehicles will pass out of the quarry eastwards and join the B3353 (Corsham Road). From there they will either turn north through Corsham and join the A4 toward Bath, or they will turn south, then east toward Melksham to join the A350. None of the traffic, according to Ham & Doultling management, will pass through Atworth. If traffic were to pass west from the

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quarry, and join Neston/Atworth Lane passing south toward Atworth, some 80% of the vehicles would turn east onto the A365 thus passing through Atworth.

ATAG are therefore content that if vehicles follow the prescribed route, there will be no traffic impact on Atworth by the reopening of the quarry.

Kenneth then explained that Sir James Fuller had agreed to answer any questions, or to deal with the issue in a separate meeting. There were no questions raised about this issue.

D.3 Discussion on the Five Issues as prioritised by Residents

Before handing over to Alan Lee who would co-chair this part of the meeting, Kenneth reported information regarding a CATG meeting which ATAG had attended on 14th May. At this meeting, village gates for Atworth were discussed and a proportional funding arrangement was proposed involving equal division between the County through MAB, CATG, and APC. The agreement of those parties will be sought in the near future. *[NB.: please see the discussion on page 8, and later in the proceedings.]*

Kenneth also reported that locations for the use of mobile SIDs in Atworth have been identified; SIDs are now awaiting deployment.

At this point, Alan Lee took the Chair so that the meeting could discuss each of the five issues voted for priority action by the Residents' Meeting in February 2012.

D.3.1 Enforcement of Speed Limits

This issue arose at the Inaugural Meeting of ATAG, and was awarded priority at the subsequent Residents' Meeting.

Mark Stansby (Panel) opened this issue, referring to Community Speedwatch (CS). A CS member had reported a speed of 64mph in the 30mph zone.

Alan Bagnall (Panel) reported that CS had nine members, now reduced to only two. Mitch Roberts (Panel) stated that four new volunteers had joined; more are needed. CS has shown that although CS member presence in yellow jackets may slow down traffic, at least 10% is above the 30mph speed limit. The Metrocounter by Shell Court had reported that almost 15% of vehicles exceed 38.5mph.

Barry Dalton (NPT) reported that there had been a few insults to CS teams.

A member of the public asked about speed limit reductions: such changes in the speed limit has to be agreed by the authorities. *[NB.: See further discussion later]*

Mark Griffiths (Panel) reported that many had been recorded by CS and some had been given a leaflet and others had a letter. He also stated that more younger, as well as female, volunteers were needed. The youngest volunteer is 32 years old.

Robert Floyd (APC) stated that he was pleased to have the funding for the village gates.

A member of the public commented that there is a very impressive fixed SID on the A4 to Chippenham and we should have one like it.

A member of the public asked whether Atworth was to have permanent or mobile SIDs. They will be temporary and two are shared with several other parishes.

From the chair, Kenneth Spencer stated that the problem with Community Speedwatch is that it is intermittent, whereas permanent speed indication is

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needed in view of the high volume of traffic - averaged at 7,000 per day with nearly 15% travelling above 38.5mph. A permanent SID is needed.

Mark Griffiths repeated the information that the request for gates would go to MAB, with 33% funding from the three sources, including APC. [**NB.:** *please see para under D.3 above.*] The gates can be nearer to the farm shop entrance.

Bernard Kain stated that drivers must be reminded of the speed limit, and SIDs are more useful for this than gates. Crudwell and Corston have permanent SIDs and permanent SIDs rather than mobile ones are what Atworth needs.

Mitch Roberts (Panel) understood a SID was wanted, but they cannot be purchased.

Alan Bagnall (Panel) stated that Atworth can have what it likes, but it all costs money.

Mark Stansby (Panel) explained that the Policy is not to install unless there is a speed related history of accident or death.

Ruth Griffin (ATAG OC) asked how the policy is determined?

Mark Stansby (Panel) replied that it is not just capital cost but also running costs.

Policy views them as only effective for short periods but more so if moved around.

A member of the public asked for the cost of the village gates. When told £6,000, he felt certain that SIDs would be a better use of the money.

Mark Griffiths (Panel) considered that Village Gates are more effective and better value than SIDs. This produced several comments from the floor in disagreement.

A member of the public reminded us of SIDs operated using solar energy.

A member of the public considered Village Gates to be less effective in a long village where their presence would be forgotten.

Mark Griffiths (Panel) stated that SIDs have the same problem.

From the chair, Kenneth Spencer suggested that roundels on the road would effectively reinforce the message from SIDs.

A member of the public considered that Atworth night traffic was excessive, and that permanent SIDs would be the best method of controlling its speed.

Mitch Roberts (Panel) asked again whether we can purchase a SID.

Mark Stansby and Mark Griffiths (Panel) replied that we could.

William Bird agreed that a SID is a good idea for the village.

A member of the public declared that where there is no punitive enforcement a SID is a very useful way of reminding drivers of their speed.

A member of the public commented that surely we have a serious issue here.

Mark Stansby (Panel) reminded the meeting that there are already road markings and red strips. Rumble strips are a noise nuisance [**Comment:** *So are HGVs! And rumble strips in the location of the 30mph sign are not a noise issue.*] Repeater 30mph signs are not allowed by law and he does not understand how B&NES get away with it.

[**NB.:** *please see comments in section D.3 above. We could answer Mark's point by saying 36,000 driver journeys through Atworth get away with breaking the law!*]

Vote

From the Chair, Alan Lee asked the meeting to vote on the acquisition of a SID by any available means to help enforce traffic speed limits. The meeting voted unanimously in favour of this proposal.

This matter will be formally pursued with the authorities by ATAG on behalf of the village.

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D.3.2 Changes of Speed Limit

This was the first of the two aspects of Speed Limit reduction in question. In order to combat increasing speeds on entry to the village the Inaugural Meeting of ATAG raised the suggestion of a reduction to 50mph from Box Fiveways to the Keeper's Cottage and to 40mph down to a 30mph zone extended to beyond the Farm Shop entrance. This suggestion was supported with priority at the Residents' Meeting.

Ruth Griffin (ATAG OC) asked how we get a change of speed limit.

Mark Stansby (Panel) explained that limits are changed only if there is a serious issue of accident or death. He then explained that the Government requested a survey in 2008/09. Wiltshire have done this and it can be viewed on the Wiltshire website. The result of the survey was that no changes were thought necessary for the A365. He stressed that it had gone to consultation but Atworth Parish Council did not respond.

[NB.: Please read sections C.3 and C.5 above, where we make recommendations to improve matters by making consultations much more inclusive of our community as a whole.]

Ruth Griffin (ATAG OC) there is a serious problem of speed and overtaking on the Wadswick Straight. She suggested that Mark Stansby stand on the road by the lodge.

Mark Stansby (Panel) replied that his department operates according to the national criteria.

Bernard Kain asked for the cost of speed limit posts.

Mark Stansby (Panel) replied that repeater posts cost approximately £200.

From the Chair, Kenneth Spencer remarked that we are supposed to be in the Big Society. Surely then, the community view must be considered, and as speeding and traffic volume are such big issues, the county council must be persuaded.

Duncan Hames (MP for the Chippenham Constituency) remarked that although there had been a consultation for the whole of Wiltshire, he considered that there had been very few speed reductions. He questioned how the decisions were made.

Mark Stansby (Panel) in response outlined the factors that are considered:

- Environment - rural or urban
- Junctions
- Type of traffic - freight or local
- Collision rates.

A member of the public commented that if speed limit were extended there may be difficulty in enforcement.

Ruth Griffin (ATAG OC) pointed out that if the speed limit were reduced from 60mph on the approach to the village, then speeds in the village especially on entrance will reduce.

Effie Gale-Sides (Chair APC) reminded the meeting that in the Atworth Parish Plan there was a majority view that the 30mph zone should be extended to the lodge.

David Thornton commented that there is definitely a need to reduce the speed limit.

Betty Harvey pointed out that the Government expects drivers to obey the Highway Code and should recall drivers every few years to assess continuing competence.

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A member of the public agreed that there is a definite need for the 30mph to be extended towards the farm shop. He reported an incident when he was indicating to turn but was nearly overtaken when attempting to enter into the Farm Shop entrance. To make this entrance safer the speed limit there must be reduced. A member of the public stated that the speeding traffic is a serious problem for wildlife. There should be deer signs. At night it is like a race track, someone will eventually be killed.

Bernard Kain: The 30mph should be extended past the Farm Shop.

Vote

From the Chair, Alan Lee asked the meeting to vote on the question of the speed limit adjustments on the approaches to the village, as discussed. The meeting voted 75% in favour of the proposals.

There was clear support for the extended 30mph zone, and for a 40mph limit on the approach to the village. This will be pursued as an issue with MAB. Support for the reduction of speed along the Wadswick Straight was not as clear, and will be considered further by ATAG.

D.3.3 Footpath to Neston Farm Shop

This matter was proposed at the Inaugural Meeting and voted as a priority at the Residents' Meeting.

Mark Stansby (Panel) began the discussion by pointing out that he would need to investigate, but such a project would cost in the region of £15,000-£20,000.

From the Chair, Kenneth Spencer indicated to the meeting that this was the third most popular request of the twelve which were proposed by attendees at ATAGs meetings.

Alan Bagnall (Panel) felt that parishioners would rather the money was spent on footpaths within the village. He felt that the disabled had great difficulties in some areas. Wiltshire County Council thought the village pavements were adequate, but he disagreed.

Kenneth Spencer clarified the issues stating that narrow pavements were a concern with villagers, but were not voted to be in the top five by the Residents' Meeting.

A member of the public felt that the needs of the village should come before a footpath to the Farm Shop.

A member of the public considered that a survey of footpaths was needed.

Mark Griffiths (Panel) said that we struggle with the budget for footpaths, there being only £13,000 for the whole Melksham area. All the traffic measures have to be prioritised.

Vote

From the Chair, Alan Lee asked the meeting to vote on the question of the provision of a verge footpath to the Farm Shop, as discussed. The meeting voted 75% against the proposal.

This matter will be discussed by ATAG at some point in the future, but will NOT be considered at present for formal pursuit by ATAG with the authorities.

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D.3.4 Changes of Speed Limit Within the Village

This matter was proposed by attendees at the ATAG Inaugural Meeting, and voted as priority at the Residents' Meeting.

During the discussion, it became clear that the meeting took differing views on the traffic hazard in Bradford Road compared with that on the Bath Road.

Bradford Road Discussion

Bernard Kain stated that parking is a serious problem, but speeding is not a problem because of the congested parking. If you cannot enforce the speed limit, then it invites a disregard of the law.

A member of the public stated that parking is a serious problem especially as drivers park on the pavement.

A member of the public stated that parking outside the school is a real issue and there are safety issues with parking on the narrow pavements.

A member of the public stated that parking on Bradford Road is a real problem. He had raised it with APC, but it hasn't been resolved. Double yellow lines are needed in certain places.

Bath Road Discussion

Rosemary Ward (Atworth Neighbourhood Watch) stated that she was pleased that she doesn't have young children because the A365 is so dangerous.

A member of the public, who was a mother of young children concurred with Rosemary - it is really, really dangerous.

A member of the public stated that lack of enforcement of the speed limit is making the A365 very dangerous, particularly with regard to the zebra crossing.

Alan Bagnall (Panel) stated that the zebra crossing came with the School Travel Plan. The zig-zags have been extended to make it safer. With regard to Bradford Road, APC cannot paint yellow lines.

Vote

From the Chair, Alan Lee asked the meeting to vote on the questions of speed limits in the village, as they affect the School Travel Route along the Bath Road and Bradford Road, as discussed.

The meeting did not support a change of speed limit on Bradford Road as it was currently self-limited by the traffic.

However, it was also clear that safety on the School Travel Route along Bath Road is of great concern to those travelling to the School with children.

This matter will be discussed by ATAG at an early point in the future.

Whilst Bradford Road will NOT be considered at present for formal pursuit by ATAG with the authorities, ATAG will consider how it may pursue the issues of safety along Bath Road by users under the School Travel Plan.

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D.3.5 Dangerous Overtaking

The issue of reckless driving and dangerous overtaking when leaving the village was raised by attendees at the ATAG Inaugural Meeting, and proposals supported as a priority at the subsequent Residents' Meeting. Such reckless driving includes overtaking by the Clock Tower 'Bus Stop, where visibility is hindered by the brow of the hill, and travelling westwards up Bath Road past the Farm Shop.

From the Chair, Kenneth reminded the meeting that the A365 through Atworth carried approximately 7,000 vehicles per day, as averaged by the Department for Transport. 250-350 of these were heavy goods vehicles. According to the Metrocounter, almost 15% of all vehicles travelled at 38.5mph or above.

A member of the public observed that if there were, as stated 7,000 vehicles, 15% speeding above 38mph, then there were some 36,000 significant speeding violations a year. He asked for comments from the police representative. Inspector Lisette Harvey (Panel) agreed that the community spirit is welling up, and we do take the figures onboard. However, resources can only be deployed where warranted. There was certainly a need to educate drivers.

[**NB.**: Please read section C.4 above, where we comment on the tolerance of such a large number of traffic violations.]

Duncan Hames (MP) observed that traffic speed as represented by percentages does not take into account the volume of traffic. Thus, on a busy road the percentage over 38mph is a much greater number of vehicles than on a less busy road. And so a less busy road could manage to have measures such as SIDs put in place, when the number of speeding vehicles is far fewer than on the busier road. Communities on busy roads are experiencing increasing levels of speeding. Mark Stansby (Panel) stated that Wiltshire is not the enforcement authority. Lack of funds mean that we no longer have the Speed Camera Enforcement Van. From the Chair, Kenneth Spencer supported Duncan Hames' view that the evaluation of speeding by percentage for a SID puts busy roads such as the A365 at a disadvantage.

Mark Griffiths (Panel) agreed that this was a very good point.

From the Chair, Alan Lee reminded the meeting that the Residents' Meeting had supported as a priority, the installation of Double White Lines (DWLs) around the Clock Tower 'Bus Stop, and up the hill past the Farm Shop.

Venetia Fuller reinforced the view that this was a problem as traffic travels at speed out of Atworth. She has even offered to pay for the double white lines, and so the cost surely cannot be claimed to be an issue.

Mark Stansby (Panel) replied that as there had been no fatalities, no action can be taken. DWLs are only used where visibility is restricted, and that is not the case here. It was pointed out that there is the brow of the hill. Mark then said that a 'Hidden Dip' sign could be considered.

He claimed that the route has to be treated as a whole, therefore it would have to apply to the whole of the A365. He stated that Wiltshire will only consider it if there is a proven history of incidents but none were recorded on the County database. It was pointed out that residents have seen accidents which have happened, but unfortunately the county seemed not to know of them.

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[NB.: Please read section C.3(2) above. This exchange demonstrates what disappoints ATAG regarding making progress with these matters. It seems that the County Council and its departments are much too willing to hide behind its policy decisions, when residents require a flexible and supportive approach which help resolve community problems and issues.]

Betty Harvey observed that it is an extremely dangerous turn into the Farm Shop. Colin Goodhind (Melksham Community Area Partnership) observed that at least a "Hidden Dip" road sign should be considered.

Mavis King recounted her experience of a very dangerous "near miss". Someone overtook her at high speed when she was indicating to turn right into the Farm Shop entrance.

Bernard Kain reminded the meeting that there will be an additional traffic load on the A365 when the B&NES restrictions, which will disallow HGVs travelling along the A4 to the A36 over Cleveland Bridge and *vice-versa*, come into force. To protect ourselves from this possible serious hazard, we should indeed have double white lines installed.

Mark Stansby (Panel) replied that he will look into the situation regarding the turn into the Farm Shop. Maybe the Fullers could erect a tourist sign to warn of the presence of the Farm Shop turning.

A member of the public mentioned that it was perfectly legal to cross double white lines to pass a stationary vehicle, as at the 'Bus Stop.

From the Chair, it was stated that the same applied up the hill- the objective was the reminder of the hazard and improvement of driver behaviour.

A member of the public stated that the straight road suggested speed to some motorists; could a bollard or similar be used to deter overtaking.

Vote

From the Chair, Alan Lee asked the meeting to vote on the application of Double White Lines to the area around the Clock Tower 'Bus Stop and up the hill out of the village past the Farm Shop. The meeting voted virtually unanimously in favour of this proposal.

This matter will be formally pursued with the authorities by ATAG on behalf of the village and raised as an issue with MAB.

ATAG will also take up Mark Stansby's offer of a site meeting to look seriously at the options.

D.4 Closure of the Meeting

Kenneth Spencer thanked all residents for attending and for participating so fully in the discussion. He also thanked Sir James & Lady Venetia once again for their kind hospitality.

ATAG would be pursuing the items for which there was clear support from the meeting with the Melksham Area Board and with Atworth Parish Council, whose support is important.

Finally: the meeting closed at 9:15pm.

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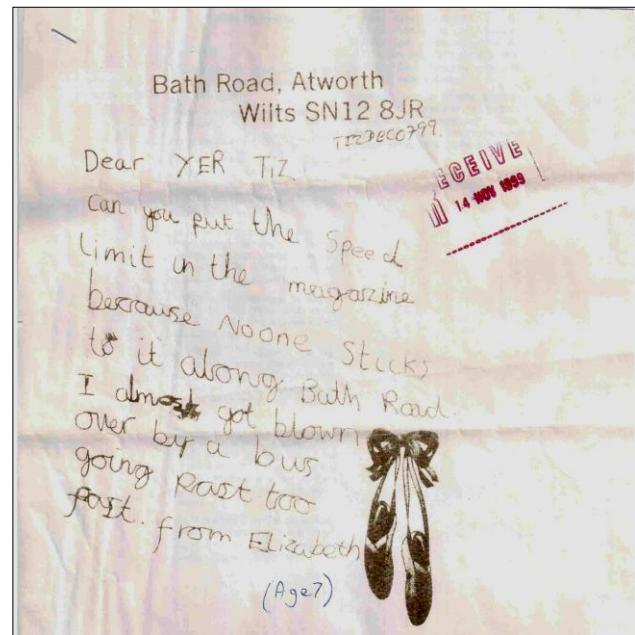
Website: <http://atag.99k.org>

E. ATAG: INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

The Atworth Traffic Action Group arose from discussions around the village that the quality of life was being adversely affected by the increasing effects of the traffic volumes along the A365 and elsewhere in the village.

These discussions were prompted by several considerations: the Editor of the Atworth Village magazine had been given a letter from a girl named Elizabeth, aged 7, who had made a plea in 1999 for improvements in traffic conditions along the Bath Road, which was on her route to school.

Almost all residents who lived on or near the Bath Road felt that the volume of traffic, the number of HGVs, the speed, the fumes and particulates, rain spray and vibration all affected the quality of life unacceptably, and few actions seemed to be taken by the authorities to limit it.



In the second half of 2011, in discussion with Mavis King, it was agreed that a small number of residents would get together to see whether anything might be done to raise the profile of this problem in Atworth. A meeting was arranged in November 2011 in the skittle alley of the White Hart pub, and more than sixteen residents attended, whilst six sent apologies. At this meeting, the name ATAG, and the following statement of Objectives was adopted unanimously:

"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."

At the Inaugural Meeting all attendees were invited to state, and speak to, traffic issues which had affected them directly as residents. These issues were distilled to twelve. A small number of attendees volunteered to form an Organising Committee. ATAG then organised a Residents' Meeting in February 2012 when more than 35 residents attended, and participated in a lively discussion about the twelve issues. Each attendee then completed a questionnaire to prioritise the twelve issues, and thus to determine the first five issues on which ATAG would pursue resolution.

ATAG is determined to work towards changing the attitude and response of authorities to the traffic issues and affects in Atworth so that its quality of life can be improved.

Thankyou for reading the report - we hope that you will continue to support us.