

## West of England Partnership Joint Transport Executive Committee Meeting (4th March 2011)

### Item 8: Highways Agency Memorandum of Understanding - Claverton A36 Speed Limit

#### Statement by Cllr David Batho (Chairman - Claverton Parish Council)

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

My name is David Batho. As Chairman of Claverton Parish Council - the stakeholder referred to in the "HA Memorandum of Understanding" paper - I would like to make the following statement regarding our long standing request for a speed restriction on the A36 through Claverton Village, where the national speed limit of 60mph currently applies.

Firstly, I would like to thank Cllr Charles Gerrish for bringing our campaign to the attention of the JTEC last year and also Peter Dawson, B&NES Group Manager Planning Policy & Transport, for his support.

I would also like to thank the HA for offering to install two temporary Vehicle Activated Warning Signs at Claverton. However, contrary to what is stated in the Memorandum of Understanding paper, only one sign has been installed. This is only activated when vehicle speeds exceed 60mph and therefore does not serve to encourage drivers to take care driving through the village!

The Parish Council is deeply concerned that the HA is still not prepared to consider the Claverton scheme as a stand-alone project and that possible implementation in 2012/2013, as part of the A36 Bath to Wilts Border Safety scheme, is still shrouded in huge uncertainty related to emerging priorities and funding caveats.

I do not intend to rehearse all the analyses and arguments why the Claverton scheme should be expedited as a stand-alone project. However, I would like to highlight a number of key issues and put some questions to the HA.

**Firstly**, if a bid for the design of the A36 Bath to Wilts Border Safety scheme, including Claverton, were to be made for the 2011/12 financial year - when does the HA expect that it would be looked at and how could the Parish Council be involved in that process?

**Secondly**, there is no mention in the HA's comments of the Parish Council's offer to part-fund a Claverton stand-alone scheme, bearing in mind that the actual cost of a simple speed limit scheme would be considerably less than the £30-40,000 initially quoted by B&NES (I refer you to Peter Dawson's letter of 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010 which was copied to the HA).

In the context of the emerging Localism Bill, such a proposal is entirely commensurate with its stated objective of helping local communities to achieve their own ambitions.

I would, therefore, like to request that the HA provide a cost estimate for a simple, sign-based, stand-alone scheme and an indication of how a part funding formula might look?

**Thirdly**, in discussions with the HA we have been told that there have been no fatalities and the accident record is not bad enough to justify a speed limit, that the HA have a responsibility to keep traffic moving and that, overall, there is no value for money in implementing such a scheme.

Whilst I fully appreciate the financial constraints resulting from the recent government Comprehensive Spending Review, I remain deeply concerned by the views of the HA, particularly as they actually agreed in 2008 that a Claverton speed limit, albeit 50mph, should be implemented.

Why am I concerned? Well, my background is the oil industry, and having worked both on drilling rigs and in management of major offshore and onshore oilfield developments, I am concerned by the pitfalls of adopting a 'wait and see' policy, i.e. having identified an unsafe situation and then waiting to see if any major incidents occur before committing to fixing the situation.

In addition, you will have heard of the Cullen inquiry into the 1988 Piper Alpha platform disaster in the North Sea. The Cullen report recommended that the responsibility for enforcing safety in the North Sea should be moved from the Department of Energy to the Health & Safety Executive, as having both production and safety overseen by the same agency created a conflict of interest.

There is a parallel here with the HA's responsibility both for keeping traffic moving and for safety and I am concerned that the former is dominating the latter

**The overriding consideration is** - an unsafe situation has been identified years ago and nothing has been done about it. The Parish and wider community, including the ever expanding neighbouring University of Bath which has given its support to our campaign, are left wondering if a speed limit will ever be implemented.

Claverton residents live on both sides of this fast trunk road with its poor sight lines, and many people visit to access the Kennet & Avon Canal and River Avon, particularly in the spring and summer. We have continuing concerns about village residents and other pedestrians crossing the road and vehicle movements at the three A36 junctions, concerns which have only been heightened as the demographics of the village have changed to include many more young children.

**The overriding conclusion is** - this unsafe situation must not be allowed to continue. It is simply unacceptable that there is no traffic speed restriction on the A36 through the Claverton Village community.

I do not want to stand in front of this committee at some point in the future to report a serious accident or fatality on this stretch of road

**I, therefore, invite the HA to provide answers to the questions I have asked and urge them, once again, to expedite the design and implementation of a *stand-alone* speed limit scheme on the A36 through Claverton. There is overwhelming community support for the scheme. The Parish stands ready to play its part.**

Thank you.