

# Minutes of the Ashdown Forest Villages Road Safety Partnership

10.00, 8 October 2008, Ashdown Forest Centre

Present: John Gramolt (Co-opted member & Chairman, Alison Beck (Withyham PC), Bob Beard (East Sussex FRS), Graeme Beattie (ESCC SID Co-ordinator), Mike Collecot (Hartfield PC), Hew Prendergast (Conservators), Arabella Sackville, Chris Tree (ESCC Transport Strategist), Robert Watson (representing Forest Row PC). Minutes were taken by Tracy Buxton.

## Action:

### 1. Apologies received.

Matt Elder (East Sussex FRS) and Roy Galley (Maresfield PC).

### 2. Minutes of last meeting.

It was noted that Mr Galley had attended the last meeting and the minutes were amended. The minutes were adopted.

### 3. Matters Arising.

The Chairman stated that he had not yet made contact or arranged a personal visit to Buxton to put across the Partnership's message.

JG

Graeme Beattie reported that the Road Safety Week that started on 15<sup>th</sup> September at Groombridge School had been a great success. SIDs had been utilised along with cycle training for school children. He went on to say that this was the fourth road safety week in the Partnership's area in the last two years. At a time when local authority spending has been under pressure this has been an important example of ESCC's commitment to the work of the AFVRSP. Alison Beck reported that not as much data as expected had been collected by the SID due to a technical problem. She went on to say that the parishioners' perception of vehicle speed was greater than demonstrated by the data collected by SIDs. The Chairman thanked Alison Beck and the volunteers for their efforts.

Graeme Beattie reported that, after many years of discussion, there was now an agreement to move the speed limits at Corseley Road, Groombridge. Albeit, that the extension to this speed limit has been placed on the ESCC "Priority List", he was unable to predict when it was likely to happen. He went on to report some other changes to other local speed limits (based on electoral divisions rather than parish boundaries): Forest Row at Hartfield Road – to 30 mph; Forest Row at Priors Road – to 30 mph; and on the A264 to the East/West Sussex county boundary – to 50 mph.

Graeme Beattie circulated speed report data collected from three road loop sites around the Forest (see attached data summary). This report, based on 85<sup>th</sup> percentile, gathered from the recent (June 2008) placement of road loops, compared the results with data gathered from the same locations in 2006.

The exciting conclusion from the evidence is that there has been an 'average' reduction in road traffic speed of 10%. (Note: the data recorded by loops meet the road safety industry standards. They therefore carry very high credibility with the emergency services and government departments. The important educational role of the SIDs is complimentary to the loop data.)

However, detailed examination of the supporting data shows that there are still a number of drivers who continue to exceed the 40 mph limit by significant amounts. Speeds of 70 mph have been recorded. The data intelligence of the times of day and regular location of the excess speed events will be forwarded to the local police with the hope that enforcement pressure can be increased by the Police.

Hew Prendergast commented that the general reduction in road traffic speed owed much to the work of the Partnership and the sustained contribution of local volunteers.

Bob Beard reported on the last road safety event. 34% of drivers were stopped for speeding. 64% of drivers and/or passengers who were stopped for not wearing a seatbelt. He went on to describe the nationwide Safe Drive, Stay Alive campaign targeted at young drivers and invited members of the Partnership to attend on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December at Uckfield Community College. He went on to describe the Family Safety event taking place on 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> October where the whole brigade was involved along with mums and schools; the Designated Driver Campaign aimed at all drivers in the run-up to Christmas taking place across the county on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> November and Friday 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December from 21.00 to 01.00, and the nationwide Drink Drive campaign. He described the 2008-2011 national plans to reduce road deaths and how targets were being set centrally. It was agreed that better communication between ESFRS and the Partnership was very desirable in order to spread initiatives across the year.

Robert Watson suggested that as things were now moving in a positive direction it was time for a press release and that the parishes and the public should be informed. It was agreed that, as there was positive news, Hew Prendergast should draft a letter to the Parishes thanking them for their assistance and draft a press release for the local media.

**It was agreed that Hew Prendergast would draft a short press release that would be passed around the Partnership and via ESCC press office, with a short deadline, for comments prior to release.** HP

**It was agreed that Hew Prendergast would prepare a letter of thanks to all the SID volunteers and the participating parishes.** HP

Graeme Beattie stated that as a result of the availability of improved technology, ESCC were now moving away from speed detection loops in favour of speed detection radar (SDR). There was a short discussion regarding the high number of excessive speeds recorded at Gorsey Down and Pylons. Chris Tree reported that there would be a comparative study made with the New Forest where speeds are generally lower than on the Ashdown Forest. He went on to say signage and 'gateway features' were also different on the New Forest. Hew Prendergast commented that the essential difference between the New Forest and the Ashdown Forest was that there is a long history of livestock roaming and having right of way on the New Forest and that drivers there have a higher level of awareness. He went on to say that, by contrast, commoners on Ashdown Forest had the right to graze but continuity of free roaming animals had been lost for some years (1980s, 1990s) owing to animal owners' concerns for safety on the roads. As a result driver awareness of animals is perhaps much reduced compared with the New Forest.

There followed a short discussion regarding 'gateway markers' such as post-and-rail fences, rumble strips and red tarmac. The Chairman asked Chris Tree to come back to the next meeting with some further ideas on this issue.

There was a short discussion regarding the speed commitment campaign and it was noted that 539 drivers had signed up. Hew Prendergast commented that 1000+ forms had been sent out to local residents. Bob Beard commented that he was unaware of the number signed up on the SID day but would find out. Graeme Beattie commented that the forms were running low and a re-print was now required.

Hew Prendergast reported that he had contacted Hartfield Parish Council about

an idea to make the Newbridge - Chuck Hatch road being made single track in order to encourage drivers to reduce their speeds. This idea proved not to be agreeable. He went on to say that he was looking for a simple way to encourage reductions in speeds that would give drivers a perception of road narrowness using lines marked on the road surface similar to the solution used at Fairwarp and the green edges used in Forest Row. Chris Tree commented that these schemes had been introduced but as yet ESCC has no measure of their effectiveness.

**Chris Tree agreed to come back to the next meeting with some further ideas on 'gateway markers'.** CT

**Graeme Beattie agreed to do some background research on using lines on the roads.** GB

Robert Watson commented that the Corex signs reporting deer casualties beside the A22 must be updated. Hew Prendergast stated that the information had been passed to Graeme Lake at ESCC. *Post meeting note – these signs were updated on 8 October 2008.*

Graeme Beattie stated that he was heavily involved with the speed awareness courses and they were currently dealing with 150 people per week, many of whom were from the Nutley area.

#### 4. **Results of SID Week 17 September 2008**

Alison Beck reported that the results from SIDs in Withyham were not yet available. Graeme Beattie stated that he would summarise the data rather than provide it in a raw state. Alison Beck stated that increasing numbers of drivers seemed to be ignoring the SID and that there was disappointment the Police had not been involved. She went on to say that the lack of Police support had reduced enthusiasm for SIDs. The Chairman said that SIDs, although appearing not to have an effect, made a very important contribution to the overall campaign of education. Graeme Beattie said that he believed that SIDs played a positive role in slowing traffic and he expected the data to support that. There was a short discussion regarding the effect of Police involvement during SID campaigns. Graeme Beattie suggested that the SID and loop evidence be presented to the Police, via Steve Grace or Steve Etherington, as it is clear that there are a significant percentage of drivers continuing to exceed the speed limit. Hew Prendergast commented that the Police had been present on the Forest recently, but that the Partnership had not been made aware in advance.

**It was agreed Hew Prendergast, John Gramolt and Graeme Beattie would make contact with the Police, provide them with evidence of speeding, and inform them that the initiative was unable to move forward without the commitment and viable involvement of the Police.** HP, GB, JG

It was agreed that the next SID date would be in the New Year.

Robert Watson commented that he would no longer be attending these meetings, as he was no longer a parish councillor, and that Forest Row PC, would need to have a representative in the future.

#### **Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2009 at 10.00

*The meeting closed at 12.00.*