

## **Minutes of a Meeting of Elkstone Parish Council**

8.00 p.m., Wednesday 16th January 2013, in Elkstone Village Hall

**Present:** Mr. Hobbs (Chair) Mssrs. Collins, Cooch, Luck, Muschamp; Mrs. Eyre (Clerk) also invitees Mssrs. S. and N. Parsons (County & District Councillors) Mr. Watt (CCB)

**Apologies:** Mr. Macaulay Lowe, Area Manager Gloucestershire Highways, (who did not expect to be dealing with 3/190 issues now that a GCC Lead Officer has been appointed)  
Ms. Lawson-Smith, just-appointed Lead Officer, GCC (for whom this was too short notice)

Mr Hobbs opened the Meeting by thanking everyone for coming on such a cold evening, and explained that the Parish Council needed to deal with a few items of business for which a deadline existed, before taking item 5.

**1. Minutes of the previous Meeting** (14<sup>th</sup> November 2012) were accepted and signed.

**2. Matters arising** – there were none.

### **3. Finance**

3.1 To receive RFO's Year to Date report of income and expenditure – received with thanks.

3.2 To approve the precept request for 2013 – 4 as previously discussed:  
This for £3000.00 less £142.00 Council Tax Support from CDC = £2858.00  
proposed: Mr. Muschamp, seconded: Mr. Collins, carried nem. con.

3.3 To renew CPRE membership, annual subscription £29.00:  
proposed: Mr. Muschamp, seconded: Mr. Collins, carried nem. con.

### **4. Proposed parish boundary change**

To approve the previously-circulated draft of letter to Cotswold District Council re the proposed parish boundary change (two out of four possible replies having been received, both indicating awareness and support of the proposed change)  
proposed: Mr. Muschamp, seconded: Mr. Cooch, carried nem. con.

### **5. The proposed 'no right turn' trial for traffic from the south at The Air Balloon roundabout:** (items 5 of 06.07.11 and 2 of 21.09.11 refer)

News of this proposed trial broke mid December.

Mr. Luck told the Meeting that he had at last been able to speak with someone from the Highways Agency yesterday. He has been invited to put forward 'well-reasoned arguments' about the problems which are anticipated by Elkstone parishioners, and so would appreciate such contributions from the Meeting.

The trial date is not fixed, and won't be until the criteria for either abandoning the trial, or making the arrangement permanent, have been decided and set. It is still possible that the trial will not take place.

Mr. Luck pointed out that the 1990s dualling of the A 417 was done under a DBFO scheme ('design, build, finance, operate') and it could be hoped that the proper dualling of the Nettleton Bottom to Brockworth 'missing link' might have been done this way too, except that DBFO schemes seem to have dropped out of use.

Mr. Luck sees two separate issues – long-distance traffic (heading for Cheltenham from Swindon and places to the east and south east on the A417, and Gloucester-bound traffic from Oxford via the A 436); and local traffic (from Cirencester and villages off the A 417 heading towards Cheltenham or the North Cotswolds). He invited comments from those who imagined that local

parishes will be seriously inconvenienced by local traffic cutting through local lanes to avoid the extra miles of detour caused by no longer being able to turn right at the Air Balloon. He is working on the assumption that, unless either through modeling (ideally) or (if absolutely necessary) in practice, the proposal can be shown not to shorten travel time from The Highwayman to the top of Crickley Hill, it will have failed completely on that score alone.

Mr. S. Parsons reminded the Meeting that the Highways Agency does not have to throw this scheme open to public consultation, but GCC is insisting that they must consult.

Mr. Parsons read some parts of a letter from Mr. Nigel Riglar, GCC Commissioning Director, regarding the position of GCC on this.

There is some thinking that the whole is an absolute nonsense, and the HA must abandon it should the trial be started and found to be not working.

Apparently, the HA thinks that there are only 800 traffic movements per day through Elkstone! Clerk reminded the Meeting that, before the A 417 was dualled, there had been 300 vehicles per day along the 3/190. By 1998, 2 years after the dual carriageway had been opened, there was an increase of over 40% in Monday to Friday vpd. An increase of 30+ - 40+% in the two years from the previous count was also found in 2000, 2002 and 2004 - a much higher rate of increase than the national average of 4% per year. 2004 was the first time that the vpd figure exceeded 2000.

Mr. S. Parsons hoped that all this proposed trialling, and the concern it is causing, will eventually lead to a proper solution.

Mr. N. Parsons explained that the role of Cotswold District Council is the monitoring of air quality; as it has been found to be below EU minimum acceptable level, CDC has to have a plan to improve AQ. However, the latest WSP study (now available on the CDC website under cabinet documents for December 2012) indicates that the current proposals may not improve the AQ at the Air Balloon; indeed, it may worsen slightly.

Mr. N. Parsons corrected the misunderstanding - the proposed trial is aimed at improving the flow of traffic from the Air Balloon down Crickley Hill, not at improving the AQ there.

It is reported that there are 30,000 traffic movements per day through the Air Balloon roundabout, of which 800 are estimated to be local, so the inconvenience of not being able to turn right is seen as negligible in the bigger picture.

Mr. N. Parsons also hoped that all this will lead to a proper solution, and echoed the already-expressed need, before commencement, to establish the criteria for adjudging a failure.

He advised that anyone who wished to join a pressure group in respect of the Air Balloon and A 417 problems should contact Mr. Mike Cuttell, who is about to launch a group and petition via the Gloucestershire Echo.

M. N. Parsons indicated that the latest report by consultants WSP is available via the CDC website.

For the benefit of newer parishioners, Mr. Hobbs explained that Mr. Cuttell was formerly Chair of Coberley Parish Council (the Air Balloon is within Coberley Parish) and also the Chair of the now-disbanded 'Missing Link Action Group,' which campaigned for the Nettleton Bottom to Brockworth tunnel.

Mr. Watt of the Cotswolds Conservation Board told the Meeting that the Board is keeping a watching brief here. The Board is keen to see a resolution to the congestion through the A 417's 'missing link' by traffic management measures rather than by extensive engineering works, but holds that the Cotswold villages and environment must not be compromised. The Highways Agency has a duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to have regard to the need to conserve and enhance the character and tranquility of the AONB and this applies through the wider AONB, not just over the land affected by the trunk road itself. The Board is very supportive of further consideration being given to traffic calming measures to dissuade rat-running through Elkstone and other villages in the area.

Constructive contributions were taken from the floor:

- Parishioners wishing to leave the village, the hamlet of Cockleford, or any of the houses along the 3/190 by car can only do so by driving into the flow of traffic on the 3/190. At both the Manor Cross and Westerleigh crossroads, the sight lines are not good, and there have been a number of 'near misses' or minor collisions, and it is believed that this will worsen if the no-right-turn trial is implemented.
- It is already difficult to walk along the 3/190 – which is a shared space with no pavements – because of the speed and volume of the traffic, and it is believed that this will worsen.
- The passing traffic presents a considerable hazard to secondary school children from the village getting onto and off the school bus at the Westerleigh crossroads, and it is believed that this will worsen.
  
- There is a growing issue of passing traffic leaving litter, and it is believed that this will worsen.
- In spite of the existence of the Lorry Management Zone, some heavy vehicles use the 3/190, and it is believed that this will worsen. Mr. S. Parsons responded that he believes there should be more enforcement, but Police say they haven't sufficient manpower. This is a difficult area, because there are access issues to the LMZ, also sat.navs which are not up-to-date.
- The effect of vehicles passing each other is to gradually erode the edges of the verges, since the 3/190 is only just of double carriageway width; as a result the edges of the tarmac continue to break up, and patching by Gloucestershire Highways, filling in the tarmac to the new, receding verge edge, does not last because there is no made-up sub-surface under the patching. This is particularly the case on Bubb's Hill, and it is believed that this will worsen.
- For some parishioners living above Bubb's Hill and wishing to drive to Cheltenham, the descent of the 14% gradient of Bubb's Hill is not to be contemplated, for example, in winter conditions, and a slightly longer route via the A 417 and Air Balloon, followed by a right turn, is undertaken instead. If the no-right-turn is implemented, these parishioners will be denied this safer option, and will have to drive considerably further to avoid Bubb's Hill or a similarly steep descent.
- It was thought that the no-right-turn could add 17 minutes to the journey time of ambulances heading for Cheltenham Hospital A & E. It was pointed out that provision will be included to allow emergency vehicles to make a right turn. However, certain Hospital consultants have to live within a 30 minute drive of the Hospital, and for some a no-right-turn would make this impossible.

Additionally from the floor, there were suggestions that additional traffic-calming measures should be sought and implemented. In reply, it was pointed out that the last review, with Gloucestershire Highways, of what could be done in the way of traffic calming was only 18 months ago, and unfortunately, there is no reason to suppose that the reasons for not being able to install chicanes, pinch-points, or even parked cars, (no street lighting, safety and liability issues) would have altered.

A number of parishioners expressed concern that traffic surveys should be done, both before and during any 'no right turn' trial period. It was suggested that the Parish Council could implement this. In reply, it was pointed out that such surveys would cost far more than the Parish Council's precept. The issue of traffic surveys has already been raised with Mr. Macaulay-Lowe, who has said he is fully convinced of this need, though expects the Highways Agency to fund surveys.

Mr. S. Parsons added, by way of conclusion, that he will chase Mr. Riglar about the Highways Agency evaluations – he feels that the HA must come to local meetings and engage fully with local residents.

Mr. Hobbs thanked everyone for their contributions.

It is noted that firstly, that there was a majority view among parishioners present that the question of traffic calming should be re-visited, and secondly, that pre-trial and during-trial traffic surveys must be carried out.

Mr. Hobbs closed this item by reminding the Meeting that, whether we like it or not, the 3/190 is part of the Queen's Highway over which legitimate users have a right to pass and repass.

**6. AOB** - Mr. S. Parsons told the Meeting that he has a small amount of budget to be spent on roads, and he has allocated some of this to the filling of the potholes and broken tarmac at the bottom of Bubb's Hill, near the Green Dragon.

**7. Date of Next Meeting** - Wednesday 13th February.

There being no other business, the Meeting closed at 9.26 p.m.