

Heavy Vehicles at Roachill, Knowstone

Report of the Local Service Officer (Barnstaple)

Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendations: It is recommended that Members note the report and the results of the consultation exercise which has been held in Knowstone concerning the lorry traffic through Roachill.

1. Summary

The report concerns the issue of the effect of heavy goods vehicles passing through the hamlet of Roachill, Knowstone.

2. Background

At the 15 March 2005 meeting of the North Devon HATOC the Local Service Officer reported on the continued and long standing issues of heavy lorries passing through the hamlet of Roachill, Knowstone. It was resolved "that the Local Service Officer be authorised to take appropriate action in consultation with the Local County Council Member", Minute 18.

Following the Committee resolution there were further discussions and correspondence with those affected. These included residents, parish councils, farmers and land owner representatives, road haulage companies and the police.

On 14 December 2005 a trial was set up at the picnic area at Moortown near Knowstone. This was intended to check whether a possible physical constraint could be installed on either road approach to the hamlet to prevent the largest size lorries using that route. The trial was well attended by residents, farmers, hauliers and their representatives, parish councillors, police and others.

The trial showed that it was possible to install a chicane system to exclude the largest lorries whilst allowing through small vehicles and normal agricultural traffic. However it was apparent that such a restriction would prevent access by the larger type of agricultural contractor's equipment. The event was also an opportunity for the various interests to be discussed and clearly showed the strength of feeling on either side. The trial also highlighted a number of practical difficulties with such a project including the need for extensive signing, problems that might arise if vehicles became stuck and initial and ongoing cost implications.

Residents of Roachill remain concerned about lorry traffic and would prefer lorry movements which avoid the hamlet. Whilst there are alternative routes via the old A361 main road, now the B3227, and the A396 some haulage companies do not consider these to be an adequate alternative to the North Devon Link Road. For lorry drivers wishing to get to the East Anstey area from Tiverton or South Molton the journey distances are very similar. Drivers coming from west or south of the A361 between Tiverton and South Molton would have a considerably longer detour to avoid Roachill.

It has been argued that by banning lorries, road and cattle grid maintenance costs would be reduced. However this is difficult to quantify overall and not a valid reason for restricting access to part of the network, particularly, as in this case, where local farms and businesses will be disadvantaged.

Weight limits have been suggested but are not generally supported by the haulage industry and the police have reservations about their enforceability in such a rural area. Orders which allow access (necessary to permit essential servicing) are very difficult to enforce, as they must permit access for delivery and to businesses. Lorry bans necessarily divert heavy vehicles onto other roads which may be less suitable and are likely to lead to requests for unsustainable extensions of such restrictions elsewhere on the road network.

Signing to advise of the restriction and to direct traffic onto the alternative routes is likely to cost at least £6000 including the necessary Traffic Regulation Order and site signing.

Traffic volumes and speeds have been monitored previously through Roachill and show average speeds to be about 30mph and traffic volumes in the region of 330 vehicles per day. Almost all the traffic is between 7.00am and 8.00pm. Of these the Parish Council have estimated that there is an average of six of the heaviest lorries each day and some days this can be more than double. These are most likely to be servicing businesses or farms in the East Anstey area.

Suggestions have been made that lower speeds and more considerate driving through the hamlet would help mitigate the impact of the traffic.

Whilst a 20mph zone could be introduced, (as there are in a few North Devon villages), it is unlikely that such a measure would significantly reduce the already modest traffic speeds unless significant traffic calming work was implemented. This would need to reduce speeds to below 24mph average to allow such a lower speed limit. This could reinforce the driving careful message which would help limit the adverse impact of traffic in this hamlet where houses are built very close to the roadside. Traffic calming gateways and other work was put in place several years ago following extensive consultation. However physical traffic calming is very difficult to achieve in a rural village situation in a way that is effective in reducing speeds but in keeping with the environment and allows access by larger agricultural machinery. Most schemes are really only suitable for town residential streets. Any scheme would be costly and require ongoing maintenance.

3. Conclusions

This matter has been the subject of extensive consultation. Unfortunately there appears to be no consensus supporting a particular course of action. Any scheme to be effective in restricting lorries would involve significant expenditure and does not assist in delivering Local Transport Plan objectives. The County Council has resolved in the current year's budget not to go ahead with traffic engineering schemes that are not directly linked to the Local Transport Plan. It is therefore recommended that no changes to highway layout are made in Roachill and no weight limits introduced. It may however be possible to introduce some minor changes to the road markings to reinforce the effectiveness of the existing traffic calming feature.

4. Sustainability Considerations

The issues to be considered are fuel use and distances involved on alternative routes, road safety issues, environmental and social issues and the costs and maintenance that would be needed for physical works. It is likely that the status quo would have the least sustainability impact.

5. Reasons for Reaching the Decision

It is considered that taking account of the wide range of views and having examined many options the recommended action is a reasonable response at this time.

6. Alternative Options Considered

The issue of traffic intrusion, volumes, speed and road safety have been considered in detail since before the construction of the North Devon Link Road when concerns were originally raised by Roachill residents. A wide range of options have been carefully considered and a number of actions taken including the traffic calming measures introduced during the 1990s. More recently the alternatives of weight limits, traffic calming and physical restrictions, speed limits and also working with local hauliers and businesses have been considered.

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North Devon District Council Ward: Bishops Nympton

Local Government Act 1972

List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref
Background Paper 1 Correspondence, reports and data on file		N38
North Devon Highways and Traffic Order Committee 15 March 2005 (ED/05/13/LSO)	Mar 15 2005	

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