

## **Tackling Excessive Speeds in Rural Areas Task and Finish Group.**

At the start of the Task and Finish Group's work, Speedwatch Groups, via local councils were emailed and asked to respond to the following questions:

- Whether their campaign had been a success;
- Whether, as a result of their work, they felt speeding had reduced overall; and
- How they felt speed camera policy should be shaped.

The responses can be seen below:

### **Horsmonden Speedwatch**

Over approximately 5 years of doing Speedwatch we have not noticed any decrease in speeds through Horsmonden but would rather say that there has been an increase. Of the 4 main roads through the village, the worst road is Brenchley Road where vehicles are constantly exceeding the speed limit by between 10 and 30mph i.e they are travelling between 40 and 60 mph.( Please note that there is no pavement on a large part of this road within the 30mph zone).The next "worst" road is probably Lamberhurst road where the average speed is around 40mph.

The results of a traffic survey carried in the village about 3 years ago should be available through Horsmonden Parish Council. The survey was carried out over a period of about 2 weeks and results highlighted the level of speeding through the village.

We have had a visit from Kent Highways officer who "noted" the speeds but was only in situ for a short time. He indicated that he would review some of the signs and white lining. Some of this was done but has had no positive effect on speeding. The officer also stated that he would propose to come up with a long term solution to the speeding but to date, as far as we are aware, nothing has transpired regarding this.

Our opinion is that the only permanent way to reduce the speeds in Matfield, Brenchley and Horsmonden would be to have some form of traffic calming measures such as are in place in Lamberhurst and Bells Yew Green. Many small villages in France have calming measures in place and they are very successful.

To summarise

- 1) Unfortunately the Speedwatch campaign has not been a success on a permanent basis.
- 2) As mentioned above the level of speeding has probably increased rather than decreased.
- 3) If Speed cameras are put in place they have to work and be a permanent fixture. If this option goes ahead some liaison with the villagers should then take place before any installation as they are better informed as to the village black spots than any outside agencies.

### **Paddock Wood Speedwatch**

**Success of campaign-** It has been reasonably effective, although more volunteers would be welcome. As the groups do not have any enforcement powers it is really an educational process. It sends out the message that the community does care about traffic speed in a town and makes drivers think about the speeds they are doing. Details of drivers doing over 37 in the 30 zone are kept on the system and if they offend 3 times a letter is delivered to their home address by someone who works for the police to emphasise the risks they are taking and the danger that they pose to the public. If a driver's speed is excessive a letter is sent in the first instance. Operation is also limited by the risk assessments that have to take place to identify a suitable spot to set up and this limits the use to main roads and often precludes some of the side roads where residents are worried about speed.

**Have levels of speed been reduced.** The visibility of the groups has helped although in between times people forget. It has helped to educate people who have been stopped so that they consider their speed more and are more aware of the limits that are in place. In terms of impact of different systems there is an order of effectiveness, least to most: speed matrix advising driver to slow down, speed matrix with actual speed of vehicle, yellow box-camera with road markings.

**Policy on speed cameras-** There is no doubt that the yellow boxes with lines on the road are the most effective deterrent, more so even than police with a speed gun which is not normally possible due to the shortage of officers. This is within the remit of KCC Highways and they seem to have a very high bar that has to be reached to justify pacing cameras. It would be useful if the Speedwatch teams were able to influence Highways to change limits or site matrix or camera on roads where particular problems have been identified.( Paddock Wood is an example of this - Badsell Road where the limit drops from 50 to 30, beside a traffic island that is sited beside a bus stop just where the houses begin. The 50 limit is too high, the drop too sudden and the location of the bus stop and a pedestrian island quite dangerous) If a line of communication could be established it would be helpful.

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### **Bidborough Speedwatch**

#### **The success of our own campaign:**

Bidborough Community Speed Watch Scheme was only established at the beginning of 2016, with the first session being held in February. It is a small team of volunteers holding 1-2 sessions each month. It is too early to form a view.

#### **Whether, as a result of our work, we feel levels of speeding have reduced overall:**

There is no evidence to suggest that levels of speeding have reduced overall as a result of our work. In July, during one relatively short session, 19 drivers were recorded as driving in excess of

35mph in a 30mph zone in the centre of the village - about a third of these were travelling at 40+mph.

#### **How we feel the policy on speed cameras should be shaped:**

Unless you are in a position to hold Speed Watch sessions on a very regular basis, it is unlikely that they will result in reducing speeding levels overall. And, unless a driver is recorded at a 'high end' speed, an advisory letter will only be issued as a result of second and subsequent detections.

The current policy on speed cameras states that where black and white camera signs, but no fixed cameras, are in place - ie a safety camera van may be enforcing along that stretch of road:- The vans operate where at least one person has been killed or seriously injured in a speed-related crashes, over a 5km stretch of road, in the three years prior to installation.

Thankfully, Bidborough does not currently qualify for either a fixed camera or a camera sign under the existing policy, however, in a village like Bidborough a high number of pedestrians have to cross the road in the centre of the village to cross between bus stops (one of which is a school bus stop), and access the village shop, the Community Hall (which includes a nursery), the pub/restaurant, the garage and the Church and Primary School both of which are located in the High Street. The provision of a black and white camera sign to complement the work being undertaken by the Community Speed Watch Scheme would be a huge step forward in helping to educate drivers to observe the village speed limits and we very much support the views of the Hawkhurst Group in terms of using cameras or signs more widely.

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#### **Sissinghurst Speedwatch**

**Success of our own campaigns** - Results of this can surely, be gauged by the results held by the Speedwatch Co-ordinator at Police HQ.

**Reduction in levels of speeding** - We seem to be filling in less sheets when we go out now than when we started three years ago. Is this due to our success or, the volume of traffic through our village? We don't have the answer I'm afraid. The roads are definitely busier, unfortunately.

**Policy on speed cameras** - The results of speeding in areas should show where there is a need for cameras. Also, cameras are there 24/7. The police and Speedwatch volunteers cannot give this level of cover.

Notes: It would help if speed limits on entering villages were clearly seen. Not covered by plants, trees and dirt. Also, CLEAR road markings - speed limits and SLOW markings on the road.

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#### **Speldhurst Speedwatch**

Success of campaigns – In Speldhurst Parish we have thirteen approved sites (there are a number of sites we would like to assess but are deemed too dangerous!) and normally we move around the parish to ensure each village is assessed. Therefore we tend not to revisit a site straight away which

makes it difficult to judge whether a speedwatch session has been successful. Speldhurst Parish Council has purchased a mobile SID which is moved around five sites at present and we have found that has had good results in reducing speed mainly because it is not there permanently and takes drivers by surprise, but the main factor is they are not sure it is a camera.

Overall I would say the impact of speed watch session is limited and in most cases we suspect driver behaviour quickly reverts back to normal.

Obviously we do not want speed cameras everywhere but we do support a wider use. There are two specific places in our Parish where we feel they are justified and we have looked into various methods including the mobile camera, but the criteria are so strict that it was impossible to demonstrate suitable justification.

Ultimately a speed camera is the only deterrent to the habitual speeder and the only way to prevent them from speeding is to hit them in the pocket via points and a possible ban.

The current approach of placing speed cameras only in sites where there is a record of traffic accidents is reactive rather than proactive. We would support a change in approach such that where there are identifiable danger spots suitable for fixed camera use they can be installed before and not after someone is badly injured or killed. Therefore SPC supports Hawkhurst Parish Council's drive for a change to the policy for fixed speed cameras.

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**Capel/Five Oak Green Speedwatch** (Maggie Green, Chair Capel Parish Council & Speedewatch Coordinator)

The Community Speed Watch team in Five Oak Green would fully support any change in policy regarding fixed speed cameras (as would Capel Parish Council too I am sure)

At present we only operate on the B2017 thru Five Oak Green. We are looking at more areas within our Parish of Capel as it covers a large area with many "problem" roads. Colts Hill (A228) for example is too dangerous for us to operate on safely & would benefit a fixed speed camera on its 40mph stretch, likewise Alders Road which bisects it (no speed limit yet but a busy rat run). We have only relatively recently had the speed limit changed from 40 to 30 outside the school which is disgraceful. The village itself has no traffic calming or a crossing. We have 2 fixed SIDs & an advisory "unsuitable for HGVs." The SIDs are largely ignored, we have had some reduction in HGVs & hope completion of the A21 dualling will help, but they still blight the Parish.

Our data to date suggests that our observations of speeding generating letters thru the village puts us as 13th out of 114 active CSW groups & 3rd for high end speeding (50% + over speed limit). We have observed on occasion that EVERY vehicle is +35mph driving in the village & our observations average one a minute i.e. too many to write down!

As an educational tool we are hopeful we are making a difference BUT it should not be left to a small group of volunteers.

The Parish would benefit from fixed cameras even more if the money generated could be used for traffic calming by the Parish Council & then aim for 20mph through the village.