



Northumberland

County Council

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

DATE: 26TH JANUARY 2022

PETITION – COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN TO AMEND THE USE OF MILITARY ROAD B6318 JUNCTION OF A68 TO HEDDON ON THE WALL

Report of: Service Director - Local Services, Paul Jones

Cabinet Member: John Riddle

Purpose of report

To acknowledge receipt of the petition received by Democratic Services regarding a community campaign to amend the use of the B6318 Military Road from its junction with the A68 at Stagshaw Roundabout to Heddon-on-the-Wall.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Petitions Committee note the content of this report, acknowledge receipt of the petition and support the proposed actions.

Link to Corporate Plan

How - "We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone"

Enjoying - "We want you to love where you live"

Connecting - "We want you to have access to the things you need"

Key Issues

1. A petition has been received following a community campaign to improve road safety and restrict HGV usage on the B6318 Military Road from its junction with the A68 at Stagshaw Roundabout to Heddon-on-the-Wall.
2. The petition states:- "We are calling on the community and visitors from the A68 Stagshaw Roundabout to Heddon on the Wall to support our request to improve road safety on the B6318."
3. The petition requests that reduced speed limits are introduced along with improved signage, distinctive road markings, restricted overtaking and for HGV and quarry wagons to be restricted to access only.
4. The petition was signed by a total of 179 signatories.

Background

The Petition

The County Council has received a petition relating to road safety concerns on the B6318 Military Road on the section between the A68 at Stagshaw Roundabout and Heddon-on-the-Wall. The lead petitioners cover note states that:-

“Over the past few years, I have been involved in highlighting the issues of the Military road (B6318) between Heddon on the Wall and the Stagshaw Roundabout with A68. Speaking to other members of the community they have also raised concerns over the past 20 years but no action has been taken.

We therefore enclose a petition signed by every home along the fore-mentioned road, concerned motorists, equestrians, pedestrians and tourists walking Hadrian’s wall. Without exception every citizen has raised three concerns: -

1. Safety of the road within villages and hamlets
2. Vehicles driving at excess speeds
3. Volume of HGV use along a B-road saving 1 minute on a journey vs. the advised signposted and safer route of the A68/A69

The attached petition is proof of the serious and unified nature of the request and we plead our elected leaders and business leaders to take action based on the will of the entire community.

1. Improved road safety
2. Speed camera’s to be installed
3. Change the road to “HGV access only” unless an emergency

Based on the changes requested together we will improve the health of those living along the road, save citizens lives and enforce the already advised HGV route

Petition results

Written petition = 117

Online petition = 62, Northumberland County Council – Petitions (Community campaign to amend the use of Military Road B6318)

Total petition results = 179”.

The written petition itself asked people to identify whether they supported “Access Only to HGV Traffic on Military Road B6318 Yes / No” and “Improved Road Safety Yes / No” together with leaving their comments. See Appendix 1

Further information was provided from the Lead Petitioner setting out concerns at the various lengths along the route and suggested changes. This can be seen at Appendix 2

Accident Data

The Petition stated that there had been “an estimated 16 serious accidents over the last 2-3 years between the roundabout A68/B6318 and Heddon on the Wall”.

The length of the B6318 from the A68 Heddon on the Wall is 15km or 9.3 miles. According to accident data supplied from the North East Regional Road Safety Resource from Police records of injury accidents, there were 17 injury accidents in the period 2019 to 2021, of which 8 involved serious injury. There were 27 total casualties in this period, of which 10 were serious and 17 slight according to Police records (note the higher figure recorded for ‘casualties’ is due to the potential for a single accident to result in injuries being sustained to more than one person, for example if two vehicles are involved both of which have passengers that sustain injuries).

For the 5 year period 2017 to 2021, there were 27 injury accidents of which 12 involved serious injuries (including 1 fatal accident in 2018). There were 41 total casualties in this 5 year period, of which 1 was fatal, 13 were serious and 27 slight according to Police records.

Police records only identify injury accidents and data is not available for any damage only incidents.

Current Situation with Areas of Concern Identified in Petition

Harlow Hill

We are already aware of speeding concerns raised by residents at Harlow Hill. This has been a site identified for Police mobile camera enforcement as a speed concern site for a number of years. The existing 40mph speed limit is regularly enforced by one of Northumbria Police’s mobile camera vans. A scheme to improve signs and road markings was also implemented at Harlow Hill in 2018/19. It appears that traffic is in general conforming with the 40mph limit, though it is acknowledged that the petition is requesting a 30mph limit.

Colleagues in the Road Safety Unit at the police have informed the County Council that each time they receive a complaint for Harlow Hill they increase visits temporarily. However, they have also confirmed that they detect very few offences there and don’t recall an HGV being detected speeding through the village above the limit. They suggest that it is probably more a perception of HGV speed and associated noise at that location.

Halton Shields

Speeding concerns have already been raised by residents living in Halton Shields, a speed survey is planned however this issue has also been passed onto the Road Safety Unit of Northumbria Police. The police in partnership with all Local Authorities in the force area have recently developed a new enforcement strategy, known as Operation Modero which will assist the police with dealing with this type of issue. Halton Shields is already included in the Operation Modero database, and the location will be considered for further investigation and any appropriate action which may be deemed necessary.

It should be noted that the police don’t currently have any designated enforcement sites on any National Speed Limit section of the Military Road in this area.

Robin Hood Inn, Two Hoots Junction and Approach to Heddon on the Wall

Following the receipt of this petition, speed surveys will be arranged at the Robin Hood Inn, at Two Hoots Junction and within the 40mph section on the approach to Heddon-on-the-Wall to assess actual speed of traffic. Speeding concerns have never been previously raised at the Two Hoots Junction, and it is some years since a survey was completed in the vicinity of the Robin Hood Inn.

General speeding

With regards to the requests for reduced speed limits, the County Council currently has no plans for such works on this length of road. The aforementioned speed surveys will provide information on actual vehicle speeds to assess whether there is a speeding problem which needs to be addressed further. Any change in speed limits need to comply with DfT Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits, and in particular length and number of frontages in villages.

Comments about average speed cameras are noted. To date we don't have any of these on the County's road network, although we are currently looking into their feasibility and whether a pilot scheme could be taken forward in the future at an appropriate location somewhere in the County. However, average speed cameras would generally need a consistent speed limit on the road over a considerable distance.

For information, based on previous speed surveys which have been undertaken across the County when issues relating to excessive HGV speeds have been raised, we have found that HGVs are complying with speed limits and that perceptions of HGV speeding have not been confirmed by data. HGVs should only be travelling at a maximum speed of 50mph on this route even when they are travelling on a derestricted speed limit. Obviously, when travelling through locations where a lower speed limit is in force, such as Harlow Hill, this speed limit should be adhered to.

While we sympathize with the concerns raised in the petition, it would not be possible to implement double white lines to prevent overtaking as visibility is adequate. Double white lines are already in place where it has been considered unsafe to carry out such manoeuvres.

HGV Traffic from Quarries

From a Planning perspective, the quarries in the area have planning conditions controlling vehicle movements. These will generally cover the approved access point onto the public highway from the sites that vehicles are required to use, the number of vehicle movements into and out of the site in a given period of time (normally a maximum daily number and an average over a given period of time), and the times of the day that the vehicles are allowed to enter and exit the site.

In some circumstances the planning conditions will control the direction vehicles are permitted to turn when leaving the site (e.g. All vehicles shall turn right upon exiting the site) but that is as far as they go in terms of controlling vehicle routeing. We cannot use planning conditions to control vehicle routeing outside of the site as the conditions can only apply to the red line boundary of the site. In some circumstances, and where a particular issue is identified, a legal agreement may be used to control vehicle routeing beyond the

site boundary but such a legal agreement can only be used where it is needed to make the site acceptable in planning terms. In addition, an operator could have a voluntary agreement to cover vehicle routing but this would not necessarily be controlled by the planning permission for the quarry.

In relation to this petition, there are two quarries that are likely to be the principal contributors to the movements of heavy goods vehicles along this section of the Military Road. These are Barrasford Quarry and Swinburne Quarry, which are located over 8 miles north of Corbridge and are accessed directly from the A68. Vehicles could also be associated with Keepersshield Quarry (located to the north of Humshaugh and accessed from the B6320) and Divethill Quarry (located west of Great Bavington and accessed from the B6342 between the A68 and A696). Each of these quarries have planning conditions as described above and do not have anything to control movements elsewhere on the highway network.

When the Council receive a planning application for a quarry, matters relating to vehicle movements and highways matters are considered and assessed in consultation with NCC in its role as the highway authority. National Highways would be consulted where relevant. The main matters that are considered include whether the proposal includes a safe and suitable access to the public highway, the suitability of the roads for heavy good vehicles and network capacity. It may be difficult to address issues elsewhere on the highway network where these are not directly related to the development and where it can be demonstrated safe and suitable access to the core road network. For example, vehicles from Barrasford have access to the A68 which can be used to get to the A69 and the strategic road network. Also all vehicle movements from the site do not necessarily go in this direction. When looking at proposals for minerals extraction, it must be noted that minerals can only be extracted where they occur which limits where these developments can be located.

The policy in the Northumberland Minerals Local Plan (Policy EP18) would be used to assess the effects of such proposals on the road network and the effects on local communities. This policy will be replaced by policies in the emerging Local Plan if it is found sound following the examination. The most relevant policies are Policy MIN 1 (Environmental criteria for assessing minerals proposals) and Policy TRA 2 (The effects of development on the transport network). The most applicable parts of these policies are provided below:

Policy TRA 2:

1. All developments affecting the transport network will be required to:

a. Provide effective and safe access and egress to the existing transport network;

b. Include appropriate measures to avoid, mitigate and manage any significant impacts on highway capacity, congestion or on highway safety including any contribution to cumulative impacts;

c. Minimise conflict between different modes of transport, including measures for network, traffic and parking management where necessary;

d. Facilitate the safe use of the network, including suitable crossing points, footways and dedicated provision for cyclists and equestrian users where necessary;

e. Suitably accommodate the delivery of goods and supplies, access for maintenance and refuse collection where necessary; and

f. Minimise any adverse impact on communities and the environment, including noise and air quality.

Policy MIN 1:

1. Proposals for mineral extraction will be supported where the applicant can demonstrate that any adverse effects on local communities and the environment are acceptable.

2. In considering applications, appropriate weight will be given to potential effects on:

... g. The capacity and suitability of the transport network, including numbers of movements, site access arrangements, and impacts on non-motorised users – The transport of minerals using rail and water is encouraged and where road transport is proposed applicants will be required to demonstrate that transport by rail or water is not practicable or feasible;

From a Highways perspective, the B6318 is identified as a part of the Resilient Road Network that maintain economic activity and will be prioritised to be kept open in times of severe weather. As such it is expected that this route would be able to take HGV traffic, and as noted in the petition the B6318 is a diversionary route should there be issues with the A69. Given this it would not seem appropriate to restrict HGV use on the B6318 to “for access only”. If such a restriction were to be considered, this would need to be in the form of a 7.5t weight restriction along it’s length. Given the difficulties of HGV vehicles being able to turn around on other roads which join the B6318, this would also mean having to impose weight restrictions on these adjoining roads such as the B6321, C342, B6309 etc. And this would have an impact on the wider network. Any restriction to allow HGV use for access only would be a traffic movement offence which would require enforcement by the police and would be very difficult to enforce.

Therefore, whilst having sympathy with the view that where possible through HGV traffic should use the A68 and A69 rather than the B6318, it is felt more appropriate to try to achieve this through voluntary means and advisory signage. Further consideration could be given to strengthening existing advisory HGV signage and further dialogue could be held with main haulage users in the area.

Proposed actions

In light of the numerous concerns raised it is proposed the following actions would be taken.

A) Further speed surveys will be undertaken at the locations highlighted to identify traffic speeds.

B) Further investigation will be carried out regarding the causes of the injury accidents along this route over the last five years to better understand and evaluate any potential patterns in contributory factors.

C) Consideration will be given to any potential signage and road marking improvements which may assist in alleviating the road safety concerns raised depending on the outcome of the investigations outlined in A) and B) above.

D) Consideration will also be given to strengthening existing advisory signage for HGVs to try to further encourage use of the A68 / A69 for through HGV traffic. Further dialogue will be held with main haulage users in the area to encourage use of the A68 / A69 route.

Implications

Policy	The response to the issues raised in this petition is consistent with LTP Policies.
Finance and value for money	Any improved signage / road markings to be considered for funding through the Rural Roads Safety Improvements allocation in the 2022/23 Local Transport Plan.
Legal	None
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None
Risk Assessment	n/a
Crime Disorder &	Driving at excessive speeds and also non-compliance with weight restrictions are both offences which are only enforceable by the police.

Customer Consideration	Petition identifies excessive speeds and HGV traffic affecting quality of life of residents along this route
Carbon reduction	n/a
Wards	Ponteland West, Ponteland South with Heddon, Corbridge, Bywell

Background papers:

Written Petition – Appendix 1

Additional Information from Lead Petitioner – Petition Template – Appendix 2

Report sign off

Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Finance Officer	N/A
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
I.T.	N/A
Director	Rob Murfin
Portfolio Holder(s)	John Riddle

Author and Contact Details

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