

# Infrastructure Focus Group Report

## Version history:

1. V1 circulated to Focus Group participants for comment on 5 July
2. V2 with minor amendments and the addition of appendix 1 circulated to Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on 12 July
3. V3 (final version) with changes to the appendix and published on Lympstone Village website

The focus group met on 3rd July 2012 at the Village Hall. Participants volunteered following the original community consultation on 18 April, and publicity in the Lympstone Herald and village website. The group was a diverse one. Members came from different parts of the village, and ranged from well-established residents to relative newcomers.

## Participants:

Deborah Lovell  
Tony Day  
Jackie Michelmore  
Rebecca Abrahams  
Andrea Bower  
Michael Weathrall King  
Clive Wilson  
Nick Moore  
Steve Parks  
Ian Stratford  
Steve Parks  
Tony Garratt (Infrastructure Champion)

The group considered three main issues – transport, the cycle path and the proposed Dinan Way extension.

## 1) Transport

### Railway

The train service is a real asset and we are lucky to have it. It provides a superb service. Various improvements are in the pipeline e.g. line improvements and longer trains. An increase in train frequency beyond half hourly would be dependent on a passing loop at Lympstone, probably situated at the station (concern expressed at the idea it might be situated anywhere else). Avocet Line Rail Users Group is campaigning for ½ hour service on Sundays.

Concern was expressed that the train company was missing revenue since often passengers joining at Lympstone were not charged. A ticket machine should be installed at Lympstone station. It is difficult for passengers connecting at Exeter for Lympstone to buy a ticket before boarding without missing a connection. Stiff penalties for this were unreasonable.

No threats perceived if a new company gets the franchise (when is this due for renewal?)

Are any improvements needed to the station? The lighting has been improved. Some support for additional cycle racks, but the existing ones on the platform are not used. Concern that the shelter is not weatherproof and whether it has sufficient capacity at busy times.

There was a view that the station was nicer in the past, and that other stations provided a better 'advertisement' for their community. One problem was with the lack of water supply at the station.

Concern about excessive friendly 'beeping' from train drivers at people waving from cycle path which disturbed rural tranquillity.

## **Cars**

Inappropriate parking leads to dangerous situations. Lack of driveways means people have to park on the street. Police encourage people to park on pavements.

There is some concern about excessive vehicle speed in the village. In particular commercial vehicles/taxis. Some people don't feel safe - important for sense of community (talking on street corners is part of village life), and the danger to children going to school in particular. However some do not see speeding as a major problem.

There were mixed views about introducing a 20mph speed limit in the village. 'Some people think it is outrageous there is not a 20 mph limit'. Contrary view that it is difficult to exceed 20mph in the village, and that there is insufficient evidence to justify 20mph limit. However 'we should not dismiss the idea of a 20mph limit' at least in some parts of the village e.g. past the school and down Sowden Hill into the village.

The village benefits from 'natural' traffic calming measures e.g. parked cars and narrow roads.

Mixed views about other traffic calming measures e.g. sleeping policeman, chicanes. Could have negative impact on the 'look' of the village. Cars driving over sleeping policemen would shake houses and keep people awake. Chicanes would exacerbate parking difficulties. Need to get a balance between 'our lives' and slowing people down.

We need to identify the speeding 'hot spots'. These may be outside the village centre in other parts of the parish e.g. estate on northern side of village is a 'rat run', speeding at eastern end of Courtlands Lane.

The school is doing what it can to encourage car sharing. More footpath links to the village centre would reduce car use. Encourage car sharing.

Parking is a major problem at the top of the village near the Saddlers Arms. This causes additional traffic congestion as cars get stuck at the junction. Any new development needs to provide parking spaces/new development should provide additional parking for existing residents.

Do we know how many parking spaces there are in the village/ how many cars? A survey would identify the need/problem. Many houses don't use their drives.

The car park is a great asset but some think the charges are too low i.e £30 per year which encourages multiple car use. The car park should be a community asset. The Parish Council should consider running the car park and bringing in a 'green charging policy' e.g. higher charge for multiple car use/bigger engine etc. Why no charge on Sundays?

Could have flexibility e.g. parking for local residents only, but this might add to problems e.g. some spaces underused.

The station car park should be reserved for rail users – currently used more widely.

People should be discouraged from starting the Exe Trail in Lympstone – problem with people parking in lanes because it is free whereas they have to pay at Exmouth.

Parking problems in Gibraltar and Trafalger roads – no provision for visitors etc. Cars parked across driveways. Parking problems in Underhill Crescent.

Would the shop benefit from allocated parking spaces, especially now people can't use the pub spaces?

### **Buses**

Would more buses through the village take trade away from the railway? Improved bus service would be good for some people (e.g. elderly). In the past some 57 buses diverted via the estate and Woodbury on the way to Exeter. This provided a faster link than the 56 and community would benefit if this service was reinstated. Bus fares should be reduced, especially for children.

Village could have a community mini-bus.

## **2) Cycle Path**

As at the initial consultation this provoked strong, conflicting opinions.

Cycle path on river is fantastic and brings great environmental benefits. It's great for businesses (although this was questioned – what's the evidence?) and families and attracts holidaymakers to the area. It links well with the train. Some people have moved to the village because of the cycle path.

The difficulty comes in the transition between the path and the route through the centre of the village. Different types of users cause different problems. Commuters and speed cyclists go too fast through the village. Leisure users/families spread out and take up too much road space. Also pedestrians. The main problem was the danger caused by cyclists speed. 'It's a death waiting to happen'. They need to slow down – children are particularly at risk.

Suggestions for slowing cyclists down included sleeping policemen at the entry points to the village, tables and chairs outside café and pubs in the road, stop sign at bottom of station hill (owned by railway). We need a physical barrier

The other main problem was perceived to be the impact on community life, and the attitude of some cyclists. 'Cyclists challenge the rules of the road, no requirement to have a bell'. 'Motorist made to feel they shouldn't be there'. Lessens sense of belonging, enjoyment of village. Difficulty where front doors open on to street. People get verbal abuse.

A strong view was expressed that the routing of the cycle track through the village was a mistake. It should bypass the village e.g. by being diverted along the railway line. But is there any money for this?. Some felt the possibility should at least be explored – there is a 'need to at least ask the question'.

'Cycle path' is a misnomer – it should be called a 'recreational trail'. There was support for plans to arrange 'group travel' for children along cycle track to school in Lymstone.

Police are patrolling the cycle track giving out leaflets explaining it is a shared space. Will be interesting to see whether this has an effect.

How do other communities deal with the problem – e.g. Exton? What will happen as cycle traffic increases?

### **3) Dinan way extension**

EDDC say that this link between the Dinan Way and the A376 is necessary. This may be one of the 'constraints' we have to work within in writing the Neighbourhood Plan. EDDC preferred route is parallel to and just to the north of Summer Lane to a roundabout to join the A376 north of Courtlands Lane.

No-one expressed any enthusiasm for the construction of this road, and there were many concerns – environmental impact, threat of housing development along the route, the route encouraging a short cut into the village via Courtlands Lane.

Questioned whether Summer Lane couldn't be widened instead.

Also questions about the need for the link, and whether it would improve traffic flow. Traffic might simply back up to the Saddlers Arms.

In reality the route may never be built due to cost. Danger that it is only affordable if accompanied by housing development.

Neighbourhood Plan could identify our preferred route and stipulation that no development along the line of the road. 'We have more control if it is in our parish'. 'If the Dinan Way extension happens this should not facilitate new housing alongside it. We should seek to mitigate as much as possible'.

Discussion on this important issue had to be cut short because of time restrictions.

#### **4) Other issues**

Lack of time precluded discussion on other important issues such as broadband, power cables etc. People encouraged to send in individual comments about these issues.

#### **Appendix**

A written contribution was received from Jackie Michelmore after the Focus Group regarding issues with the cycle route through the village and how the impact might be alleviated. She also drew the Steering Group's attention to a survey about this issue conducted earlier in the year.

**Mark Robertson, Facilitator, 30 July 2012.**