

Speeding and Speed Watch – Buxted since 2018 to 2021

Speed Survey Buxted 2018 - the last monitoring was in 2018. I have attached the results received from ESCC basically showing that there isn't any significant speeding recorded. After receiving this report, it was reported back to the April 2018 PC meeting the minutes of which are as follows:

April 2018: *Speed/Pedestrian Surveys, Buxted High Street: Following an agreement to fund two speed and one pedestrian survey at a previous parish council meeting, the chairman advises that these survey's have now been carried out by ESCC Highways and data has been received and circulated to members. Whilst the speed of vehicles at the mini roundabout is within legal limits, the car speeds recorded outside The Moorings were mainly between 30-40 mph and over the legal speed limit for this location. Most pedestrians were found to be crossing at and over the mini roundabout. Two councillors have made a more detailed study of this data. Highways have been asked to comment on the findings. The data has now been passed to the Community section of Highways who will be able to advise it warrants further actions either outside The Moorings, or at the mini roundabout. If the response is negative, Buxted Parish Council could consider asking permission to put up a relevant 'alert speeding' sign at the Mooring location. On the day of the meeting ESCC advised that we have now paid for the data to be collected, but to ascertain if we can do anything with this data, we now need to pay for a further feasibility study.*

Cllr. Wells commented that looking from a resident's point of view, we have spent money to ascertain information we already know – and we are now being advised we need to spend a further £500. We have promised residents that we would pursue this to the best of our ability and therefore this is what we must do, but this process has been unclear from the start. Cllr. Hoggan commented that we don't really know what information we are getting for the money. We need to make the process less opaque. Cllr. Galley suggested that he try and clarify the situation prior to the parish council agree into a feasibility study. The parish council therefore resolved that Cllr. Galley speak to Highways and the parish council agree in principle to go ahead with the feasibility study.

This matter was reported back to the PC in June 2018 reporting:

June 2018 - Top End of Buxted High Street (Outside The Moorings)

With regards the top end of Buxted High Street where the speed survey recorded that everyone passing the sensor was over the speed limit, a Senior Highways Officer advised that he had discussed this matter with Sussex Police and commented as follows:

"Further to our recent email correspondence, I can advise you that I have now had the opportunity to discuss the speed data with Sussex Police.

In summary, the data indicates that the 30mph speed limit is generally well adhered to, given that it is a main east – west 'A' class road. The westbound figures, for traffic heading towards the village where the level of frontage development becomes more apparent, are good with mean speeds of around 31mph whilst the eastbound figures, for traffic leaving the village centre and heading out through the slightly less developed part, are a little higher with mean speeds around 33mph.

There is also a relatively low percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limit by a significant amount, given the volumes of traffic using the road, and the Police would prioritise their resources on roads with a higher level of offending and a more significant crash record. For information, there has only been one slight personal injury crash in the entire length of the 30mph speed limit for the latest available three-year period.

Although this is not a priority site for the Road Safety Team, you may wish to consider applying for a Feasibility Study through East Sussex Highways to consider what options might be available to further enhance the existing 30mph speed limit. I would suggest that the measures that could be used would be limited as it is an 'A' class road and there are already in position a number of 30mph roundels and red surfacing on the carriageway to reinforce the upright 30 signing."

Members therefore suggested that the clerks investigate the option of obtaining a SID which can be located in various approved locations in the parish. Hadlow Down are looking at the same scheme so the clerk will liaise. Update in July.

October 2019 - PC meeting referred to Ian Irvines Speedwatch results and response from ESCC referring to changes to the road/speed signs to assist with the reduction of traffic:

Before any discussion the chairman wished to thank the Speed Watch volunteers for all their hard work and hoped that more volunteers would come forward.

As mentioned above, prior to the meeting the clerk circulated a report from the Buxted Speed Watch team which provided activity for the last nine months. It also requested parish council support on the following two proposals:

- 1. Installation of average speed monitoring devices in Buxted at either end of the 30mph zone, or*
- 2. Installation of artificial 'chicanes' at strategic points along the High Street (as per the ones outside the school in Maresfield)*

A response had been received that morning which established that neither proposal would be supportable by ESCC. The response was as follows:

"With regards to point number 1, the use of safety cameras (commonly referred to as Speed Cameras) within East Sussex is managed by the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP). There is strict government guidance on the use of speed cameras which has been adopted by the SSRP. This guidance states that they should only be considered at sites which have a significant injury crash record where excessive speed is a contributory factor. This helps to ensure that cameras are only used at sites to improve safety and are not seen as a means to raise additional revenue.

I can confirm that crash data supplied by Sussex Police shows that there has only been one crash resulting in slight personal injury recorded in the latest available three-year period within the village of Buxted. Excessive speed was not identified as a contributory factor and the use of a camera at this location could therefore not be justified.

With regards to point number 2, traffic calming on an A class road is never easy as they are the major roads within the county for traffic to use and the implementation of physical features can be problematic. Previous measures introduced within Buxted in response to speeding concerns have only been with the use of signs and lines and not chicanes or any other type of vertical/horizontal feature.

You will appreciate that this length of road was not identified within our Speed Management Programme for any attention and with the crash record mentioned above, it is not a priority for the County Council. If you wish to

explore what might be possible, I would suggest the use of the Feasibility Study and Community Match process with East Sussex Highways and I am aware that you are fully understanding of how to apply.”

Given the above information and following a discussion it was agreed:

- *The clerk would re-look at the costs and legislation regarding a mobile speed camera.*
- *We will also investigate the proposal of changing the existing speed signs to show drivers how fast they are travelling.*
- *Ask Police to change the wording of the Speed Watch letters to be more robust.*
- *Parking on zig-zig lines outside of the village shop. Photographs should be taken of offending vehicles and reported to Operation Crackdown. <https://reports.operationcrackdown.org/asdprs/>*
- *Ask Police for a comment on why up to 5 letters are being sent out to a repeat offender and not a visit from the Police.*

Minutes of November 2019 Meeting stated:

Road Safety: Feedback following Speed Watch suggestions and consideration of criteria to install and purchase a Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) – Following the previous meeting the clerk clarified with Highways the required criteria for the provision of a VAS which appears to be quite convoluted. The clerk then met with the clerk to Maresfield Parish Council to establish a timeline and estimated costs of providing a VAS. The priority would be to obtain two licences per location from Highways costing £57.20 and £380 per licence per site (or 10% of total costs if over £3,000). These licences would have to be submitted to Highways with the following information:

- Method statement for fixing and installation of devices
- Risk Assessment Report/Wind loading report
- Details, dimensions and illustration of the devices
- Details regarding length of time device is to be located
- Copy of public liability cover of £10 million

Once a licence(s) has been provided by Highways, we would then need to establish what, if any services are under each site. This would mean contacting gas, electricity, BT, Virgin Media, and water authorities. The company that installs the ground works for removable poles (Ground Screw) will require this information. Once this has been done, removable poles can be installed on each site and SWARCO would then be able to install the VAS signs. Although the clerk does not have a cost for the installation of the poles, the VAS sign is £2,700.

Members discussed the pro's and cons of the devices but there was real concern that given that they are not permanent, there is no concrete evidence that the speeding of traffic is slowed down.

It was therefore agreed to wait and monitor the effectiveness the impact that the VAS signs have in Maresfield over the forthcoming months prior to a decision on if they are appropriate for Buxted. The clerk should also have a discussion with speed watch volunteers as to where the signs should be situated should the PC wish to move forward with the project. Clerk to also gain overall costs from Maresfield parish council.

April 2021 PC meeting in Cllr Galley's update it was minuted:

With regards speeding, the parish council has investigated this on many occasions. We do have flashing 30mph signs and the white lines were changed from the centre to the edges of the roads to give the appearance of a

narrower road. Furthermore ESCC/Police do not support any further engineering works along the road. It was therefore agreed that the parish council are unable to pursue this matter any further.

In October 2021, the parish council reported the following in regards to concerns at speeding vehicles on the A272 at the end of Howbourne Lane:

Howbourne Lane – safety/speeding/visibility concerns as the entrance to Howbourne Lane. Follow up since previous meeting

Following the September meeting, the clerk contacted ESCC Highways to ascertain costs for a speed survey in this location. What was received was the results of a speed survey undertaken in spring 2020 not 15m from the proposed location. This showed that although there was some speeding, the mean average for most vehicles was between 40mph and 50mph (this section of road is a 40mph). This information was passed to the local resident who had attended the meeting. Although she appreciated that a speed survey had been carried out, most probably in association with possible development in the area, it was highlighted that this survey was carried out during lockdown when there would have been significantly less cars on the road and it does not represent everyday traffic and speeds. It was therefore suggested that a new speed survey should still be undertaken.

The timing of this survey was discussed with some members commenting that the average speed would have been higher in lockdown. If it had been a traffic survey, then traffic numbers would have been low, but speeding would not be affected or could have been higher.

Claudine commented that Wadhurst have recently purchased black cat speed monitoring equipment (the same equipment used by ESCC). This allows parish councils to carry out its own speed monitoring.

It was suggested that the clerk contact Highways and request the foliage be cut back to improve the visibility. If the local resident gathers enough support and that group wishes to take the matter forward, the parish council would support a speed survey whether it be via ESCC or Black Cat monitoring equipment, which could be borrowed from Wadhurst.

From this point onwards, the parish council pursued the use or purchase of a Black Cat but there was no information provided by the Wadhurst volunteer regarding how the information is downloaded, or if ESCC would then consider the findings or if they would only use their own speed survey results.

BUXTED SPEEDWATCH

Buxted Speedwatch – restarted in December 2018 with the PC purchasing various equipment. Then in October 2019 Ian Irvine attended the parish council meeting and stated the following:

The Speed Watch co-ordinator spoke and advised that he had intended to present a report to ask the council to start a campaign to install speed cameras or chicanes in Buxted High Street. However, in the light of information provided by ESCC today (see below) cameras or road engineering proposals are not an option. However, he still wished to explain a little more about the current speed watch team and gave the council an overview. The current team started ten months ago with increasing numbers of volunteers, now with 12. In the summer months there has been up to 6 organised sessions per week, however these sessions will reduce during winter months due to daylight and weather conditions. All volunteers would agree that the average speed of vehicles is 38mph in the 30mph limit and an average of 50mph in the 40mph speed limit. Most vehicles therefore are exceeding the limit by approx. 10 mph. Unfortunately, the team do not think that the

speed watch initiative has a significant long-term effect on speeding through the village, even having reported nearly 2500 incidents to police. They record a lot of repeat offenders and some that have had visits from the Police. For some reason the message doesn't seem to be getting across. He then ran through a spreadsheet of data (see attached below) which estimates that there is a lot more speeding traffic through the village than the team can record. As the original proposals are now not deemed possible, the Speed Watch team would ask the parish council to consider asking ESCC to change the existing speed indicating signs to show the speed that the vehicle is travelling rather than just a flashing 30mph sign in addition to further ideas listed below in minute 05/10/19.

The speed watch coordinator clarified that 99.9% of people caught by speed watch will receive a letter from the Police with some receiving visits, depending on how often the offence has taken place.

Following this, the Speedwatch group continued with their monitoring until September 2020 when the following was reported to the parish council meeting:

Speed Watch – Communications between Buxted Speed Watch and Police:

The parish council received communication from the co-ordinator of the Buxted Speed Watch team sadly advising that they would be unlikely to continue monitoring speeds in the village as they do not feel they are receiving the support from the Police. They feel that for the scheme to work they would need in the region of 100 volunteers. They have 10 active volunteers who manage 3 or 4 Speed watch sessions per week on average and will never make enough impression as 95% or more drivers never see them. Speed Watch is only effective if a high proportion of drivers are regularly and consistently monitored.

The other key point is that the 'threat' contained in the police letter is regarded by most offenders as irrelevant; they know that the police do not undertake speed monitoring on the A272.

The Clerk contacted the Speed Watch co-ordinator who replied with many facts and figures but sadly this does not seem to translate back to the teams who still feel that they have been left to monitor speeding with little or no support from the Police. They disagree with the fact and figures provided by Steve O'Connell, and whilst we offered to have a dialogue at this meeting between the two parties, it was felt that nothing much would have been gained from participating in a virtual meeting, at this time.

The chairman has since had a telephone conversation with Nus Ghani MP who reiterated what we have heard so many times before that without a record of serious accidents or fatalities, Buxted will not be a priority for speed monitoring by the Police. It is unlikely that the letter, sent to offenders, will be changed and it is a nationwide letter, not just a local one.

Unfortunately, our Speedwatch team do not think it is worth them carrying on with their efforts. Cllr Galley commented that as a result of Speed Watch teams in place we have seen a reduction in speed in Maresfield, Buxted, Uckfield and surrounding areas. He wondered if their expectations could be too high and felt that it is a shame that the group does not feel it can continue.

Cllr Blandford added that she felt this was a real shame that we would be losing our Speedwatch team and would be unlikely to be able to replace it.

In November 2020 PC meeting a follow-up was minuted:

The parish council has recently received copies of emails between Speed Watch members and the Police which question the validity of the results and effectiveness of Speedwatch. The correspondence remains ongoing and the parish council will continue to be updated with correspondence.

It was commented that Speedwatch is a very worthy activity but such a shame that it does not appear to have the backup of the Police either in support on site or figures. The council are grateful to the tenacity of the local Speedwatch co-ordinators who keep pursuing this matter.

One of the suggestions from a Speedwatch member was to install 'village gates' at either end of Buxted village that provide a visual reminder to slow down as well as marking the edges of the village creating a sense of place and be aesthetically pleasing. The suggested positioning of the gates could be at the Toll Farm triangle to the east of the village and the wide verge leading up to Buxted Primary School to the west of the village. It was agreed to ascertain costs and a design and circulate to all parish council members in addition to gaining the relevant licences from ESCC Highways. It was also suggested that other parishes who have the gates are approached to find out the impact it has on the villages. Signage to be attached to the gates would be discussed later as it was felt important to keep as simple as possible.

However, after the January 2025 SLR meeting, a Highways Road Safety Officer visited the village to look at possible sites for village gates and reported that he did not feel there were any suitable verges on which gates could safely be installed.

In June 2021 the parish council reported on a follow up to the Speedwatch issue:

Speedwatch demise and follow up action by PC – Sadly the Buxted Speedwatch Team have decided to disband. Not through lack of volunteers this time, but unfortunately because they feel completely unsupported by Sussex Police. An extract from a document received from the Buxted co-ordinator of speed watch provides further information as to why the group felt that they could not continue:

"As a result of the failure of the police to establish anything resembling a 'partnership' approach to tackling the "speeding epidemic" (their words) in Sussex, the Buxted Speedwatch Group has ceased to operate. The past two years has seen a series of broken promises by Sussex Safer Roads Partnership, culminating in abysmal failures to establish any of the measures previously promised by Sgt Kara Tombling on 1st March 2021. Group members cannot see any point in continuing to waste their time on Speedwatch.

Councillors may recall a previous report in the Autumn of last year highlighting our concerns about how the Speedwatch scheme was operating and the use of false statistical information to claim success for the scheme. This continues, despite acknowledgement that the claims made for the success of Speedwatch were, to be polite, misleading.

We were invited to a zoom meeting where it was said that PS Kara Tombling was in charge of the police activity in relation to Speedwatch. It appears that PS Tombling has since been redeployed as she does not respond to emails; we were not advised that this was taking place.

On 1st March we were told that "PS Hendy is reviewing the way we publish our data, and that context is provided around them. He is currently developing the next newsletter". This has not happened. PS Hendy has not responded to requests for clarification. Emails to him go unanswered.

PS Tombling specified 5 areas of immediate action on 1st March. It appears that none of these have been achieved.

- 1) Further meeting to be set up in 3 months. – PS Tombling to set date.
- 2) PS Hendy to review statistical information and how this is presented and shared.

- 3) *PS Hendy to include the new Stage 3 roll out in newsletter to groups.*
- 4) *Set up stakeholders meeting – PS Tombling to develop opportunities.*
- 5) *PS Hendy to review a new process to sharing Police activity with CSW groups.*

We were assured by PS Tombling that Buxted would be invited to participate in a stakeholders meeting; we have heard nothing.”

ESALC are due to hold the bi-annual meeting with the Chief Constable of Sussex Police and the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner on 5th July and Parish Councils are asked if we wish to raise any queries of a strategic or unresolved matter. It is therefore agreed that the clerk would submit this issue for further discussion and explanation of why matters and promises were not followed through.

Cllr Galley has sent the document from Speed Watch to the Police and Crime Commissioner who will be visiting Fairwarp in August. He will raise this matter again with Katie Bourne again in person.