

## COUNTY COUNCILLOR UPDATE FOR HUMSHAUGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 10/3/22

**1) The traffic calming scheme at New Houses.** We're still hoping that this will be included in next year's Local Transport Plan construction programme, but I've been told that funding's very tight and it's not guaranteed to get the go-ahead. We should find out in March or April. The traffic speed survey has been repeated and I expect to have the results very soon. The equipment that they used was brand new, so we'll be able to trust the results. If it agrees with the independent survey results and shows a significant speeding problem, it'll be more likely that the traffic calming scheme will get the go-ahead. It's possible that the clearway could be removed in advance of the other traffic calming measures being installed, so if the scheme does get the go ahead that's one of the first questions that I'll be asking. The next question will be whether I can buy an interactive speed sign using my small schemes money. I can't take this any further until we know what the speed limit is going to be, because the type of speed sign apparently depends on the speed limit of the road that it's on.

**2) The footway and bus stop audit.** I was joined by four Humshaugh residents and my colleague Wendy Breach from Active Travel Tynedale on a cold and wet day in early February for a survey of Humshaugh's footways and bus stops. We paid particular attention to how accessible they were for less able-bodied people. One of the team was in an electric wheelchair, and another has a partner who uses a mobility scooter, so their opinion was extremely valuable and hugely appreciated. We measured the width of the footways and found that many of them were far narrower than the recommended widths in the government's Inclusive Mobility guidelines. We also scored the quality of the surface of the footways, looked at how easy or difficult it was to cross side streets, identified places where there should be dropped kerbs but aren't and looked at how accessible the bus stops are. I've since drawn up plans showing this information and I've written a short report to go with them. I'll soon be sending the plans and report to the County Council's Highways Improvement department for their opinion, and I'll let you know what response I get. The parish clerk would be very happy to share the plans and report with anyone who would like to see them.

**3) The traffic calming scheme by the First School.** The County Council did what they call a PV squared survey last year, which was to find out if pedestrian numbers are high enough to warrant a pedestrian crossing. They aren't, which is what we'd been told to expect. Unfortunately, the traffic speed survey that we thought they were doing at the same time seemed to get forgotten about, so I had to ask them again to do it. It's now been done, and I should have the results any day now. I'll get in touch as soon as I have them, and I think we'll then be able to make a final decision on scheme design.

**4) The Storm Arwen review.** A Review Committee consisting of eight County Councillors has been formed, and I'm one of the eight. We've read the responses to the public consultation, so we all have a good understanding of the problems that different communities faced. Invitations have gone out to the companies that we want to interview, and interviews start a week today. I've been doing some research into Northern Powergrid, and there'll be some tough questions coming their way. It seems that they weren't doing as much to replace old poles as the other network operators, despite a very healthy profit margin. It also seems that Ofgem's attempts to restrict their profit margins have been ineffective. I asked if we

could interview Ofgem, but unfortunately the chairman of the review committee wasn't keen to.

**5) Flooding on the U8142.** This is the road that runs from Humshaugh to the B6320, via the war memorial. Herbie drew my attention to flooding in the vicinity of the war memorial after wet weather in early February. I brought it to the attention of Highways Maintenance but haven't heard from them yet. I asked the Lead Local Flood Authority last week whether I should be reporting flooding on roads to them as well as Highways Maintenance, and they said that I should only do that if I don't get a reply from Highways Maintenance. If there's still a drainage problem on the U8142 I'll flag it up to the Lead Local Flood Authority straight away.

**6) EV charger installation.** The County Council have 80 EV chargers ready to be installed across the county, and they're keen to install them. Some parish councils have asked for chargers at village and town halls. Newbrough town hall lost out to the Red Lion next door, but it looks like Simonburn village hall will be getting theirs the week after next. Wall parish council have asked for a charger on the side of the road by the kids' playground. There's also an online tool that members of the public without off-street parking can use to request on-street chargers: [https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/launch/ev\\_charge\\_roi](https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/launch/ev_charge_roi)

**7) The poorly patched area by The Crown Inn.** If you were wondering why the potholes by the Crown Inn have been so roughly patched, it's because the work was done as a form of pre-patching prior to surface dressing the road that runs through the village from Chollerford to the B6320 via the war memorial. They pre-patch the potholes before they surface dress a road, and at junctions they pre-patch a wider area than they plan to surface dress, just to be sure they don't surface dress an unpatched pothole. The rest of Haughton Lane seems to have been quite well patched, and it doesn't seem that it needs to be surface dressed in any hurry. Highways Maintenance are certainly in no hurry to surface dress it. The short section of pre-patched road by The Crown does bother some people though, and I've promised them I'd ask the Parish Council to consider making it one of their Local Transport Plan suggestions in October. You've got plenty of time to chew that over!

**8) The drainage problem at the children's playground.** The Highways Inspector, Michael Rowe, had a look at the culvert which runs under the road from the playground. He says it's clear and that there are no problems with either the inlet or the outlet. While he was there, he noticed that the burn on the playing field is badly silted up and might need to be recut by JCB. He also felt that the drainage pipes under the playground could be blocked, and that it might be a good idea to identify their locations and jet their outflows.

**9) The lights at Barrasford quarry.** I've had three complaints about how bright the lights are, and two of them came from within Humshaugh parish. I've spoken to the quarry manager, who explained that the quarry operates 24/7 when the demand for asphalt is high, and they need bright lights at night to work safely. He also said that when they're not operating at night they leave the lights on as security lights, but that they leave them on at full brightness. He's going to speak to his electrician about turning the lights down when they're not operating and about changing to a warmer colour of light that might bother people less and have less effect on the quality of our dark skies. He's also looking into the possibility of fitting baffles to stop light escaping upwards. If the light disturbs you where you live you can contact Public Protection (email [public.protection@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:public.protection@northumberland.gov.uk) or phone Julia

Bonner on 01670 623831) who will investigate whether it constitutes a “nuisance” level of light pollution.

**10) Emergency government funding** for buses has been extended until October, so we’ve temporarily avoided the cliff edge that we’d been warned about. There’ll be no more bail outs after October though, so we have until then to get bus usage back to pre-pandemic levels or higher. They’re currently at 70%, so we have some work to do. I’ll be pushing the County Council to launch the “Use It or Lose It” campaign that I’ve promised to help them with.

**11)** Alex MacLennan from Forestry England tells me that several Humshaugh residents have already asked him **if the timber lorries could visit Humshaugh at Christmas**. They would enter the village via the road past the war memorial and leave via the roundabout at Chollerford. The road would have to be completely cleared of parked cars for the evening and closed to all traffic for five or ten minutes while the lorries pass through. I’d be happy to pass your decision on to Alex for you.

**12) The Community Speedwatch** scheme is slowly coming to life. I’ve received an email asking me to provide more information and tell them where I want to do it. If you haven’t already signed up now’s a good time! Go to: <https://careers.northumbria.police.uk/citizens-in-policing/> or email [careers@northumbria.pnn.police.uk](mailto:careers@northumbria.pnn.police.uk) to express an interest.

**13)** The County Council launched its **public consultation on the LCWIPs** on Monday. LCWIPs are Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, and there’s one for each of Northumberland’s twelve main towns. Three towns in the Tyne Valley have one – Haltwhistle, Hexham and Prudhoe. LCWIPs are the documents that the council use when they apply for funding for improvements to footways and cycle paths. Here’s the link to the consultation:

<https://haveyoursay.northumberland.gov.uk/transport/local-cycling-walking-infrastructure-plans/>

**14) Finally, would the parish council like me to buy them a bench?** A lady in Allerwash asked Newbrough Parish Council to buy a commemorative bench for the jubilee, but they said no. I’d like to use my Small Schemes money to buy it, but the minimum spend is £2000, which equates to approximately four benches. Warden and Simonburn parish councils have already agreed to me buying them a bench, so I’m just looking for a fourth parish council to say yes and I might be able to put an order in. We’re probably going to be buying the benches from a company called Broxap, and so far everyone seems to want a recycled plastic bench, but Broxap do wooden and metal benches too, so you wouldn’t have to go with recycled plastic. It could have a commemorative plaque on it, but it doesn’t have to.