



Peterstow Parish Council

24th January 2025

John Champion Esq
Police and Crime Commissioner
OPCC
West Mercia Police
Hindlip Hall
Worcester
WR3 8SP

Dear Mr Champion,

Road safety and Police Enforcement at Peterstow on the A49 in Herefordshire

Background

We first wrote to the Chief Constable on 10/01/2023, including a report drawn from our East-facing Speed indicator Device (SID), funded by Peterstow Parish Council (PPC). Our concerns were passed down the chain of command. We received no response from the Chief Constable's office.

Police efforts were then directed to construct a case for not conducting enforcement within the village. PPC was not advised that such a survey had been carried out. We discovered this some months later, by accident.

A copy of PPC's original SID-based report is enclosed. Everyday experience of driving into the village confirms that whatever minor inaccuracies might be attributable to the SID, it painted a very clear picture of the levels to which the existing 40mph was being ignored.

Threat to the Community

It is further the case, that even were the 40mph limit to be enforced and observed, Peterstow would still be unsafe for residents and traffic. PPC has been making parallel representations to Highways during the past 2 years. Highways Officers with responsibility

for Network and Safety have personal concerns about road safety within Peterstow. Were the A49 not a trunk route, the speed limit would be set at 30mph by the Local Authority.

In an earlier letter to Jesse Norman MP, we included the following three paragraphs:

“The residents of Peterstow should be able to live peacefully, without fear of traffic risk and without our Village being divided by the A49. It is entirely reasonable that speed limits be reduced as we have requested; and entirely unacceptable that some Residents need to die on, or by, the road in order to build up statistics to suit Highways’ outdated, and now politically unacceptable, rules.

There is a much wider case for overall review of road safety on Trunk Roads. As you will know, the A49 in Peterstow was never designed for the scale and volume of today’s through-traffic and was a candidate for a by-pass more than 40 years ago.

On the enforcement side, even for the existing limits, it seems fair to say that there is little appetite within the Police for this.”

Outdated rules relating to Road Safety

We know that there is current review of the Highways ‘Green Book’ rules. Jesse Norman has now written to Ministers at PPC’s request, to ask about the progress of this review and expected timelines.

Why we are appealing to The West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner

Any Police response now to our ongoing situation is only at the level of our PCSO.

We have a hardstanding for a Camera Van. We don’t recall it ever being used.

Highways are scheduling tree work to leave the Camera Van Stand clear for use.

We are told that there is no possibility of having a Camera Van to be scheduled within the Village. We are not told why, nor to whom we might have right of appeal.

Peterstow has had a Community Speed Watch operating in the Village in the past. We still have the equipment and have now 5 volunteers for training. DBS check information has been collected. Our PCSO has been unable to advise progress to our Team Leader, Cllr Brian Lampert; or whether it will be possible to reinstate the scheme with less than 7 volunteers.

Resources

We do understand that Police resources, both human and monetary are finite.

Perhaps complaints about speed and road safety become insignificant compared to city knife-crime? However, fears caused by careless and/or dangerous drivers are as real to Communities as those caused by violence.

Without wishing to tempt providence, we have no other policing issue within the Village that we are aware of, other than Road Safety. It is our Key Issue. Vehicles are a potent threat, when driven in an irresponsible way.

We ask whether response to PPC's reasonable concerns can be escalated to a higher level of command for positive action and with sufficient resource.

Responsibilities

Representatives of the Parties, Highways and Police, have said to us that they need the support of the other Party in considering any speed limit change. The relationship is not clear to us. On the receiving end, it feels a little like 'pass the parcel'.

Highways have said that unless the Police can confirm they can enforce a lower limit, there will be no speed limit reduction. PPC argue that we are better to have a 30mph limit that's not well-policed, rather than a 40mph limit similarly so. Top speeds are much more likely to be reduced above a 30mph limit because drivers will be more concerned about increased penalties for their offending.

Could you please have it explained to us how the relationship between Police and Highways works with regard to changes in Speed limits and who makes a final decision?

Risk

It is important to understand the level of risk within Peterstow.

On 5th April 2024, PPC wrote in detail to Highways about the road safety hazards and potential solutions, within, & either side of, Peterstow. Within that letter, bullet L) stated "within Peterstow from East to West (North-going), in all 0.4 miles, we have:

- a staggered Cross-Roads at the entrance to the Village, with some heavy traffic turning.
- a busy Village Pub and Campsite on the Right, again with some heavy traffic turning.
- a road South to the Left, with poor visibility.
- a private Road North to the Right.
- a Bus Stop on the Right where a Bus must stand in the Carriageway.
- the Village Shop at the crest on the Right with Car/Van/HGV traffic turning in/exiting.
- a Road North to the Right.
- a Bus Stop to the Left, with a Stand from which Buses turn back into the Carriageway.
- a Cross-Roads.
- a Road to the Right leading to the Church & Community Hall which also carries Farm Traffic.

Conclusion

We ask you, Mr Police & Crime Commissioner, as our elected Police representative, to understand and support our position; to speak with the Chief Constable and to ask for a sufficiently senior decision-making Police Officer to engage with PPC, with sufficient resources in hand, to improve Road Safety within our village.

We look forward to hearing from you as soon as you are reasonably able.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Brian Roe
Chairperson to Peterstow Parish Council