

Report to Hargrave Parish Council Meeting 6th July 2020

Prepared by J Hodgson

Subject: Nuisance motorbikes on B645

Background

There is an historic, ongoing and escalating problem with motorbikes being ridden in an anti-social/illegal manner on the B645. This impacts on the safety of other road users, properties and businesses that adjoin the B645 and the wider residential environment, including neighbouring settlements.

The matter was raised by residents during public speaking time at the Council meeting held 15th June 2020 and was discussed by the Parish Council at the same meeting. Minute 20-32 refers.

There are also wider road safety concerns regarding the hidden dips and overtaking vehicles.

Meeting 26th June 2020

ENC Councillor Howell arranged for Mr T Pursglove MP and Mr J Smithers (NCC member for Places, Highways and the Environment) to attend a meeting with representatives of Hargrave Parish Council. Due to COVID 19 restrictions the meeting was held outside and with a limited invitation list.

Also in attendance were:

Cllr J Gunthorpe, Cllr Brotherton, Cllr Farrington and Cllr How.

Ms J Hodgson, parish clerk

Ms Sagers, assistant to Mr Pursglove.

Mr S Mold, the PFCC (Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner) for Northamptonshire , was unable to attend or send a representative of his office.

Cllr Gunthorpe stated that the Parish Council was responding to consistent and heated correspondence from residents as motorbikes that were driven recklessly presented a danger to other road users and themselves and were significantly impacting the health and wellbeing of Hargrave residents and residents of other parishes by the noise created.

Cllr Gunthorpe identified 4 key areas:

1. Motorbikes were part of a wider safety issue of the B645
2. It is a cross border issue with Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire which can make finding a resolution more difficult
3. Producing an adequate evidence base is difficult. Consideration should be given to the online platforms/forums and magazines that recommend this road in a manner that encourages dangerous driving.
4. Engineering solutions may be a way forward such as rumble strips and extending the 40mph zone.

It was noted that riders had been witnessed positioning themselves in the junction of B645 and Church Road and timing each other with a stop watch.

Cllr Howell read an email from the office of the PFCC outlining a broader scheme aimed at motorbike riders.

It was noted that it is difficult to collate records of all accidents that occur as not all accidents are reported. Basic collision data is available on www.crashmap.co.uk.

It was noted that police camera vans would only be positioned at locations that were approved by the Home Office. Mr Pursglove could assist by talking to ministers if necessary.

Mr Smithers will investigate the possibility of re-instating the 'hatchings' on the hidden dips for the safety of all road users and examine the options for extending the 40 mph zone.

It was noted that extending the 40mph zone may just move the problem further along the road and would only be truly effective if it is enforced.

Mr Smithers was advised that the Parish Council would like to know what **is** possible rather than what isn't possible.

Mr Pursglove will suggest to Mr Mold the creating of signage 'you are in a snap zone' to advise drivers that dash cam footage may be up loaded to the police website and prosecutions may follow.

It was noted that Hargrave newsletter was being used to inform residents how to report criminal/antisocial driving, including 'operation snap'.

It was recommended that when the monthly meetings with the PFCC recommenced, a Hargrave representative should attend to voice these concerns. Often the Chief Constable is in attendance.

It was recommended that colleagues in other parishes be advised to contact their MP and PFCC.

End of meeting report.

Hand held police cameras

At the Parish Council on the 15th June a resident suggested borrowing hand held police cameras as used by other communities. This would be part of the 'community speedwatch' scheme. The cameras only record the speed, not the vehicle details. Other details have to be manually recorded. It is unlikely that the B645 would pass a police risk assessment for community speedwatch. The resident has been advised via email.

Noise complaints

NCC Highways have advised that they do not have experience with monitoring noise.

ENC Environmental Health emailed 15/06/2020 and to date have not responded.

It was suggested at the Parish Council meeting that the council investigate employing an acoustic company to record the level of the problem. Enquiries have been sent to two companies.

The issue would be what could be done with the data collected.

The Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant has confirmed that motorbikes if found to have breached MOT regulations / insurance details would be dealt with for traffic offences.

Reporting of motorbike problems

The Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant has advised the following and this has been included in the Hargrave newsletter:

“For crimes in progress i.e dangerous driving it should always be 999 especially if there is a registration number that is caught.

Alternatively you can report slower paced incidents via both 101 and the online reporting tool – obviously these don't get treated as an emergency response and therefore the perpetrators will be long gone before police attendance which makes our job difficult.

Please actively encourage members of the community to report anything to Operation Snap via Northants Police Website – i.e Dash cam footage of dangerous driving etc – we have had several successful prosecutions from this. <https://snap.northants.police.uk/snap>”

Police monitoring

Northants Highways have confirmed that the Northants Police have recently been using collecting data on the B645. This would indicate that on some level there has been recognition that there is an issue. I have asked if we can have site of the data. Highways to make enquiries with the police.

Neighbouring parishes

Contact via email has been made with Chelveston PC, Dean and Shelton PC and Covington Parish Meeting.

Accident data

It was suggested that the Parish Council meeting that requests for accident data should be requested. However, it is not apparent if this is centrally recorded anywhere.

Comments from Northants Highways

Note this pre-dates meeting on the 26th June:

“In terms of engineering measures to deter motor cycles, this is notoriously difficult to do. Apart from the fact that we don't traffic calm unlit rural derestricted roads, the standard method of traffic calming is build-outs/chicanes, or possibly speed cushions. Neither of these are effective against motor cycles, although buildouts may have some effect in heavy traffic. The only measure which is generally effective in slowing down all traffic is full-width road humps, which we can't install on an unlit, derestricted road (but I don't think that is what you had in mind anyway).

It is also worth mentioning that traffic calming/engineering is only considered in relation to injury collisions, not for noise reduction – it can often generate different types of noise in any case depending on the type of traffic using the road.

In the past any serious and persistent collision sites such as tight bends may have been 'straightened out' – you still see laybys formed from the bypassed bits in some places on main roads – but this would tend to encourage faster speeds rather than slow people down. I think most site of that kind will have been addressed now. We monitor the collision data on an ongoing basis (see Red Routes again) and analyse emerging trends to try to address problems as they develop, if there is a common factor among a cluster of collisions.”

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/northamptonshire-highways/road-safety/Pages/red-routes.aspx>

Possible next steps

1. Understand where the police camera van can be positioned and see if other locations are an option
2. Look into the red route status – can this be changed?
3. Group meeting with other parishes (remotely)
4. Direct correspondence with PFCC, Chief Constable and MP
5. Use of Hargrave speed device to collect speed data.