

Pitchcombe Road Traffic Issues Status- Oct 2005

Following numerous meetings held over the past 5 months between representatives of the Parish Council and the Traffic Manager, Gloucester County Council, the following road safety improvements to the A46/A4173 have been agreed in the vicinity of the junction at Pitchcombe.

Short term

Extensive cutting back of the trees and hedge rows along the A46 and A4173 to improve line of sight visibility, this has been completed.

Improved road markings and signage at the approaches to the junction and at the junction, this will include the removal of any redundant signs.

Installation of vehicle activated warning sign approaching the junction from Stroud.

Provide skid resistant surfacing on the approach to the junction from Gloucester direction.

Provide a red tarmac with white chevron area at the approach to junction from Stroud, this will also improve and designate the "turn right area" from Painswick.

Undertake feasibility study to look at alternative layout of the junction including the provision of traffic lights.

The above activities are hoped to be completed by March 2006.

Longer Term

Installation of traffic lights at the junction .The Traffic Manager favours this solution and a scheme has been submitted for priority assessment as a pre-requisite to it being included within the capital programme for approval within the next Local Transport Plan 2006/11. The Parish Council will continue to lobby GCC for the earliest approval and installation of traffic lights at the junction.

Full correspondence between the Parish Council and GCC can be found on the Pitchcombe website , www.pitchcombe-pc.gov.uk,

To date the Parish Council has met resistance from the Traffic Manager and GCC Police to reduce the speed limit from 50mph to 40mph , however the police have agreed to take speed measurements using a "archer system" on traffic using the A46 and A4173 within Pitchcombe.

Finally a 20mph speed limit has now been implemented in Wragg Castle Lane.

Peter Hewlett

Pitchcombe Parish Council



Environment Directorate

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Please ask for: Mr John Lindsay

Phone: (01452) 425622

Our Ref: 532/3/171/JHL/ag

Your Ref:

Date: 13th September 2005

Dear Mr Balgobin

A46/A4173 junction - Pitchcombe

Thank you for your letter of 7th September 2005.

I can confirm that we will seek to implement the measures outlined in my letter of 2nd August 2005 during the present financial year. The exception to this may be the provision of the vehicle activated sign on the approach to the junction from the Stroud direction.

As I indicated at the meeting, I hope to be able to undertake a feasibility study into the provision of traffic signals at the junction during the next financial year. This assumes that the level of funding available for design in advance is confirmed at the level I currently anticipate. The feasibility study will be primarily concerned with an appropriate layout for the junction on the assumption traffic signals are provided, together with identifying the likely cost, and any particular problems that might be encountered.

With respect to the deployment of the archer system on the approach roads to Pitchcombe, as this is Police equipment, I have forwarded a copy of your letter, and this response to Inspector Pickersgill at the Police Operations Centre at Bamfurlong.

Yours sincerely

Traffic Manager [South]

Copy to: Andrew Parker-Mowbray
John Roberts
Inspector Pickersgill Gloucestershire Constabulary Operations Centre Bamfurlong Lane
Bamfurlong Cheltenham GL51 6ST
Councillor Mrs Joan Nash



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

PITCHCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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7th September 2005

Mr J Lindsay
Environment Directorate
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Dear Mr Lindsay,

TRAFFIC SAFETY ISSUES - PITCHCOMBE

Thank you for attending the meeting at Pitchcombe Village Hall on the 5th September to discuss Pitchcombe traffic issues. As discussed and agreed, GCC will implement the road safety measures items 1 to 6 as outlined in your letter dated the 2nd August 2005, during this financial year. Pitchcombe Parish Council would appreciate these improvements to be undertaken as soon as possible.

Further it was agreed that GCC will undertake a feasibility study of alternative layouts of the junction of the A46/A4173. This study will take into account the potential requirement for traffic lights to be sited at this junction. We appreciate that the funding will not be available until the 2006 financial year. However, in the event of funding becoming available this financial year we would appreciate and encourage the urgent commencement of the feasibility study.

Finally, we discussed at length the request to consider a reduction in the speed limit from 50mph to 40mph. We would like to take up the offer of deploying the "archer system" on the approach roads to Pitchcombe, please could you confirm this requirement with Inspector Pickersgill.

We look forward to the imminent road safety measure being implemented.

Yours sincerely,

Roy Balgobin
Clerk



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Please ask for: Mr John Lindsay

Phone: (01452) 425622

Our Ref: 532/3/171(1)/JHL/ag

Your Ref:

Date: 7th September 2005

Dear Mr Balgobin

A46 junction Pitchcombe

I refer to our site meeting on the morning of 5th September.

I have now spoken to my colleague, John Roberts, and I can confirm the following two issues.

Firstly, it is inevitable that the hedges that were recently trimmed back will, over time, start to grow again. This is unavoidable, but the Parish Council is probably in the best position to know when the time has been reached for a further trim. Therefore, perhaps you could advise the local area supervisor, Yakub Mula, at the appropriate time.

Secondly, some comments were made about the two white chevron markings that were recently removed in an attempt to indicate where vehicles should wait when turning right into Halfway Pitch. In order to clarify the situation a little further, we will arrange for the remaining chevrons to be superimposed on an area of a red surfacing. As the area in which vehicles should wait, when turning right into the minor road, will remain uncoloured, this should give a better indication to drivers. Unfortunately, I am unable to say when this will be carried out. As I am sure you will appreciate, it would be uneconomic to undertake this small area of work in isolation. Therefore, whilst an order will be issued to our contractors, we will advise them that it should not be progressed until such time as they have other work of a similar nature within the local area.

I trust that this will be satisfactory, but if you have any further queries then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Traffic Manager [South]

Copy to: Cllr Mrs J Nash
John Roberts



Certificate No. FS12163
Development Co-ordination



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Mr John Lindsay

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532/3/171(1)/JHL/ag

2nd August 2005

Dear Mr Balgobin

A46 junction - Pitchcombe

I refer to previous discussions and correspondence, and in particular our site meeting of 26th May, and your letter of 14th June.

Since that time, I have had some extensive discussions with my colleagues and have also taken the opportunity to re-visit the junction in order to obtain a better understanding of the problems, and the possible causes of the accidents.

At the A46/A4173 junction, our accident records show that between 1996 and 2003 there were one or two reported injury accidents per year. This rises to five in 2004, with a further three already reported this year. I accept the views of the Parish Council and local residents, that in addition to these there are many other accidents which go unreported. However, this is quite common, and nationally it is estimated that approximately 80% of all accidents go unreported. What is perhaps important is that the majority of accidents involving injury are those that are reported, and, again, this is also true on a county wide and indeed a national basis. Therefore, in making comparisons between different sites and junctions, the reported accidents have been found from experience to give us a good guide as to the severity and difficulties at each particular location.

In looking at the reported accidents, together with the comments made by the Parish Council, I accept that there is a clear upward trend in the number of accidents occurring, although the precise reason why this should occur is not completely clear. We have looked at the accidents reported in a little more detail, and a number of factors do emerge. These are:-

- there is no evidence to support the suggestion that excessive speed is a significant contributory factor.
- the single biggest group of accidents involve a vehicle travelling from Gloucester and turning right onto the A46 being in collision with a vehicle travelling from Stroud towards Cheltenham and Painswick.
- a secondary group involves vehicles travelling from Gloucester and turning left towards Painswick, and being in collision with a vehicle travelling from Stroud towards Painswick and Cheltenham.

In looking at precisely why these accidents occur, we have noticed from our second visit to the site that there is a potential serious hazard for drivers waiting to turn right towards Stroud. If traffic from Stroud is in a platoon, ie several vehicles travelling together, then if two or three are travelling towards Gloucester, they can mask a further vehicle behind, which is intending to, and maybe signalling to travel towards Cheltenham. Thus the vehicle waiting to turn right pulls out in good faith, and does not see the vehicle travelling towards Cheltenham until it is too late.

The other cause, primarily related to those travelling towards Painswick, is I believe probably more obvious. Drivers for this manoeuvre would use the first slip, where there visibility back towards Stroud is obscured by the crest.

I would not wish to suggest that these are the only causes, but they are likely to be contributory factors in at least some of the accidents.

Turning to the potential solutions, I believe, as I indicated in my previous letter, that there is a general consensus in favour of the provision of traffic signals. Since our last exchange of correspondence, I have seen nothing to change my mind on that particular point. Such a scheme has been submitted for priority assessment, as a pre-requisite to it being included within the capital programme, and, indeed as you may have already heard, it has been put forward as a project we would like to undertake within timescale of the next Local Transport Plan, ie 2006/11.

Turning to the immediate future a number of possibilities have been discussed, some of which I have considered in a little more detail below.

Firstly, I am well aware that there is considerable pressure to impose lower speed limits on both the A46 and A4173. I have discussed this suggestion quite extensively with the police and we are both of the view that this would not be appropriate, or solve any of the problems. Our reasons for this I will attempt to explain in a little more detail.

The A46 and A4173 through Pitchcombe have all the general characteristics of a rural road. This is unlike the situation that exists through Brookthorpe and Edge where, from the point of view of the driver, the road is clearly passing through a built up settlement. I accept that along the length of road we are interested in, there are a very limited number of properties, and that the minor road that serves the main built up area of Pitchcombe links to the A4173. However these factors do not alter the situation that from a driver's perspective the roads themselves are predominately rural.

The above factors are very important, as if any speed limit is to be effective, then it must be seen as being reasonable by the drivers that use the road. In other words, if it is not seen as being reasonable, then there will be a substantial proportion of drivers that will disregard it leading to other problems, which could have the potential to increase accidents rather than reduce them. More precisely:-

- if a substantial proportion of drivers exceed the speed limit, then quite clearly this give difficulties of enforcement for the police. The police are caught in the middle of a situation between drivers who see the limit as being unreasonable, and local residents who want the limit enforced using resources that might be better and more effectively used elsewhere.
- the overall effect of the above point is that it can undermine speed limits elsewhere which can be justified and which are more acceptable to the majority of drivers.
- any speed limit is likely to be ignored by the idiot fringe who, unfortunately, are more likely than any other drivers to be the cause of an accident.

- whilst it is accepted that some drivers might observe a lower limit, this then builds up frustration by drivers who might be following, leading to an increase in overtaking, possibly in circumstances where such manoeuvres are undesirable and could potentially lead to an accident.
- drivers emerging from minor roads, as well as pedestrians seeking to cross the road, might be misled into believing that vehicles are travelling at a lower speed than they actually are, with obvious unfortunate consequences.

Finally, in relation to speed limit accidents, I would draw your attention to my comment previously that there is no overwhelming evidence to suggest that speed has been a contributory factor to the accidents at the A46/A4173 junction.

Another possibility we have considered is the removal of the crest which causes problems for vehicles turning out of the first slip. However, whilst it is accepted this might achieve some limited benefits, it is relatively expensive, particularly as alterations to services in the carriageway would almost certainly be involved. Moreover, if it were undertaken, its precise effect is not clear, and it may have the effect of increasing traffic speeds generally through the junction.

On the more positive side there are a number of minor, or not so minor measures which we could undertake over the next year or so, which whilst they will not be as effective as traffic signals, might help to reduce the risk of an accident. More precisely these are:-

1. Trimming back overhanging hedges and bushes generally ie:-
 - the left hand side of the A46 when approaching from Cheltenham.
 - the left hand side of the A4173 when approaching from Gloucester, particularly where it overhangs the footway.
 - the right hand side of the A46 on the south side of the junction when travelling towards Stroud. This will give some improved visibility, particularly for drivers emerging from Halfway Pitch.
 - where traffic signs are obscured.
 - in the vicinity of the Upper Pitchcombe turn.
2. Some alterations to signs aimed at improving driver knowledge, and eliminating unnecessary signs and clutter. More precisely:-
 - repositioning the existing "Give Way" sign on the downhill approach to the junction from Gloucester so that it does not obstruct the footway.
 - removing entirely the existing route confirmation sign for north bound traffic travelling towards Cheltenham. This sign might be appropriate for a trunk road, but is not appropriate for a relatively local road of this nature.
 - when approaching from Painswick, the existing "No Entry" sign on the north side of the second slip can be removed and repositioned on the back of a Give Way sign. This will allow one post to become redundant, and hence to be removed.
 - retain the existing direction sign on the north side of the second slip for the time being. Although we discussed their possible removal or re-siting, we have looked at it again from the point of view of the driver, and these are quite clear and conspicuous on approaching the junction.
3. Alter road markings to clarify the junction and improve lane discipline. More precisely:-
 - on the approach from Stroud, add the destination of "Painswick" (or an abbreviation) to the right hand lane.

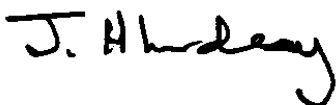
- when approaching from Painswick, to supplement the existing “No Entry” signs, mark in white on the carriageway the words “No Entry”.
 - look in a little more detail at some alterations to the white lane markings when approaching from Gloucester to encourage drivers to “square up”, at the junction/give way line.
4. Provide skid resistant surfacing on the approach to the junction from the Gloucester direction. This recognises the potential for vehicles driving towards Stroud travelling around the bend prior to the junction, encountering a queue and being forced to brake relatively quickly.
 5. On the approach from Stroud, incorporate a vehicle activated warning sign which would probably include a standard junction warning sign, with the words “Slow Down”, or similar. This would be activated by vehicles travelling above an agreed threshold speed, and give them a greater opportunity to be aware of the junction ahead, and the potential for emerging traffic. You should not interpret this, however, as suggesting that speed is a contributory factor, more the need to alert the drivers to the fact that there is a junction, with the potential for vehicles pulling out unexpectedly.
 6. Although not necessarily related to the A46/A4173 junction, to investigate the provision of an additional sign when travelling downhill from Gloucester, in the vicinity of the church, to give warning of the minor road junction to Pitchcombe village.

I have arranged with my colleague, John Roberts, from the divisional office to arrange items 1 to 4, and 6 above. Indeed, I understand that he has already discussed item 1 with you at a site meeting.

With respect to item 5 I feel it would be useful if I could follow up your earlier offer of another site meeting, when we could discuss this in a little more detail. Unfortunately I am away on leave next week, but I will arrange to contact you on my return to agree a mutually convenient time and date. In the meantime, if there are any points you wish to clarify, then please do not hesitate to contact myself or, in my absence, my colleague Andrew Parker-Mowbray.

Finally, I hope the contents of this letter will reassure you that the concerns of the Parish Council and local residents are being taken seriously, and that we will do what we can to reduce the risk of an accident and consequential injury. Clearly, the ultimate solution, ie the provision of traffic signals is not something that is going to be achieved quickly, but is the goal we must aim at, and in the meantime, do what we can by other means.

Yours sincerely



Traffic Manager [South]

Copy to: Cllr Mrs J Nash
 John Roberts
 Andrew Parker-Mowbray
 Lawrence Elcocks
 Inspector Pickersgill Gloucester Police Operations Centre Bamfurlong Bamfurlong Lane
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Please ask for: John Lindsay

Phone: (01452) 42 5622

Our Ref: JHL/532/3/171/rb

Your Ref:

Date: 22nd June 2005

Dear Mr Balgobin

Pitchcombe Traffic Issues

Thank you for your letter of 14th June 2005.

As I am sure you will appreciate, it is difficult for me to give you an immediate answer to all the various issues raised. Therefore, before making any comprehensive response, I would like to discuss further with my colleagues, and to consider the possibilities in a little more detail.

I would also like to consult further with the Police, particularly as I understand that you had a separate meeting with Inspector Pickersgill. Without prejudging the issue, the police view with respect to speed limits, will, of course, be of major importance in considering the possibilities for these, or otherwise.

Notwithstanding my comments above, I feel that there is very little doubt that the longer term solution must involve the introduction of traffic signal control at the junction. This would certainly remove conflicting movements, create safe opportunities for traffic to emerge from the village, and give greater opportunities for pedestrians to cross. The more difficult part is what can be done in the short term to try and at least improve the situation.

I will, of course, respond to you more fully in due course, as soon as I have more information available.

Yours sincerely

Traffic Manager [South]

copy: John Roberts
Andrew Parker-Mowbray
Cllr Joan Nash



PITCHCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Mr Roy Balgobin

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14th June 2005

Mr J Lindsay
Environment Directorate
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Dear Mr Lindsay,

TRAFFIC SAFETY ISSUES - PITCHCOMBE

Thank you for attending the meeting with Pitchcombe Parish Councillors on the 26th May, 2005 to discuss road safety issues within Pitchcombe Parish. As our Minute Book confirms these have been a concern of the Parish Council for many years.

In addition the residents of Pitchcombe have increasingly raised concerns to the Parish Council about road safety and the growing number of accidents which have occurred in the village. Pitchcombe is somewhat unique in that it has two major "A" roads (A46/A4173) converging – at speed – within the village.

The majority of residents (85% of the population) live off these two main roads with access to the A46/A4173 via eight road access points in the parish. All of these road access points are considered to be dangerous due to poor line of sight and the speed of road traffic passing through the village on the A46/A4173.

The concerns and feelings of the residents have now reached a point where actions have been demanded to improve the road safety of the Parish. This has culminated in a campaign organised by the residents and a Pitchcombe Traffic Survey has been undertaken and presented to the Parish Council, a copy will be supplied for your review.

The response to the survey has been very significant with over 70% of residents providing returns. In recent years some 117 accidents have been witnessed by residents. 20% of these accidents have involved Pitchcombe residents, family or friends entering or exiting the village. It follows that 80% (at least) have involved non-residents. The majority of all accidents (70%) have occurred at the junction of the A46 and A4173 at Pitchcombe. The contributory factors as to the cause of the accidents being:-

- Speed of Vehicles
- Poor line of sight
- Confusing and unclear signage

Idiosyncratic and confusing junction layout.
Driver error

Therefore, to improve road safety in the Parish the residents consider the following improvements are required to mitigate the increasing risk of potential fatalities and injury to residents and other road users:-

1. A reduction of speed limit from 50mph to 40mph with respect –

A4173 to and from Edge to Pitchcombe
A46 to and from Painswick to Pitchcombe
to and from Stroud to Pitchcombe
2. A reduction of the speed limit from 50mph to 30mph at the A46/A4173 junction. This reduced speed limit should be imposed for a distance of 300yds in each direction to the approaches of the junction, i.e. from Stroud, Edge, and Painswick.
3. Installation of traffic lights at the A46/A4173 Pitchcombe junction, with controlled lights at Halfway Pitch. These traffic lights should also incorporate a controlled pedestrian crossing.
4. Improved signage and road markings including electronic feedback at all approaches to Pitchcombe i.e.,

A4173 prior to - Wragg Castle Lane
Merry Walk junction
A46 prior to - Wragg Castle Lane / Pincot Lane
Wades Lane
5. Improved signage and road markings at A46/A4173 Pitchcombe junction.
6. Improve “line of sight” by clearance of tree foliage on A46/A4173, and removal of redundant and obsolete road signage.

The Parish Council fully supports in principle the residents’ demand for road safety improvements and believes that in addition a thorough professional appraisal of the feasibility of alternative layouts be undertaken so that motorists using the A46/A4173 junction can instantly perceive how to negotiate it whichever direction they approach from and whichever their exit.

I would appreciate your urgent consideration to the above request.

Yours sincerely

Roy Balgobin
Clerk

Cc County Councillor Mrs J I Nash
District Councillor Mrs B A Tait