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Road Safety Group – Interim Report to Council January 2023

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**The Council is asked to NOTE the report on current issues and consider any further action required.**

**In respect of item 10) Coed-y-Rae as a new item ORPC is asked to write to Shropshire Council for the urgent replacement of the flood marker**

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There has been no meeting of the Group since November as the issues highlighted so far have been with Shropshire Council and regrettably there has been little to no response from that Council, despite a number of reminders. Members are reminded that the responsibility passed from Cllr Carroll to Cllr. Marshall at the end of 2022.

A letter restating our concerns was sent to the portfolio holder 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022. To date there has been no reply. I have emailed Cllr Marshall a number of times, and was reminded that

**1) Coed-y-Go.**

Possibly due to the change in Portfolio Holder, there was some confusion over whether or not the Council's agreement to pay the requested sums [£19,727.60] had been communicated to Shropshire. The Clerk has since officially confirmed this and has received an invoice (which had to be corrected) and queried the completion date for the work -several times. It would of course be wholly inappropriate for the Rural Parish Council to pay in advance for work to be undertaken without receiving a guarantee as to when the work would be done, or better, confirmation that the work had been done.

At the time of preparing this report there has been again no response from Shropshire.

**2) Costs**

With respect to the costs quoted by Shropshire Council for the work, Helen Morgan has communicated our concerns to The Secretary of State at the Department of Transport. The Clerk has circulated the response (22<sup>nd</sup> December). As might be expected, this letter followed the usual Departmental practice of firstly quoting the money being provided:

*The Department is providing £170 million in 22/23 to local highways authorities in England, outside London and City Region areas, through the Integrated Transport Block. This includes £1.6 million a year for Shropshire for small scale transport schemes, including road safety measures. The Integrated Transport Block is not ring-fenced, allowing authorities to spend their allocations according to their own priorities.*

And then passing the buck back to Shropshire *because local authorities are best placed to understand the local needs and considerations.*

There is a degree of irony here in that ORPC is a local authority – but not perhaps viewed so in the mind of the Secretary of State.

The matter of costs is being taken up by SALC on behalf of all Parish Councils. Perhaps as part of the discussions it may be that if Shropshire is going to ask Parishes to pay for road safety work highlighted under their own policy as a community concern and hence a trigger for action, then Parish Councils should have a greater say in how the £1.6 million allocated to Shropshire for small scale transport schemes should be spent!

### **3) Morda School.**

Members will recall the complaints received about speeding traffic and the effect of parking by parents at the start and end of the school day and its effects on local residents.

Morda School replied (7<sup>th</sup> December 2022)

*We continually strive to improve the road safety outside school. We have been working with the local police and Road Safety officer and the speed of the traffic passing school is much better now that the speed bumps (which we pressed the council hard to reinstall) have been replaced.*

*Children have had road safety visits from PC Carol and Road Safety Officer Ray Hughes. We encourage children to walk to school wherever possible and are planning a focus on road safety - particularly the safe use of the road crossing.*

*We will be launching this road safety campaign in January 2022 which will be led by the school council, to encourage all children ( and parents) to use the crossing correctly. As part of this campaign, we will again encourage parents not to park on the road. We will suggest carpooling and walking to school wherever possible (though of course you will understand that we cannot enforce this).*

*There is always a member of staff (usually one of the Headteachers) on duty at the front gate in the morning when children arrive, and in the afternoon when they are picked up. Parents who park on the zig-zag lines are asked to move their vehicles and reminded that parking there is illegal.*

*Please be assured that we continue to work with parents and children to improve the safety and reduce the impact on our neighbours.*

### **4) Speed Limit Morton**

The concerns of residents of Morton regarding the inappropriate nature of the national speed limit in the area was also communicated to Shropshire Council in September and again in December. A response is awaited.

## **5) HGV signage**

Heavy Goods Vehicles are leaving the A5 carriage way at Aston Gates Junction assuming Maesbury Road Industrial Estate is at Maesbury. The HGVs travel from the A5 down Chain Lane, a narrow single track country lane and find themselves at the Ashfield, Maesbury Crossroads.

Here they try to negotiate the left turn onto the Knockin/Oswestry main road which has resulted in actual impact on Ashfield Farmhouse boundary walls and inches away from Oakfield Cottage Bay window which sits on the opposite side of the main road, this left turn is too tight for big vehicles. If HGVs try to turn right to Oswestry, again they mount the pavement trying to avoid impacting the boundary fencing of the Unicorn Child Nursery They mount the pavements both sides of the Knockin to Oswestry Road. Residents have requested appropriate signage.

Both Council and local residents have been trying to communicate to Shropshire that the request is for some simple signage – not extensive engineering works, as interpreted by Officers.

Again, no response from Shropshire.

## **6) Nant-Mawr**

The issue of speeding traffic which on an area which is shared by ORPC and Llanyblodwell has been communicated to Shropshire by both Councils. Both are waiting for a reply.

## **7) HGV Licences**

Following the impasse with the Department of Transport over amending legislation to allow Parishes to be a Statutory consultee, this will be followed up nationally by the NALC. In the interim assurances to be sought that Shropshire has recognized and will facilitate the addition of any application for an Operator's licence to be added to current protocols in respect of Planning.

## **8) Speed Limit through Weston from 30mph – 20mph**

The current speed limit is considered to be too high given the nature of the road, its rurality and the increased number of houses permitted by Shropshire Council. A request for a discretionary speed limit was sent to Shropshire Council, following the ORPC meeting in September. A reminder was sent in December.

A response is awaited.

## **9) Agricultural Vehicles.**

The SALC Joint Working Committee has raised this a number of times. While a working group had been established it has not met for some time, the loss of an officer and lack of resources cited as the reasons for this.

Members will have noted the significant number of emails sent recently with regard to the impact of vehicles on verges. There have been numerous complaints from the local community on the destruction of the verges by tractors and heavy goods vehicles.

This damage would seem to be inconsistent with the note on the Shropshire Council website:

*Biodiversity 'corridors' such as roadside verges are vital links to allow wildlife to move freely between fragmented habitats. Some of the best are even protected as local wildlife sites or sites of special scientific interest.*

The ORPC also has an obligation to protect biodiversity.

However, identification of those responsible seems to be scattered, with work by Severn Trent being blamed along with Yareal and local businesses. With regard to Yareal, it is clear that the planning application CONDITIONED the flow of HGV's to the Oswestry/Trefonen road. If damage is also being caused by Severn Trent or local farm, then some degree of accountability should and must be actioned.

Mark Barrow (Shropshire Council) responded (12<sup>th</sup> December) to the letter submitted by the ORPC following the last meeting.

*I have passed the details onto officers leading in the areas of planning and highways to explore what, if or how we can help address the situation you face. As you are aware we have very limited powers in relation to the planning controls over farms and enforcement of highway issues rest with the Police, but can sometimes be progressed as civil court matters. Damage to the highway verges is another matter and one we may be able to progress further.*

A list of questions has been prepared by Cllr R Jones for possible submission to Mark Jones Director of Farming Yareal UK.

- 1) What do you propose to do to rectify the damage that the farm vehicles have caused on the local verges as the vehicles in use are too large for the surrounding traffic and infrastructure.
2. In your response to Councillor Barrow, which you agreed could be circulated, you stated that you are happy to work with the local community. Could you please define with who, how and for what purpose especially as this has not happened during previous phases of your development. This would be a good time to inform the local community of your future intentions.
3. Also in your email you stated that you support local business and employ staff locally. Could you confirm how your venture will be of benefit to the local community and the intended employment of local people on the farm.

And a question to Mark Taylor (Shropshire Council)

What mitigation measures he will implement to ensure that the planning application 22/02774/EIA is complied with to relating to the routing of the farm traffic and their suppliers?

In the long term it would be expedient to re-establish the Agricultural Working Group to bring together the different parties and create a more permanent solution which addresses all the issues of damage AND biodiversity.

New Matter/s:

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**10) Depth marker for flooding in Coed Y Rae Lane**

It has been reported that the depth marker for flooding in Coed Y Rae Lane has not been replaced which is a safety concern for vehicle users and pedestrians.

As this may be a Shropshire Council responsibility the Council is **requested to write to Shropshire Council for its urgent replacement.**