

Highways

Highways will be completing a number of lining projects in the near future, some of which will be covered by a statutory road order which will be issued in the coming few weeks. These projects cover:

- renewing the white lines for pedestrians on Dunster Steep and ‘no parking’ in Parsons Street near the allotments;
- repainting yellow lines on the corner of Meadowhayes and The Meadows;
- removing a short section of yellow lines to enable more parking near the top of Redway;
- providing a statutory disabled parking space on the west end of the High Street;
- removing the yellow kerb ticks on the west end of the High Street.

Highways have advised that the road order will also include replacing the missing sign on a new pole by the Castle.

The Somerset Improvements team have been contacted regarding a site visit to understand the implications and costs of some of the measures supported in the traffic consultation survey, such as widening the footpath at Dunster Steep, adding more dropped kerbs, informal pedestrian crossings and protected parking areas. A Highways site visit is also planned for June, to investigate the cost of extending the 20 mph limits within Porlock.

A lot of traffic speed data has now been made available from Highways department, which indicates that we don’t have a speeding issue in Porlock, but rather a problem with discourteous drivers, or people driving within the speed limit but unsafely for the road conditions. Purchasing a speed indicator device (SID) to raise awareness of drivers’ speeds is under review, as research shows that these devices are effective in reducing traffic speed.

We have been in contact with Somerset Council Transport Services about the Exmoor Coaster bus timetabling with a view to reducing High Street congestion in this summer’s peak season. The result was disappointing; essentially as SC provides no funding to First Bus South and this service is a solely commercial route, SC have no powers to influence the number of journeys scheduled or their timing. Priority must be given to commercial services over publicly funded ones such as the no. 10 bus.

The only objection that could be made would be on the grounds of safety i.e. operating along a road with any height, width or weight restrictions where the vehicles used exceed the restrictions placed on the highway by the highway authority. We have been told that the Exmoor Coaster 2024 peak timetabling is such that the buses should not meet each other in the High Street. It remains to be seen whether this will be true in reality, and PPC will monitor the situation and report any issues to Somerset Council and First Bus South.

Other Highways matters

- In order to smooth traffic flow on the High Street and along Sparkhayes Lane/Meadowhayes, we are proposing modification of some road signs to more effectively direct traffic to the Sparkhayes campsite. This should keep some traffic off the High Street and improve the flow of traffic along Meadowhayes and Sparkhayes Lane.
- Street lamp #3 in West Porlock is now working.
- SC Parking Services and Highways are working on providing the correct parking restriction signs outside the west end of the High Street and along Highbank Cottages.
- The Highways Steward was not able to clean the road signs on Porlock Hill due to safety concerns (speed of traffic on a steep, D-restriction section of road). It is hoped that Highways will now incorporate this work into their cleaning schedule (to be advised).

Other matters

Floral Displays

The watering contracts for 2024 have begun. Further plantings of seasonal bedding and perennial plants where necessary will be undertaken now the temperatures have improved.

Biodiversity and Grassland Management

The Council is committed to increasing biodiversity and as part of this will be considering the grassland management in line with Somerset Council's proposal, and will additionally consider a 'No Mow May'. The Love Where You Live Working Group are looking at ways to positively promote these initiatives if adopted. The use of non-chemical, in particular non-glyphosate weed management is being investigated.

Dog and Litter Bins (Somerset Waste Partnership SLA)

Following a survey of the litter and dog bins in the parish by the Love Where You Live Working Group, the report from 2021 previously provided to Council has been updated. The WG are making a number of recommendations to Council and a request has been made to urgently replace the rusty dog bin in Sparkhayes Lane near the campsite as it is a health & safety issue for all users, public and collection staff.

Littering is seen as a problem in Porlock and the LWYL WG will be making recommendations to Council about how to raise the profile of this issue through Social media and other publicity.

The Clerk has contacted Somerset Council to discuss the bin collection SLA for the public litter and dog bins.

Feedback from the Love Where You Live Working Group display at the Annual Parish Meeting suggested that more individual responsibility for maintaining the aesthetics of the Parish would be very beneficial. The litter pick fortnight was well received but rubbish collected from the Marsh left at the bottom of where Sparkhayes now needs to be collected and disposed of.

Ongoing:

- Financial support for maintaining areas devolved from SWT and permission for volunteer maintenance of some areas
- Signage for OSC/Parish Room – to confirm opening times going forward before replacing sign
- Car park provision – a Somerset Council countywide review of parking is to take place in 24/25