

Traffic Calming and Road Safety Working Group, Car Parking Working Group

Final Report, April 2025

This report captures all the main information gathered and actions taken, following Porlock Parish Council's (PPC's) endorsement of the Traffic Calming and Car Park Working Groups' recommendations. This work is based on the consultation with Porlock residents in late 2023. On behalf of the Council, Cllr. S. Colson would like to extend PPC's and his sincere thanks to the members of the two working groups for all their work and input.

The work has been sensitive to maintaining the heritage of Porlock and not making any permanent changes that would be detrimental to the look and feel of our village. It also recognises that there is a relationship between managing traffic speed and congestion, which is a natural consequence of seasonal volumes of traffic on a main 'A' road (A39) which is narrow and bending as it runs through the village.

Summary

It is some time since the traffic consultation exercise in late 2023. However, since then a number of actions have been taken, resulting from a large amount of work in information gathering and consultation with local stakeholders, our Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's), Avon & Somerset Police and many departments within Somerset Council (for example the Traffic Management Team, Area Highways Manager, Parking Services, Street Improvements Team, Active Roads Team etc.). As a result, the following actions have been taken or are in the process of being taken.

- A speed indicator device is being purchased to help raise speed awareness on our roads
- On Dunster Steep, the hedge is being cut back hard so it doesn't encroach on the virtual footpath, and the white lines designating the path have been repainted.
- Somerset Highways have gifted PPC a 171 licence to widen the path at the top half of Dunster Steep and a contractor is being engaged for a quotation to do this work.
- A third 15 mins free shoppers' parking bay is being added to Doverhay car park, at no cost to PPC. Similar spaces at Central car park are being kept under review with Somerset Parking Services, during their county-wide parking review.
- PPC will promote Central car park to raise awareness of its location (especially for visitors) and the fact that it has electric vehicle charging points and a short stay tariff as well as a long stay one.
- The road signs have been changed at the junction of Meadowhayes Rd and Dunster Steep to direct Sparkhayes Campsite traffic along Meadowhayes and away from the High St, particularly away from the junction with Sparkhayes Lane at 'Piggy in the Middle'.
- The white 'keep clear' lines on Parson's St have been repainted.

The details of all the areas explored are described below.

1. Traffic speed

Consideration has been given to various ways of influencing vehicle speeds in the village, and these are described below. This analysis should also be read in conjunction with the road traffic speed data for Porlock in the Appendix, which indicates that *average* traffic speeds in Porlock are already low and within speed limits.

a) 20 mph zone

A formal 20 mph zone is an area where all the roads into Porlock village are clearly signed as a 20 mph zone, which then establishes a 20 mph limit for the entire village. This has the advantage of reducing the need for signs within the zone while raising awareness of speed limits, however specific traffic calming elements have to be in place every 200m (for example speed bumps, traffic priority designations etc.). The traffic calming elements would impact the character of the village and would be costly to put in place (approx. £10,000). This, combined with the low average traffic speeds in Porlock (see Appendix), means that this is not an attractive option and was not pursued further.

b) Extension of 20 mph limits on certain roads

Some roads in Porlock are 20 mph where they are near to the High St, but further down they are 30 mph. Others are 30 mph throughout. Consideration was given to extending the 20 mph limit for the full lengths of Bossington Lane, Old Lane, Doverhay, Parson's St and Redway. This would produce more signage in the village and would cost approx. £7,000. This, combined with the low average speeds in Porlock, means that this is not an attractive option and was not pursued further.

c) Speed Indicator Device (SID)

PPC is not eligible for a grant from Avon & Somerset police for an SID, due to the lack of data indicating a speeding problem (see Appendix). However, PPC has resolved to buy its own mobile SID to raise speed awareness. This has the benefit of being flexible with the locations where it can be used, and will only be used from time to time so there is not a permanent change to the look and feel of the village. It is also a more cost-effective solution compared with adding 20 mph limits. SIDs are a good reminder to drivers to reduce their speed and data shows they are effective in 90% of cases. There is also evidence of compliance within the areas they have been used, and it has also reduced the need for Community Speed Watch groups, which are reliant on volunteers.

d) More frequent random speed checks

Our PCSO was advised that the Specials are unlikely to do formal speed checks as their priority is areas with known speeding issues, and the Porlock traffic data (see Appendix) do not raise concern. We understand that while speed is a contributing factor for local road traffic accidents and offences, the main issues are alcohol/drugs and age, and these appear to be the main priorities. That said, our PCSO's will do their own speed checks as resources allow, though these aren't enforceable.

e) Community Speed Watch group

There was little appetite for re-forming a Community Speed Watch group, based on the experience of those who were involved previously.

2. Parking

Options to increase the use of Doverhay and Central car park have been reviewed, to move cars from the streets and into car parks to reduce congestion and improve visibility for both drivers and pedestrians. The following actions are in progress:

- Somerset Council Parking Services have agreed to add one 15 mins free shoppers' bay in Doverhay car park, at no cost to PPC
- Adding similar bays in Central car park will be kept under review, pending the outcome of Somerset's county-wide parking review
- Meanwhile, PPC will conduct an awareness campaign to highlight Central car park (especially for visitors) and the fact that it has easy pedestrian access to the High St, electric vehicle charging points and a short stay tariff as well as a long stay one.

3. Dunster Steep

It proved too costly to create a new footpath on the other side of the hedgerow on Dunster Steep, in part due to having to relocate the electricity sub-station. Other options have been pursued however:

- The landowner is kindly keeping the hedge cut back hard (to the dry stone wall) so it doesn't encroach onto the virtual footpath
- The white lines designating the virtual footpath have been repainted
- Somerset Council Highways have gifted a 171 licence to PPC, to work with a contractor to widen the virtual footpath at the top end of the Steep (where the kerbing and grass verge is located). CJ Lynch & Sons have been engaged to provide a quotation; PPC is also in touch with the Somerset Council Active Roads team regarding funding. The work would likely take about a week and the road would need to be closed, using a traffic light system on the one-way section of the Steep running into the village. Once all the information has been received, a decision can be made taking into account the benefit vs. cost and short term disruption. Land ownership on the grass verge will need to be taken into account and it will also be subject to a Somerset Council TTRO, which may or may not have a cost associated with it.

4. Other Road Safety Measures

- The white 'keep clear' lines have been repainted on Parson's St near the allotment. As long as the lines are kept visible (i.e. free from leaves) this seems to have greatly improved the problem. It will be kept under review, especially as Porlock becomes busier over the summer.
- The road signs have been changed at the junction of Meadowhayes Rd and Dunster Steep, to direct traffic to Sparkhayes campsite along Meadowhayes and away from the High St, especially away from the junction with Sparkhayes Lane at 'Piggy in the Middle'. It wasn't possible to add road signs at the Sparkhayes junction due to lack of space (to direct traffic along the High St to Meadowhayes Rd), but the campsite owner is doing everything he can to advise campers to use Meadowhayes Rd.
- Creating an informal pedestrian crossing (for example the red paved areas on the High St in Minehead) to make it easier for pedestrians with limited mobility to cross the road doesn't appear to be feasible. Due to the utilities/services in the road at the places under consideration (e.g. near Abbeyfield) and the need for road reinforcement due to the narrowness of the road at such points, this would be impractical and costly.
- On a related matter, it is not considered advisable to create 'build outs' at either end of the two on-street parking areas on the High St near the Pharmacy and Spar. A build out is where a raised kerb protects each end of the parking bays, creating a refuge for pedestrians to make it easier to cross the road. However, parking spaces would be lost in creating the build outs and it may also increase the time it takes to park, which could increase congestion.
- A detailed review of the location of dropped kerbs in the High St has been conducted, with a view to making it easier to cross the road for those with restricted mobility, push chairs, mobility scooters, wheel chairs etc. Due the narrowness of the pavements in places and the village's historic tiled paving, only one location has been identified which could improve crossing the road. CJ Lynch & Sons will provide a quotation for this work.

APPENDIX: Traffic speed data in Porlock

The following information has been provided by the Somerset Highways Traffic Management Team, based on police data from anonymous monitoring of sat navs and mobile phones in vehicles (see table below).

Location	Average Speed Recorded	Current Speed Limit
Bay Road	13.6	20
Sparkhayes Lane	12.0	20
Villes Lane	14.0	20
Meadowhayes Road	10.3	20
Parks View	11.8	20
Bossington Lane	15.0	30
Old Lane	16.4	30
Minehead Road between Hacketty Way and Dunster Steep	29.8	30
Dunster Steep (westbound)	19.4	20
Doverhay	10.0	20
Doverhay	10.3	30
Parsons Street	13.4	20
Parsons Street	12.3	30
Redway	14.0	20
Redway	19.5	30
High Street	11.8	20
West End	11.0	20
Porlock Weir Road (east end: Splatt Barn and High Bank cottages)	28.2	30
West Porlock	24.3	30