

Council – 19 September 2016

Petition: Stubbers Green implementation of better traffic calming measures to protect wildlife on Stubbers Green nature reserve

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report is in response to a petition received following the unfortunate death of 2 cygnets that occurred on Stubbers Green Road in the vicinity of the Stubbers Green nature reserve.
- 1.2. The petition containing more than 1500 signatures was presented by Councillor Clews to Council 21 July 2016 and worded as follows:

We the undersigned ask that Walsall Council implements better traffic calming measures and gives particular consideration to: renewing the rumble strip as these are incredibly worn and provide little if no impact, installing speed humps, additional signage and better maintenance of bushes and hedgerows which are currently overgrown and obscure current signage.

- 1.3. The Council's petition scheme provides that: "If a petition contains at least 1,500 signatures it will be debated at a meeting of the Council. This means that the issues raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting to which all Councillors can attend and speak. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. The petition organiser will be given 5 minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting.

They may decide to take the action that the petition requests; not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to ask for further information. Where the issue is one where the Cabinet are required to make the final decision the Council will decide to make recommendations to the Cabinet. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and this will be published on our website."

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Council consider the content of the petition.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 On the evening of Thursday 9 June 2016 an incident occurred on Stubbers Green Road in the vicinity of the Stubbers Green nature reserve resulting in the injury and death of local wildlife.

As well as a nature reserve, part of Stubber's Green, including where the cygnets were killed, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Definitive information as to the cause of the incident is not available, however it is reported that:

- A motorist became impatient with other vehicles that had slowed to an appropriate speed due to cygnets and swans crossing the road. With little regard or awareness of the reason for the slowing vehicles, the motorist is reported to have pulled out to overtake the slowing vehicles and collided with the wildlife unfortunately causing deaths and injuries.

and

- Vehicles initially stopped when a family of swans crossed the road but that a young female driver initially stopped but then drove off slowly and collided with the cygnets. When realising what she had done, drove away at speed looking distressed.

A witness to the incident noted the vehicle details and flagged down a passing police vehicle to relay the relevant information. It is understood that the police have concluded their investigations into the matter and no further action is planned.

- 3.2 Stubbers Green Road in the vicinity of the nature reserve is illuminated by street lighting and already has a number of features in place to highlight the presence of the nature reserve:

- Nature Zone max speed 20mph signs
- Warning signs indicating Slow Rumble Strip
- Rumble strips on the carriageway
- Swans crossing signs

- 3.3 This location has a good road safety record with no reported personal injury collisions taking place in the last 5 years. Given the accident history for this location, it would not meet the Council criteria for the installation of speed humps.

3.4 With the borough wide high level of demand for installation of traffic calming features and the limited budget available to meet that demand, scheme prioritisation has to be undertaken. The current prioritised local safety scheme programme was approved by Cabinet 16 March 2016 and is fully committed. Despite the delivery of the annual programme of local safety schemes, there are currently further unfunded scheme requests to the value of approximately £4.5m.

3.5 Following the reported incident on the 9 June 2016, the location was reviewed to identify any further measures that may assist in highlighting the presence of the nature reserve.

This concluded that the existing measures were appropriate however minor improvements were made by trimming of tree branches that may partially obscure road signs, the addition of a new nature zone max speed 20mph sign and refresh of carriageway lining.

3.6 Consideration was given to refreshing the existing carriageway rumble strips but this was not felt to be necessary or beneficial. When the original installation of the rumble strips was undertaken, significant concerns were raised with the Council that the noise generated by vehicles driving over the rumble strips was disturbing the local wildlife and was inappropriate to be used in such a location.

3.7 From the information available to the Council, it can be concluded that the existing measures to identify the presence of the nature reserve are suitable for the characteristics of the road use.

3.8 The incident occurred as a result of inappropriate driver behaviour and excessive speed of the vehicle was not a factor.

3.9 Officers from Clean and Green Services are exploring opportunities to secure external funding that could be used to provide environmental and ecological improvements to the nature reserve. Should such funding opportunities become available, a further review of the interaction with the road network would be undertaken as part of any major scheme design.



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19 September 2016