

## **Residents Association Open Forum**

Cars, or more accurately the problems they can cause, were the main focus of the discussion at the Residents Association meeting last month. An “Open Forum” was held to discuss the findings of last year’s questionnaire on what would improve the village and village life. A well attended meeting of over 50 residents, including our County and District councillors, focused on what we could actually do to address some of the key findings. The Residents Association Committee will now take forward the ideas coming from the meeting.

There was much debate on the Hall Lane / Smugglers Lane junction with the A379 and the difficulties that pedestrians (including people using the South West Coastal Path) have crossing the road. It was generally agreed that we should continue to press for improvements. However, in the present economic climate we have to be realistic in that this is not a high priority for Devon County Council and any funding for improvement work is likely to come from private developments in the area. For example, some planning consents in Holcombe Drive require the developer to provide funding for junction improvements.

A number of options to improve safety were raised, including a pavement along the sea side of the A379 from Windward Lane, a pedestrian refuge, or a pedestrian or pelican crossing. Most of these would require a realignment of the main road, increasing the cost. Whatever solution that is eventually proposed would need careful evaluation as some people felt that a pedestrian refuge, for example, could put pedestrians in more danger.

The related issue of speed of traffic on the A379 also caused much debate. A relatively inexpensive change would be to mark “SLOW” on the road itself around the Holcombe dip. Others thought that the flashing sign situated at Hall Lane could be more effective (does it always work?) and perhaps there should be one in the other direction replacing the speed camera.

The general consensus was that enforcement of the speed limit was the main issue. We were assured that the police do routinely target this stretch of road but their resources are limited. One suggestion was that local residents could assist the police by operating a speed gun and pass on the registration numbers of persistent offenders. This approach has been used elsewhere (Community Speed Watch) including, we understand, in Shaldon. It was generally felt that this should be explored further, in particular the practicalities of working with the police, training needed, costs etc.

The speed of traffic in the village itself was also raised. The general view was that traffic calming measures such as a 20mph speed limit, speed humps and width restrictions were not the answer. A specific problem appears to be early in the morning when parents are often in a rush taking their children to the Pre-School, and this might be addressed by a letter to the school itself just reminding parents of the speed limit. If the problem persists, then ways of enforcing the speed limit might be explored, including the speed gun idea mentioned above.

The final car-related issue discussed was parking in the village, in particular in Holcombe Road between Hall Lane and The Castle Inn. At times, cars have been

known to block or cause an obstruction in the road, which could be an issue if emergency vehicles needed to get through. The general consensus of the meeting was that the police should get involved if a car is causing an obstruction and that more enforcement was probably needed. And we have subsequently clarified with Carole Comber that people attending the church for regular Sunday services can use the village hall car park. However, the village hall is not a public car park, so people wanting to use it at other times should contact her in case there are large events on in the village hall itself.

I'm very conscious in writing this article that the above might seem very negative and that there are lots of problems in the village. This is far from the case. We are very fortunate to live in such a nice area. People are clearly very passionate about preserving village life and the high reputation of Holcombe as a place to live. The meeting was extremely constructive and we did discuss several ideas to improve the village, such as more social activities, enhancing its appearance and amenities. More of these in the next newsletter.

Finally, a reminder that the Residents Association AGM will take place on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April. Following the formal meeting we will be holding a quiz (in teams) and there will be free cheese and wine on offer as a further incentive to attend! We are always looking for new people to join the Residents Association Committee so do please consider standing. Please contact me if you are interested or want more information.

Andy Watson  
Chairman

