

Traffic problems in St Margaret's.

The Parish Council is about to conduct a formal consultation on the installation of double yellow lines in several locations in St Margaret's. This might seem an odd thing to be doing at this time of social lockdown so some contextual explanation is offered.

The Parish Council has for many years tried to persuade Kent Highways to address problems of road safety, speeding and congestion in St Margaret's. A traffic survey in 2018 revealed that the average number of daytime vehicle movements in the High Street was over 440 per hour and not much less in Sea Street and Reach Road. But until recently all proposals and improvement measures were rejected on technical grounds and cost.

A controlled crossing at the primary school entrance was turned down as were requests for a 20mph speed limit in the High Street/Sea Street and Reach Road. Other proposals had also received negative responses and all the time the problems get worse.

This year the Parish Council received expressions of concern from the Bus Company about coaches parking on the roundabout at the top of Bay Hill and blocking access for the buses. The issue was taken up with Kent Highways and this time the response was both timely and helpful. Two KCC Highways officers visited the village, confirmed the problem and offered solutions to safeguard the bus service. One measure is to put double yellow lines on the roundabout and at the entrance to Granville Road to ensure the buses have a clear space to turn around.

The KCC officers advised the Parish Council that although installation of the lines is relatively cheap a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is required and this costs about £2700. The KCC officers then advised the Parish Council that it should look at any other locations in the village where parking restrictions had been considered, as additional double yellow lines could be included in the same TRO.

Later the Highways officers revisited the village and confirmed that double yellow lines would serve a useful purpose at some locations in Reach Road, Sea Street and lower Bay Hill. In all of these the purpose is to improve road safety and reduce congestion. The Parish Council is grateful to the KCC Highways officers who are giving effective support. All proposals will be the subject of the formal consultation with the community.

Two years ago, a community group, "Gridlock St Margaret's", was set up with Parish Council support, to address the traffic issues in the centre of St Margaret's. It has met many times since then, analysed the problems of congestion, speeding and road safety and considered a range of options. It soon found that measures to reduce congestion could have the effect of increasing speeding and vice-versa.

Therefore, the group worked to produce a holistic plan to improve the situation in the High Street, Sea Street and Reach Road, in particular measures to enhance safety for pedestrians. The group engaged with KCC Highways and initially encountered the same problem experienced by the Parish Council that some standard road safety

measures were rejected on technical grounds. Furthermore, proposals for standard measures we could use, such as vehicle speed indicators, were quoted at what seemed to be exorbitant cost. Therefore the group has developed a plan which includes a range of imaginative and cost effective proposals to address the traffic problems of St Margaret's.

With the support of our MP, Natalie Elphicke, a meeting to discuss the proposals with the head of KCC Highways and senior technical officers had been agreed but this has now to wait until the present emergency has receded. The Gridlock Plan cannot be presented to the community until its technical feasibility has been confirmed but you can be assured that, both in the Gridlock Group and Parish Council, work to tackle the traffic problems will resume as soon as life gets back to something near normal.

In the meantime, it appears that action on the yellow lines proposals should go ahead and the Parish Council requires community support for these proposals.

Please feedback comments to info@stmargaretspc.co.uk or leave a message 01304 892535