CWMDU AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

CYNGOR CYMUNED CWMDU A’R CYLCH

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Boat House, Coed-yr-Ynys Road, Llangynidr, Powys. NP8 1NA

**Minutes of a Council meeting 4th May 2023**

**Present**

**Chairman:** John Williams (JW) – via Zoom but connection poor so Vice Chairperson Les Doggett (LD) chaired the meeting.

**Councillors:** Hank Jackson (RDHJ), Paul Silk (EPS), Martin Pearse (MP), William Forster (WF), Selena Clay (SC).

**In Attendance**: County Councillor Sian Cox (CSC), County Councillor Matt Beecham and Sue Dale (Clerk).

# Election of Chairman – JW was elected

# Election of Vice Chairman – LD was elected

# Appointment of representatives for;

# Discover Llangorse and Bwlch Initiative – RDHJ was appointed and is to ask for representation to talk about the work of the Initiative to the Council.

One Voice Wales – LD was appointed and is to ask for a clear and concise description of the aims of the organisation.

# Apologies:

 Kate Logan (KL), John Jones (JJ) and David Meyer (DM)

CCllr S-J Beecham (S-JB)

# Declarations of Interest: None

# Public participation

 None

# Minutes of the meetings 6/4/2023.An amendment was called for and agreed; Item 11 the last sentence (Cwmdu and District Community Council has traffic management and environmental concerns) deleted. Approved.

# Matters Arising (information only)Item 11 the Councillors expressed the view that more information about the proposed development should be available.

# Powys County Council matters.

CSC reminded the Councillors about the Climate and Nature Emergency Conference at Llandrindod Wells on the 14th June, there are some transport opportunities available for participants.

CSC asked that the following letter be read into the minutes:



**From:** Councillor Sian Cox
**Sent:** 10 May 2023 20:24
**To:** TransportOrdersBranch@gov.wales <TransportOrdersBranch@gov.wales>
**Subject:** Objection to proposal to exempt the A40 through Bwlch, South Powys, from the new default 20 MPH speed limit

Dear Madam/Sir

I write in my capacity as ward councillor for Llangors with Bwlch, and also as a resident of the ward who travels regularly through Bwlch, to register my concerns about and my objection to the proposal to exempt two sections of the A40 through Bwlch from the new default 20 mile-per-hour speed limit.

The excess speed at which vehicles of all kinds, from motorcycle to articulated lorry, routinely travel through Bwlch was by far the most common issue raised with me during my campaign for election in 2022, and by residents contacting me since.

I provide, below, my own experience of witnessing the speed of vehicles through Bwlch and the experience of residents in Bwlch who live in the houses along the sections of the A40 proposed to be exempted from the new speed limit.

During my campaigning, over eight weeks, I walked the A40 through Bwlch along its full length, numerous times.  I also stood speaking to people on their doorsteps along the route. Since being elected I have again walked the route numerous times, and again stood talking to people on their doorsteps.  On none of those occasions was the routine speed travelled by most vehicles under or at the speed limit. The majority of vehicles, in my experience, travel in excess of the speed limit. Speeds are particularly high on the straight section of road leading from the walled incline south of the junction with the B4560 out of the village north towards Brecon, and the section leading from the hairpin bend at the south end of the village down the hill towards the turn to LLangynidr.  Once drivers heading north have navigated the bend above the walled incline, and drivers heading south have navigated the hairpin bend, they begin to accelerate. The problem is particularly acute, and dangerous, on the stretch leading north out of the village, which is lined with residential homes and includes pavements along which children walk to catch their school bus.

**Resident testimony:**

A resident from Buckland Drive whose house backs onto the A40 informed me that drivers accelerate down the hill in the Brecon direction as soon as they crest the hill. The crest of the hill is a few hundred yards south of the junction with the B4560.  Ending the 20 MPH limit at the junction, as is proposed, will leave a long section of road and the houses along it, and the residents who live along it, exposed to the same high frequency speeding that they are already exposed to.

Other residents whose houses are adjacent to the road along the length of the section leading north out of the village tell me that the speed of traffic causes their houses to shake; and that it causes anyone standing on the doorstep or the pavement to be rocked physically. I have experienced this myself when standing at their doorsteps.

One resident described witnessing a person being knocked into the road from the pavement outside her house by the backdraft of a speeding lorry.

Another told me that the speed of cars’ and lorries’ backdraft knocks her door knocker continuously.

Another told me that vehicles of all kinds exceed the speed limit, in both directions, and that the biggest problem for him is motorcycles, especially at weekends. The speeds are dangerous, and the noise is almost unbearable. He believes that many of them have modified the silencers on their motorcycles, to maximise the noise output, and the noise is worse the higher the speed. The problem is at its worst at the end of the straight going north out of the village.

Another resident on this section told me that there is a drain in the road outside the house and that every time a lorry drives over the drain, the house shakes. He told me that there are structural cracks as a result and that the company DrainForce advised him that in order to reduce the structural impact on the house, the drain required to be lead-lined.

Where there is pavement on that section of road, it is very narrow, and at the northern end there is no pavement at all.  The narrowness/absence of pavement and the speed of vehicles mean that the road is not safe to walk.  An elderly resident of that section of road told me that the backdraft from speeding vehicles has always been strong enough to affect a walker’s balance and now that his balance is also affected adversely by age and ill health, he can no longer walk anywhere from his house; the risk of his being knocked into the road by the backdraft from speeding vehicles is too great.

At least two of the households on that section of the road include young children, some of whom catch their school bus on the junction of the B4560.  The road is not safe for those children to walk alone to catch the bus.  Where the pavement is narrow, and wherever there is no pavement, the speed limit should be 20 MPH.

Another resident of that section of road told me that by the time lorries coming north reach his house, their speed is such that the house shakes ‘like an earthquake’. He has a greenhouse on the opposite side of his garden from the road, at least 30 yards from the road, and told me that whenever a lorry drives past, the plants all shake as though buffeted by a high wind.

He also has drains outside his house, on both sides of the road. He told me that whichever side lorries are driving on, the house shakes.  He has lived in the house for 40 years and says that the problem is getting worse and worse, speeds higher and higher, and the stone wall in his garden that borders the road is shifting.

Another resident of that section witnessed a near-crash outside his home, when a vehicle driving at the 30 MPH speed limit was overtaken by a speeding van which nearly crashed head-on with a vehicle speeding down in the opposite direction.

Another told me that he witnessed a lorry mounting the pavement and bending the permanent bollard directly outside his house to avoid another lorry speeding down in the opposite direction and encroaching into the wrong side of the road.  The bollard is less than 2 feet from the front wall of the house; it is still bent out of shape from the collision.

The same resident told me that he has structural damage to his property because of the speed of the vehicles on the road outside; and that crack-resistant rendering with which he re-pointed the front of his house three years ago is already cracking.

Residents along both sections of road proposed for exemption tell me that pulling out in their cars from the driveways of these houses, in either direction, is frightening, because cars come at high speed in both directions.

On the southern side of the village, on the road down towards the hairpin bend, a couple who have lived for 32 years in a house adjacent to the road told me that they witness the speeding all day every day, in both directions, and have witnessed several near-crashes.  One of these was when a driver accelerated downhill after clearing the bend and nearly crashed into the rear car of a queue of cars stationary behind a waiting car indicating right to cross over to a house on the other side of the road.

This resident also said that every time he drives north through the village from his house near the hairpin bend, by the time he reaches the flat section at the top of the hill, he has a queue of cars behind him. In a rural area like ours, a car travelling with open road in front of him and a line of cars behind is a sign that the car in front is driving at a lower speed than the drivers in the cars behind wish to drive at.

In my view and the view of residents along both of the potentially exempt stretches of road, reducing the speed limit to 20 MPH through the whole village, from its furthest southern boundary to its furthest northern boundary, is necessary simply in order to achieve a reduction in speed even to 30 MPH.  Our reasoning is that if the 30 MPH limit is routinely exceeded by a majority of drivers, the same will be true of the 20MPH limit; but that, with a limit of 20 MPH, the speeds at which it is exceeded might be lower; closer to 30MPH than to the 40-50 MPH frequent currently.

In my view, and in the view of the residents along the road at the southern end of the village, the new 20 MPH limit should be implemented throughout the village and, in addition to this, either be extended itself to the bottom of the southern hill, or a 30 MPH buffer zone be created from the edge of the current limited zone to the bottom of the hill.

Firstly, as mentioned above, vehicles accelerate as soon as they have navigated the hairpin bend. Residents in a house on the side of the hill just outside the speed-limited zone told me that on two occasions when waiting in their car to turn right into their drive, facing downhill and indicating, vehicles accelerating from the bend have crashed into them from behind.

The same couple told me that their hedge-cutters fear for their own safety and that of their vehicles when cutting the hedges; and that when their hedge is being cut, throughout the job, the residents stand on the pavement with a large sign saying ‘Slow Down’ to try to keep the workmen safe.

I can testify from my own experience that while parked in the layby outside these residents’ driveway, adjacent to the road, the backdraft from cars and lorries speeding up the hill rocked my car.

Secondly, vehicles exiting Old Road at the bottom of the hill and turning right to drive south are turning into the path of speeding cars and lorries, many of them exceeding the 30 MPH limit long before it ends and travelling even faster by the time they reach the Old Road junction.

The Statement of Reasons sets out that ‘a 20 MPH speed limit should generally be set where pedestrians and/or cyclists and motor vehicles mix in a frequent manner, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe.’

Firstly, the routine high speeds of vehicles of all kinds through Bwlch village has rendered it a village where foot traffic and cycling is less frequent than it would be were the speed limit to be observed by drivers or enforced by the police.  The lower frequency of foot traffic and cycling is caused by and is a consequence of the high speeds travelled by vehicles.  It would be doing the residents of the village a gross disservice to cite the lower frequency of foot traffic and cycling as justification for a decision to maintain the 30 MPH limit.

Secondly, none of us can imagine what the ‘strong evidence that higher speeds are safe’ can be. If evidence that ‘higher speeds are safe’ in Bwlch exists, please provide me with its detail, in order that I might share it with the people who live there.

I formally and respectfully ask that no part of the A40 through Bwlch be exempt from the new 20MPH limit.

With thanks and kind regards,



Cynghorydd / County Councillor Sian Cox

Cynghorydd Llangors â Bwlch/ Councillor for Llangors with Bwlch

Aelod Cabinet ar gyfer Powys Ofalgar / Cabinet Member for a Caring Powys

E-bost / Email: **cllr.sian.cox@powys.gov.uk**

Ffôn symudol / Mobile Phone: 0780 505 3786

Winter roads – this is a categorising process for most used roads. There are 20 categories labelled by a letter of the alphabet. It is a chance for residents to have their say.

There is said to be a consultation on Gilestone Farm, Talybont, the farm that Welsh Government bought for £4.5 million.

Grants Tesco’s Community Grant and the Shared Prosperity Fund. The second round of which is for small businesses.

MB remarked that the winter consultation from Powys County Council closes on 14/5/23.

Highways- the pot holes by Cwmdu Village Hall have been reported.

Drainage works in Tretower, where no work has taken place in the last month. There has been an issue with the formal notification process. The exact position of the works and how this may impact travel (especially for school children) will be circulated when available.

# Planning Applications

23/21912/FUL, The Acre, Darren Road, Bwlch. Replacement Shed. Approved contingent upon all legal forms being observed.

# Correspondence – Councillors are notified of incoming email from external bodies, some are listed here:

21/4, Transport meeting Thursday 11/5/23, 10-12.30pm, by zoom.

5/4, Quarterly Town and Community Council meeting run by Powys County Council 27/4, contact clerk. Clerk to circulate the minutes when they are available.
6/4, Road closure at Cwmdu U0503 un 16/6/23. Circulated and discussed in item 9.

31/3/23, Electoral reform, a statement from the Minister – circulated.

# Financials

 Cheques for approval

 - Sue Dale, Clerks salary Mar 23 £465.20

 - Insurance £425.33

 - Allotment rent £200.00 approval only

 - One Voice Wales Membership £190.00

 - Website service £251.00

Report on Annual Governance for the Annual Return was approved.

# Consideration of a draft voluntary register of interests.

Councillors did not want to consider this item at this time, to be adjourned until the next meeting.

# Consideration of support for Cwmdu Hall enabling them to connect to wi-fi.

The £200 needed to register the property will be supplied, but taken out of any grant for the Hall in year.

Prop: WF Sec: RDHJ.

# The website needs some maintenance (£71 internet services, £180 maintenance).

Approved.

# Ann Williams Almshouses accounts for last year are presented for approval.

Approved, Prop RDHJ, Sec WF. Some Councillors questioned the necessity whilst other councillors wanted to continue the tradition.

# The consultation on the introduction of a 20 mile an hour speed limit on some roads is open. The closing date is 12th May 2023. There is an opportunity to raise the issue to One Voice Wales Annual General Meeting. To be discussed and action agreed.

Cwmdu is not have a 20mph section, even though Tretower will. It seems. that Bwlch will get 2 short sections of 20mph and no 40mph buffer zones. MB suggested that budgetary constraints may be responsible and it might be beneficial to wait for new Welsh Government guidance.

Personal views and objections should be sent to Welsh Government.

See item 9 for CSC’s response to the Welsh Government plan.

# To appoint a speedwatch representative to establish and organise the group.

There might be a difficulty in Bwlch to find a long enough straight stretch of road. But the Police surveyor would look at that. Of the Councillors present there seemed little interest at the moment.

# To select several dates for litter picking and appoint a representative to organise.

Councillors felt that the roads are too dangerous, revisit the item in September or when the roads are slower.

# Insurance selection.

Of the 3 quotes Zurich Municipal was preferred as value for money and comprehensiveness.

# Confirmation of the role of the internal auditor.

Approved. The single meeting format for this meeting was not universally appreciated and according to tradition this item should have been listed on the annual council meeting

# The trees at Fedw Wood are monitored regular, the trees at Cwmdu Sports Ground need similar.

WF felt that there may be an accommodation to be made regarding the monitoring at the Sports Ground.

# Update on the closure of Bwlch Post Office and possible substitute services.

There has been no progress, no reply to CSC’s 2nd email. The tentative interest has not progressed, which was due, it was felt, to the risks associated with any venture.

# Update on the proposed meeting with Crickhowell Town Council, Llangors, Llangynidr and Cwmdu and District Community Councils.

The meeting on 17th May 23, at 7.00pm in Bwlch Village Hall is confirmed.

# **Requests to support coronation celebrations to be considered.**

 It was decided to award each of the three halls up to £150 each. Receipts to be supplied after the event, along with photos of the events.

# Winter service consultation

Please see item 9.

# Update on Fedw Wood documentation

MP had left the meeting and it was decided to adjourn the item.

# Approval of draft letter to the Deputy Minister concerning the speed limit through Cwmdu on the A479.

Circulate and approved for sending. Prop: WF, Sec: SC.

# Any other business:

None

The Chairperson closed the meeting at 9.18pm.

The date of the next meeting is 1st of June 2023 at Tretower Village Hall.