

Councillor Briefing Notes Meeting: 26th April 2022

Appendix 1

Notes from VZSW Meeting

Date: 13th April 2022

Attending: Cllr Mark Williams DFPC – Lead on VZSW Project, Jackie Bennetts -Clerk DFPC, Sara Sloman – Secretary to Dartmoor Commoners' Council, Karla McKechnie- Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer, Kerry Whitting – D&C Police, Verity Nicholls and Graham Colton – Peek Hill Farm

Apologies : Richard Glanville – Burrator PC and Justine Colton – Tor Royal

Welcome and Introductions: Those in attendance expressed disappointment that there was no representation from DNPA or DCC Highways.

Aim of the Project : Mark Williams outlined the aims of the project, timescales and the purpose of the meeting. The aim of the project being to improve road safety and reduce animal deaths/injuries on the B3212 between Dousland and Princetown. The project comprises three main elements:

- 1) Hi Viz collars for ponies and cattle
- 2) Signage to encourage drivers to reduce speed and be aware of animals on/near the road
- 3) A Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) to alert drivers to excess speed

DFPC has been awarded a grant of £6306.

Aim of the Meeting: to gather input from stakeholders with regard to the three measures and to form a working group to take the initiative forwards and expand to other roads on Dartmoor, if this proves successful.

- 1) **Hi Viz Collars** – Pony collars come in 3 sizes, S, M, L plus Cattle Collars

Verity Nicholls kindly agreed to take the sample collar to try for size on one of her ponies. She will be able to put collars on a small number (approx. 30) ponies in June/July with the rest being put on at the time of the 'drift'.

An order for 150x Cattle collars, 40x Small and 40x Med Pony collars will be placed (subject to the sizing being correct) for distribution to farmers with cattle and ponies grazing that section of the moor.

- 2) **Signage** – agreeing on appropriate additional signage has been problematic, in that Highways have very strict guidelines regarding the type of signs permissible on the road. Existing signs are thought to be effective with tourists and those less familiar with the moor/road, but the group felt that generally local drivers cease to 'see' the signs over time. The addition of red flashing lights on some signs has been effective in raising awareness of them.

The original aim of the project was to place two signs, one at each end of the stretch of road, alerting drivers to the fact that animals may be found on or near the road. This has now been reduced to one red warning triangle with a cow or horse on it – the site of which is yet to be determined.

A number of questions were raised about the existing DNPA signage;

- a) Many of the current brown signs are in a state of disrepair, is there any plan for DNPA to repair or replace them?
- b) Was it possible to change the signs periodically to alert drivers to particular issues i.e. lambing, foaling, darker evenings, etc to keep the message fresh?

- 3) **Vehicle Activated Sign** – a new VAS to replace the current one sited at Leeden Tor Carparks, releasing that one so it can be placed elsewhere. Generally felt that this is effective with responsible drivers, who are reminded about their excess speed, but does little to prevent the ‘boy racers’.

A number of questions were raised regarding this

- a) If additional money were available, would it be possible to site an additional VAS at the Princetown end of the road?
- b) Who harvests the data from the VAS? Thought to be DNPA (Andrew Watson?) It was felt that access to this data was crucial to be able to measure the effectiveness of the project over time. DLPS do have historical data, which they have used to provide pie chart type information. DFPC Clerk to email DLPS to access the information is possible.

General Discussion, Comments or Questions

- a) Karla DLPS provides a monthly update to DNPA on the number of injured/dead animals, including those occurring on/near roads.
- b) All agreed that there is underreporting of animal deaths/injuries as farmers often just deal with the dead animal with out reporting it.
- c) All felt that as a group it would be more effective when approaching DNPA and Devon Highways.
- d) Suggested that joint press releases, social media campaigns, and a co-ordinated launch would have the best impact. This needs to have a strong ‘educating’ people message. Launch - Suggested that a date in mid June 18/19th would coincide with an event in Princetown (British Mountaineering Council)
- e) Discussed the differing approach taken when local police attending incident vs traffic police. Traffic police more likely to issue a driver awareness course. Group felt that educating drivers is important aspect of road safety and perhaps all drivers involved in animal death on road should undertake driver awareness course. Likened to the change in public perception around Drink or Drug driving over the years.
- f) Concern over people continuing to feed the ponies in an around carparks and on roads – again this needs increased signage to raise awareness of the harm it does by attracting animals towards the road, as well as the risk of causing death by feeding inappropriate food. Perhaps sandwich boards by each ice cream van?
- g) Dartmoor Commoner’s Council felt they had a positive and constructive relationship with DNPA.
- h) All felt it is crucial to get DNP Rangers onboard with the project and to attend the launch.
- i) Speed Watch was felt to be a good initiative and Kerry (D&C Police) said it should be possible to work more closely together i.e. have a Police presence at more sessions
- j) Police Speed Camera van was thought to be effective, even if it didn’t actually catch that many people speeding – it acts as a good reminder/deterrent (as did Speed Watch)
- k) Invisible fencing / collars which keep cattle within a set area were discussed – currently on trial in small areas on Dartmoor – not considered an option for B3212 due to animals having to cross road to access drinking water.
- l) Fencing – took 15yrs of campaigning to get the A386 fenced at Blackdown. Not feasible for B3212.
- m) Verity – offered to fund raise for additional funds, which would also raise awareness of the issue.
- n) Traffic Calming options were discussed (as on the Whitchurch – Horrabridge road) Thought generally to be effective, as when roadworks are in place/contraflow in operation on moorland roads it causes drivers to reduce their speeds.
- o) Important to educate drivers – information in visitor centres, car parks, school children involvement, local businesses to remind workers

Next meeting arranged: Weds 11th May 2pm Princetown Community Centre – felt it is v important that representatives from DNPA and Highways attend this.

Proposed launch date : 18/19th June tbc