

Flockton Bypass Group

Meeting With Cllr.McBride & Liz Twitchett 14.9.18

Introduction To Audience

Why Has The Issue Of A Bypass Been Raised Once More?

1. Concern Following Recent Accidents
2. General Unrest Amongst Residents For Varied Reasons (Incl. Effect Of New Developments)
3. Initial Support For Petition
4. Original Public Meeting & Subsequent Forming Of Flockton Bypass Group

Subsequent Support, Research, Questions, & Statements.

5. Supported By Residents, Neighbours, And Road Users
6. Door To Door Support – Petition, Posters & Banners
7. Support Via Internet – Social Media Groups & Dedicated Website
8. Road Users Canvassed – Peak Time Traffic

Research Undertaken Raising Questions to Be Asked

9. Historical Background Going Back 80 Years
10. Government's Major Road Network – Announcement & Kirklees Plans
11. No Funding Request For The A637 – Comparison To Others
12. Lack Of Understanding/Ownership By Authorities Of Current Restrictions re HGVs
13. Traffic Data Collection – It's Implications For A Major A-Road

Statements, Comments, Concerns & Supporters Etc – With Further Questioning

14. Acknowledgements Of “The Problem” That Exists
15. Cross Party Support & Views
16. Possibility For A Feasibility Study – Revised Department For Transport Guidance
17. Commitment From The Government To Improve The Infrastructure In The North

What Do We See As The Benefits Of A Bypass/Relief Road?

Benefits To Residents And Neighbours

18. Recent Closure As Proof Of Reduced Traffic Levels
19. Cleaner Air Within The Village Boundaries
20. Less Stress To Residents
21. No “One Way” Route For HGVs – Impact On All Villages Currently Affected

Benefits To All Road Users

22. Commuters And Leisure Journeys - Times Lessened
23. Freight Traffic Journeys – Times And Fuel Usages Lessened
24. HGV Drivers – No “Misunderstanding” Of Signage

Benefits To Others

25. Buying & Selling Of Properties Within The Village – No “Problem” Road
26. Less “Policing” Of Restrictions Etc.

Since Actioned By Authorities To Date & Future Proposals

27. Safety Of Schoolchildren
28. Changes To Traffic Light Timings
29. Changes To HGV Signage Re Restrictions & Subsequent Enforcement
30. Proposed 20mph Zone

Any Further Questions From The Audience

Thanks To All In Attendance At The Meeting

Walk-Through & Observations Of Traffic And The Main Problem Areas And Hazards

Relaying Of Any Follow Up To This Morning

Thanks To Councillors And Officials For Their Time

Information And Questions Relating To Points

1. November 2017. 2 accidents within a very short space of time. Air ambulance to one local resident on the way up to Grange Moor. The second was a car containing 2 elderly people which overturned after hitting the raised kerb at the chicane at the entry to the village. As featured in the Examiner with JP. A petition calling for a bypass was then set in motion by KM after discussion with councillors.
2. Varying degrees of general unrest were by then appearing on social media, and many conversations went on throughout the village about long held concerns. These included :-

Safety for pedestrians on the narrow footpaths, i.e. Walking younger children to school, especially at peak times, and elder unaccompanied children walking to the bus stops at such times. Those walking their dogs, cyclists and equestrians struggling on the road.

The HGVs. Volume of vehicles and their ever-increasing sizes. Many transgressing the restrictions by travelling eastwards from Grange Moor, including more and more with foreign plates.

The 2 housing developments, with another going through planning, and several other new properties underway. Over 150 houses, almost all 3 bedroomed or more, which would quite likely increase the village's population by over 30%, with an approximated 250+ more cars coming and going several times a day, having to turn into or off the already busy road, further slowing traffic down and creating additional queuing. Not to forget additional delivery vans etc., both adding to the levels of pollution and delaying everyone's journey times.

Speeds of vehicles through the village and beyond. Often obviously in excess of 40mph, and even 50mph, especially later in the evenings.

Lack of parking spaces causing many to park on pavements along Barnsley Road, often impairing the vision of those wanting to access the road from other streets or from their own properties. Many more now own cars than they did when the majority of houses were built after all.

3. The initial petition of over 800 signatures was presented to Cllr.McBride in mid-January. When questioned about the recently announced funding (Kirklees proposals re the Government's Major Road Network consultations in the Examiner just before Xmas), the rather curt response given was "What money? I don't know what you're talking about". Much more research was to follow.
4. A General Public Meeting was held a day or two later, attended by over 130 residents and several from neighbouring communities. Kirklees Council's Highways Department declined an invitation. Local MP Paula Sherriff attended, as did the 3 local councillors, Parish Councillor, and a representative of the police. Our MP gave her support, as did all councillors. It was agreed to form an Action Group as a result of the meeting given the general feelings from the floor. Our MP agreed to contact the Government's Transport Ministry, which she duly did. Subsequently, at a further smaller meeting, 10 or so residents formed the Flockton Bypass Group, with the councillors being included for meetings and supporting the action.
- 5-8. Support quickly grew. Group members visited residents in Flockton, and also many of those in neighbouring villages within the Kirklees boundary, with the vast majority more than happy to sign the petition. Banners and posters were produced and displayed, as were car stickers. An offshoot of the Community Group on facebook was set up, as was a dedicated website, www.flocktonbypass.co.uk, complete with a link to an internet petition set up previously. Road users were handed leaflets as

they queued at peak times, with many saying it couldn't come quickly enough, about time there was one, etc. Many of these signed the petition over the internet as can be seen by the printed version. Approximate traffic counts done at the time suggested some 1200/1300 vehicles travel through the village at peak time in the mornings, this being approx.7.45 to 8.45. Over 20 per minute, including many of the larger type vehicles. Several companies have since been contacted with details of those seemingly transgressing the restrictions, most replying with apologies and action to follow, whilst supporting our action for a bypass. This is an ongoing action.

9. Originally discussed in 1931. 87 years ago. And many times since, even with plans for a short relief road on the outskirts of the village, a road possibly 2 miles in length that residents have been demanding over the years, as opposed to a multi-million pound link road connecting the 2 motorways. Construction of such a road would only partially reduce the problems faced in Flockton. Such a road is still probably 20 years away from possible construction at best. Why, when traffic has increased to such an extent, is there still no relief road for what was originally a horse and cart track, still with road narrowings and narrow, or even no, pavements in many parts?

1934 saw roughly 2.5 million vehicles on the roads, with lorries, not HGVs, carrying freight.

1951 brought another call for a relief road, app.4.5 million , including 2 million other than private/light goods.

1971 proposals/agreements saw us with app.13.5 million in total, and app.2.5million others.

1991 again proposals/agreements, now up to app.25 million in total, including app.3 million others.

2017 shows that these have risen to app.37.5million in total, including app.4.5 million others.

A 50% increase then over just the past 26 years, when it was agreed that traffic should be taken off the A637. And HGVs are much bigger and heavier generally, carrying more per load. A massive workload on the A637.

10-11. Plans for a Major and Strategic Road Network were set in motion several years ago, with all local authorities requested to draw up their proposals based on various aspects, although mainly economical. These had to be announced before the end of 2017, with public consultations then to follow over the next 3 months. All of which was seemingly kept very quiet from the general public. Done deals almost some may say.

The announcement pre-Xmas 2017 has been mentioned previously, with questioning of why some roads yet nothing for the A637, a road listed as being part of the Major Road Network, and therefore qualifying for review. Compared to say the Holmfirth Relief Road, with few residents safety concerns affected, or the Cooper Bridge road with zero safety concerns for zero residents. Recent changes to "qualifying" community aspects meant this was entirely possible, not being totally reliant on purely economical benefits. We question whether or not the A637 was ever discussed, and if so, why was it dismissed.

Even the Transport For The North "public" consultations were extremely low-key and went basically unannounced to the "public". But this was picked up by a councillor from a neighbouring ward, and notified to the Bypass Group, with an extra meeting being hastily arranged and attended, with questions being asked, and concerns raised at the meeting and later forwarded. "It's harder making a case for northern routes such as this compared to the south" was more or less the answer we received when stating our case. Despite Government recognizing the need for improving the infrastructure in the north, The whole point of the consultations in fact..

12. Current restrictions and “one-way” routing of HGVs involving Flockton and nearby Netherton were put in place many years ago. With anomalies it now appears, hence the recent Road Traffic Order request for changes to signage, hopefully clarifying who has access and who hasn’t, who should issue traffic violations and bring to court if necessary etc. Other authorities (Trading Standards Departments etc) round the country have been able to deal with such enforcement of restrictions. Has Kirklees or any other department ever issued any tickets or prosecuted during the time these restrictions have been in place?

An e-mail was sent yesterday to one firm whose wagon was seen travelling eastwards through the village, others are still seen regularly. Enforcement is required, otherwise why have signage, other than as a deterrent?

13. Data was gathered quite recently at seven points within the village re vehicle numbers and types, mean speeds and 85thile speeds. A summary was forwarded to the Group with some very alarming figures, especially where speeds were concerned (& the number of large vehicles travelling the “wrong” way, even after deducting such as the PSVs allowed through).

Unfortunately, we have been informed that to obtain the full data would cost us £616, or £88 per set. Why the big secret we ask? Is the cost a deterrent? It certainly doesn’t cost that much for someone to run a few photocopies off and send them out after all. To be continued.

As a consequence of this, and quite possibly combined with the visit of Kirklees CEO a few months back, speed reduction zones are being proposed. So the problem has been acknowledged. And the problem is on a road classified as a part of the Major Road Network.

14-16. “The Problem” that is the A637 through Flockton. As mentioned above in fact. A problem acknowledged by many, not only in the past but more recently too. Often called a “rat run”, but how much of one is it really? Vehicles coming from where going to where? The main consensus has always appeared to be from the M1 to the M62, hence the need for a “Link” road, but not wanted by locals.

Why then not wanted? Because much of the traffic is not “cutting the corner”, or even “corners”. One route involving via Huddersfield, the other going “over the tops” to Cooper Bridge. Much of the traffic is local commuting, local deliveries, local freight transfers.

We even had the Grange Moor development several years ago, but was any thought given to the A637 then? Was there any monies forthcoming for local infrastructure from this development and if so, where was it used?

Talking of which, where is the Section 106 monies from the new developments to be allocated? Is there anything there for Flockton’s infrastructure, including any improvements to traffic flow etc?

14-16. Contd.

“The Problem” has already been acknowledged by the Kirklees CEO, as we all witnessed on her walk through and discussions with several parents. Subsequent action has indeed followed, or is ongoing.

It has also been acknowledged by Keith Bloomfield in his e-mail we received a while ago, stating that “Given the revised DfT guidance, it is my opinion that it would be beneficial if a study was commissioned. The proposed study would look at the benefits of upgrading the A637 which may also include a bypass of Flockton and other interventions in the vicinity”. He goes on to say that substantial funding would be required to commission this study, but, if and when available, it can be done.

Such a study would cost substantially less than the £300k for a study for a Shipley relief road announced this week, with the involvement of the Rt.Hon Chris Grayling MP and Government Minister. Who has himself also stated along the lines of “Is that all it would be? Well that wouldn’t cost very much at all, would it?”, when he visited Huddersfield on the 2nd February and spoke with members of the Bypass Group, inspecting a previously proposed short relief road.

It was also acknowledged as “A problem” during a meeting of Kirklees Cabinet by Cllr.McBride when questioned by Cllr.Smith. A bypass “would only move the problem elsewhere” was the short reply. The problem being that Flockton has suffered with “The Problem” long enough. And it gets worse year by year, as volumes and sizes continue to grow. As we ourselves see daily.

17. Previously mentioned in 10-11. Above. We simply want the Flockton infrastructure improving given all the above facts.

18-26. The Benefits. Self-explanatory really. At least over 4500 can see the benefits, the number of signatories on the petition to date. And still on the increase. The police have commented themselves only this week that something has to be done with this road, so they also see the benefits a bypass would bring.

27-30. Actioned & Proposed.

Barrier installed at the zebra crossing by school & Hi-Visibility jackets being looked into for schoolchildren.

Pressure pads reinstalled at the traffic lights to improve the traffic flow, and make it safer and easier for traffic emerging from Doctor Lane and nearby properties.

New signage for the restrictions and subsequent enforcement has been mentioned previously. This is soon to be carried out we understand. But the enforcement needs to be an ongoing process.

The proposals for the speed reduction zone have been sent to all households and there is to be consultation before finalising we believe. Discussions have taken place on social media and locally, with worries about policing and where the zones are to start and finish. The general feeling is that if it slows the traffic, then it must only be of benefit, but how regularly will, or even can, it be policed. One of the main concerns is that of school times, when traffic is generally at its slowest anyway. Much of the excessive speeding is during the evening and night after all. A greatly reduced level of traffic is surely a better outcome all round, with reduced speed zones at school times favoured.

Our commitment is to the residents and all who use the road through the village, ourselves and friends and families included. Before it’s too late for someone. There have been too many accidents over the years, even though many have been “non-reportable” and therefore not included with the statistics that produce actions.

It so nearly could have been too late for someone at 1.45 on Wednesday afternoon. Thankfully not an hour and a half or so later. 2 people just going about their rightful business, doing no wrong. The road was at fault. It’s design, it’s limitations. As it is now, it is no longer fit for purpose. Widening is out of the question. A one-way system for all is out of the question. (There was chaos on other local roads during the recent road closure, so such as this would have a very similar effect all year round).

Being part of the Major Road Network has its implications for any such measures as well. Improvements are almost impossible without ripping the village apart, at a greater cost all round than a simple relief road. A bypass is by far and away the best solution all round, and at very little cost, especially to Kirklees, in the grand scheme of things. However, it would have cost an awful lot less 87 years ago. Now is the time to put this right and give Flockton its much-needed relief from all this. A bypass. Finally.

Flockton Bypass Group

(Produced and compiled by David Rawling on behalf of the Flockton Bypass Group)