

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Report**

Committee:	Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee
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Title:	Animal Casualties on New Forest Roads
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Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. For many years the death and injury of New Forest livestock and deer has been the cause of concern to the Verderers, Commoners, residents and users of the New Forest. This report seeks to highlight the issues and sets out the role of the County Council, as Highway and Traffic Authority, in ongoing animal accident reduction, as well as outline the current approach and future direction.

2. Contextual Information

2.1. The Animal Accident Reduction Group (AARG) was set up in 2007 to improve analysis of the animal accident statistics and promote coordination between the organisations involved with the management of the New Forest with the aim of reducing the number and severity of traffic accidents involving Commoners' stock and Deer.

2.2. The organisations represented on the AARG are the Verderers, Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire Constabulary, Commoners' Defence Association, British Deer Society, New Forest Trust and a Parish Councils' representative.

2.3. The meetings are held twice a year, in spring and autumn, are chaired by the Clerk to the Verderers, and facilitated by the New Forest National Park Authority.

3. Background

3.1. The New Forest is nationally important as an area of woodland, pasture, heath and bog. Many of the agricultural practices conceded by the Crown to local people have been retained. This is principally the depasturing of ponies, cattle, pigs, sheep and donkeys in the open forest, known as Commoning which continues today.

3.2. The Verderers regulate Commoning and have a wider responsibility to conserve and protect the New Forest and its traditions. Agisters are employed to assist

the Verderers and are responsible for supervising the day to day welfare of the Commoners' livestock.

- 3.3. The reduction of animal accidents has always been an important aim within the New Forest.
- 3.4. Historically measures to reduce animal accidents and improve road safety have included:
 - The provision of unique and conspicuous signs at all forest entrances,
 - Introduction of the New Forest 40mph zone,
 - Wide scale publicity to improve public awareness,
 - Signing at sites with a history of animal accidents and high risk routes,
 - Police enforcement,
 - Encouraging the use of fenced routes for commuter travel,
 - Application of carriageway edge lines,
 - Increased and larger warning signs,
 - Improved roadside visibility.
- 3.5. A significant reduction in animal accidents was achieved following the introduction of a forest wide 40mph speed limit, and many of the above measures continue to be discussed today.
- 3.6. It is notable that the highest risk routes identified in the 1980s remain the highest risk routes today, although the numbers of animal accidents has seen a significant reduction.

4. Animal Accident Reduction

- 4.1. The numbers of animal accidents have been steadily reducing since 1985. In 2014 there were 91 animal accidents, including 68 deaths representing 0.73% of depastured stock. In comparison the highest numbers of accidents since detailed recording started was in 1991 when a total of 222 accidents occurred, including 182 deaths representing 2.84% of the depastured stock at that time. The number of animal accidents occurring year on year since 1985 is shown as Appendix A.
- 4.2. This data has been used by the New Forest National Park Authority to develop a map which is proving useful in the identification of animal accident clusters and high risk routes. This map is published on the New Forest National Park web site and is attached as Appendix B.
- 4.3. From this map it is clear that the majority of animal accidents occur on just three routes:
 - B3078 Cadnam to Godshill
 - B3054 Hatchet Pond to Portmore
 - B3056 Beaulieu to LyndhurstThere are additionally higher numbers of animal accidents forming cluster sites from Picket Post to Burley Street.

5. Current Initiatives

- 5.1. A number of initiatives are ongoing with the aim of increasing driver awareness and reducing animal accidents. These are being taken forward by a number of different organisations represented on or associated with the Animal Accident Reduction Group. Initiatives include emergency hotline cards, publicity such as window stickers and media releases, temporary animal accident marker signs, reflective collars, hit and run reward scheme, funding for mobile camera speed enforcement, country watch exhibitions including interviews with drivers, visitor information, cutting back of roadside vegetation, events for learner and new drivers and Commoner engagement.
- 5.2 Hampshire County Council contributes to animal accident reduction in a number of ways. One important area is the general maintenance of the public highway and in particular the New Forest 40mph zone and the village 30mph speed limits. The speed limits are applied throughout the New Forest through the use of road marking roundels rather than upright repeater signs reflecting the unique character of the New Forest.
- 5.3 Trial Traffic Calming on Burley Road, Brockenhurst

In September 2010 a series of pinch points were installed on a trial basis with the aim of reducing traffic speeds and improving safety for Commoners' animals in an area with a history of animal accidents. The scheme followed a campaign by the South Weirs Action Group and discussion with the local County Council Member, the Police and Brockenhurst Parish Council.

The trial scheme was slightly successful in achieving modest reductions in both animal accidents and human casualties, as well as achieving a small reduction in traffic speeds in both directions of between 1 and 5 miles per hour.

In September 2013, following consultation on the first phase of the trial scheme, recommendations were made for some modifications. This work took place in early October this year. A further review of the continuing trial scheme will take place in 2017/18.

The full cost of applying the original trial scheme and implementing the 2013 recommendations is expected to be in the region of £50,000 - £60,000. This approach is unlikely to be extended widely to high risk animal accidents sites across the New Forest for a number of reasons including site suitability and high delivery costs, as well as the relatively limited impact on animal and human casualties.

5.4 Changing Slogan Signs

Signs warning of animals are an important traffic management feature within the New Forest. There is a challenge in applying this signing in a way that does not detract from the open landscape whilst providing an appropriate level of guidance to drivers.

In September 2010 the B3054 between Lymington and Dibden Purlieu was the subject of a sign rationalisation and changing slogan trial scheme where nine animal related information and warning signs were removed, and four replaced with wild ponies warning signs with a changing slogan poster below that are changed on a seasonal basis.

In the years since the schemes implementation animal accidents have seen a modest reduction. Whilst these results are positive, it cannot be proven that this

is entirely due to the signing and it is acknowledged that there may be other contributing factors. However, it does demonstrate that a reduction in signing does not increase the risk of animal accidents occurring.

A further scheme is now being proposed for the B3078, Godshill to Brook, which will extend the changing slogan trial to a site in the north of the Forest. This scheme will take a different direction as it will not seek to significantly reduce the level of signing already in existence but will enhance and update it through a wider use of changing slogans. The reason for this differing approach reflects, the higher numbers of animal accidents that occur, and the reduced take up of reflective pony collars.

This scheme is currently being developed and will retain some static 'WATCH OUT Animals on the road DAY AND NIGHT' signs but will also replace some of those signs with wild ponies warning signs that have changing slogan posters. Included in the 2015/16 County Traffic Management Programme the aim is to complete the works by Spring 2016.

The future of the changing slogan signs are reliant upon a consistent resource being available. Currently these signs are made and deployed on the B3054 by Term Highway Contractor, following orders from the Traffic Management Team who fund the signs. The team are currently exploring alternative options for 2016/17 for the supply and deployment, including the possibility of engaging parish lengthsman or voluntary organisations to deploy the seasonal posters.

5.5 Casualty Reduction

Casualty reduction is embedded in the County Councils' Transport aims and objectives, and meeting road safety targets is a priority. Within this service the County Council routinely monitors road casualty data including site and route assessment. Recently a site has been identified on the B3078 Roger Penny Way, between Longcross Plain and the B3080 junction, and included in the 2015/16 Safety Engineering Routes Assessment Programme. A cluster of accidents has been identified in this area that involves animals, where cars have swerved to avoid them and left the carriageway. Following further investigation a package of measure is proposed that includes refurbishment of road markings and speed limit roundels.

5.6. Road Markings

Road marking that depict the wild ponies warning are being considered for wider use in the New Forest National Park. These require Department for Transport authorisation which is subject to application. Previous authority has been granted for the road marking to be used specifically at Crockford Bridge on the B3054 between Lymington and Beaulieu, but we are now seeking to achieve a New Forest wide authorisation for a larger marking.

Edge lining is being used at many sites to highlight the road edges as well as help to highlight the presence of livestock at the roadside through breaking the continuity of the line. However, the benefits of the measure have to be balanced with the increase in maintenance costs and the potential increase in traffic speeds as drivers have a greater confidence about the road space they may occupy.

5.7 Traffic Monitoring

The Verderers are currently funding 80% of a mobile camera unit to carry out traffic speed enforcement, targeted towards high risk animal accident sites. This initiative commenced in October 2014 and the County Council is carrying out some monitoring of traffic speeds at six established monitoring sites to enable early evaluation of the impact this initiative may be having on traffic speeds generally. This has been carried out at the request of the Animal Accident Reduction Group. The monitoring has concluded that there has generally been an increase in traffic volumes and speeds across the sites, but a significant increase in traffic speeds has been noted on the B3078 which is also a high risk animal accident route. The speed enforcement initiative is more likely to have a longer term impact and is not expected to achieve significant results in the short term. The monitoring exercise will realise benefits through informing enforcement activity.

6. **Measures Considered and Rejected**

6.1. Fencing High Risk Routes

Fencing was carried out on the main primary through routes during the 1960s and 70s, following the fencing and gridding of the Forest perambulation. These routes are as follows and remain fenced today:

A31 (Ringwood to Cadnam Trunk Road)

A35 (Ashurst to Christchurch)

A337 (Lyndhurst to Lymington)

A337 (Cadnam to Lyndhurst)

Animal underpasses exist on all these fenced routes to facilitate the movement of livestock between areas of the Forest.

Whilst fencing would reduce animal accidents it is not considered appropriate to carry out further fencing of Forest roads. This is not only because of additional management and maintenance but because fencing would destroy the unique open nature of the Forest and have a detrimental impact on the commoning tradition. Furthermore, it could have a detrimental impact on the enjoyment of the Forest, its natural beauty, ecological diversity, heritage, economy and communities. Fencing would see the Forest segregated into smaller parcels that will create problems in respect of numbers turned out into areas for grazing purposes.

The fencing of routes would require the amendment of the New Forest Act.

6.2 Blanket 30mph Speed Limit

The existing blanket 40mph speed limit applies to the secondary through routes and to Forest byroads. Its introduction resulted in a significant reduction in animal accidents. Recent monitoring of six sites on high risk routes has concluded that whilst there is a general compliance across most of these sites, traffic speeds have increased on the B3078.

The combination of 30 and 40mph speed limits across the Forest is realistic in terms of meeting driver expectation and consequently achieves a reasonable level of compliance. The speed limits are applied in a unique way that reflects the unique and environmentally sensitive nature of the Forest. There is a clear

distinction between the village environments and rural routes. Drivers, in the main, appreciate the need for the blanket 40mph speed limit and for this reason it is effective.

It is worth noting that speed limit assessment criteria takes account of human road casualty history, the degree of development, the presence of amenities that attract a wide range of road user, vulnerable road user activity, traffic volume and speed. In many cases the Forest roads would not meet the criteria for a lower level 30mph or 40mph speed limit. The blanket 40mph speed limit represents a departure from Department for Transport criteria to offer special protection that reflects the presence of free roaming livestock..

The application of a blanket 30mph speed limit cannot be justified for the following reasons:

There will be no clear distinction between the village environment and the rural routes. Drivers react to the surrounding environment and rely on visual cues to justify a change in speed limit, such as visible development, footways or pedestrian activity. Many drivers are unlikely to appreciate the need for the lower speed limit and therefore compliance levels would be likely to drop causing an unmanageable enforcement task. It could cause further road safety problems with expectations of lower speeds not being met and the potential for misjudgement, tailgating and inappropriate overtaking.

Analysis of accident data involves identifying patterns and considering whether treatment can be applied to reduce the likelihood of a similar occurrence. This can be a complex process and unfortunately there is not enough data on animal accidents to make this analysis possible. There are many reasons why road traffic accidents happen and this will similarly be the case with animal accidents. There is no clear evidence to suggest that a 30mph speed limit will have a significant impact on animal accidents.

7. Future Direction

7.1. New Forest Signing Strategy

A New Forest signing strategy would support the draft New Forest Sign Guidance. This could include a rationale on the application of warning signs, road markings, changing slogan posters and static messages. The strategy could consider the treatment of high, medium and low risk routes, and the outcomes of the different sign approaches on the B3054 and B3078. The strategy may also include other aspects of signing such as directional signing.

7.2. Average Speed Cameras

There is an aspiration to investigate the use of Average Speed Cameras. The Police have already given some consideration to their use in the New Forest but their use is currently cost prohibitive. Aside from cost there are also issues in achieving the necessary 3G mobile signal and an electrical supply.

A system would need to include, as a minimum, two cameras to cover entry and exit, which must be positioned on a clear road with no side roads, and with a clear, known, distance between each camera, as well as a back office system for processing.

A basic system is likely to cost in the region of £100,000 and extension to the system may cost around £40,000 for each individual addition. Currently there is

no funding available to provide such a system and this position is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

Whilst dummy cameras could be used at a lesser cost they are unlikely to be effective as drivers will need to be convinced that they are operational and therefore enforcement is key to achieving the desired outcome.

It is also important to consider the impact of the cameras themselves on the landscape of the New Forest.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1. The Animal Accident Reduction Group provides a good forum for discussion and information sharing, and provides opportunities to work collaboratively. For this reason the County Council should continue to support the group through Officer attendance at the regular meetings and the provision of advice.
- 8.2. The County Council will continue to monitor road casualty data and investigate locations and routes where treatable accident patterns exist. Although not directly related to animal accident reduction, there may be a casualty history that arises from the animal presence and therefore the treatment of those sites may also support a reduction in animal accidents.
- 8.3. The County Council will continue to progress current initiatives, including exploring the options for ongoing delivery of slogan sign changes, and work towards introducing a New Forest Signing Strategy.
- 8.4. The County Council will further consult the Police on the future investigation of an average speed camera trial on a secondary through Forest route.
- 8.5. Future initiatives and schemes may be developed, subject to relative priority, where resources are available and delivery funding can be secured through County Council budgets and/or through external sources.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.

3. Climate Change:

3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

3.2. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.