

## **Dirleton Village Association**

### **Minute of Open Meeting of Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022**

#### **The meeting was held in the Kirk Hall**

**Present: D. Tait (Chairman), J. Macleod, F. McClintock, D. Carter, A. Orr, S. Oliver, B. Ford, M. Chynoweth, V. & B. Nimmo, G. Presslie, D. Holloway, B. Thomson, E & E. Burn, J. & M. Hutchison, A. Scott, M. Davidson, C & A. Tweedie, V. Currie, C. Lindsay**

**Apologies: S. Paterson Brown, C. Hamer**

The meeting had been advertised as an open community meeting to discuss road safety issues and possible solutions for the Castle Inn blind junction and the castle garden wall tower blind corner. Every resident was sent either an email or a leaflet inviting them to the meeting. (Please could anyone not receiving mail from the DVA but who wishes to, please contact Janice MacLeod.) Notification of the meeting was also posted in the village notice board and in the bus shelters.

#### **1. Traffic Calming Measures Presentation and Discussion**

Derek Carter (DC) explained the background to the discussion: A DVA member had approached the committee on several occasions to say that they had seen vehicles exiting illegally at the Castle Inn corner, and that this was a danger to traffic and cyclists coming down the hill from the direction of Gullane past the blind junction, and that the DVA committee should take action. Following this up, the DVA committee kept a record of reported incidents, mainly over May and June. The total number of witnessed incidents of vehicles exiting out of the No Entry/Exit stood at 23 at the time of the meeting. Only a few volunteers actually took the trouble to send in sightings when they happened to be in the area. Therefore the total number of vehicles which are actually exiting through the junction is likely to be very much higher. The Incident Report was circulated to the meeting and is attached to this minute. The police were contacted in one case but they responded to say that they would not be taking any action.

In addition to this, residents, mostly parents, had complained to the DVA committee concerning 3 other safety fears in that section of the Main Road:

- There is a danger that children or dogs will run out onto the road from behind the Castle Inn blind corner
- There is a danger that children or dogs will run out from behind the castle garden wall Tower blind corner
- The footpath around the garden tower is too narrow for buggies and wheelchairs and which are therefore forced to go onto the road.

The DVA committee formed a sub-committee to consider what action, if any, to take. This consists of Simon Paterson Brown, Carl Hamer and Derek Carter, with John Finlay also assisting. A set of proposals were produced for discussion by the community.

### **The DVA committee's proposals for community discussion**

The presentation was made by DC in the absence of the other sub-committee members. This was followed by questions and discussion.

He began by saying that 2 simpler options had been considered first: Blocking off the Castle Inn corner exit completely and making all of Manse Road from the Castle Inn corner to the East Lodge crossroads one way.

Blocking off would mean that all traffic- cars, coaches and lorries, entering that part of Manse Road would have to carry out a 3 point turn in the road or in the Castle Inn car park and return along the north side of the Green. The north side of the Green is narrower, and has no kerbing. All traffic, including everything going to the Castle Inn, (the majority) would be re-routed in and out along the north section. This option would eliminate the exiting traffic danger, but carried out alone, would not address the other 3 identified safety issues. Keeping the No Entry arrangement and combining this with one way signage as far as the East Lodge crossroads would not change the existing situation in the Castle Inn car park, and therefore the primary existing safety issue (vehicles exiting from there onto the main road) would not be addressed. Carried out alone, this solution would also fail to address the 3 other identified safety issues on Main Road.

It became clear to the sub-committee therefore, that any potential study would need to focus on the section of the main road from the Castle Inn corner to the Tower, including its approaches.

DC explained that, in broad terms, there are two ways which the Council Roads department could approach this: firstly the regulatory one- with more signs and white lining, or secondly, the traffic calming one, which uses various road reconfigurations to slow down traffic and to alert drivers and make them aware that they are entering a village centre, and that they therefore need to proceed cautiously. The incident report shows that the regulatory approach is failing in Dirleton. Traffic calming schemes have been used since 2007, and thousands of rural villages now have them installed- some bad some good. DC showed an example of Best Practice- the Dorset AONB rural villages 'toolkit'. He also showed an example of a good scheme at Rogate which had similar village centre safety issues to Dirleton.

The community would have to insist that any scheme, whether it uses regulatory or traffic calming devices, would need to be designed to minimise any visual impact on the historic character of the Green, and this question of conservation area impact is also an important issue for the community to decide when considering its options.

DC then showed slides of the DVA committee's ideas for discussion:

- The corner of the Castle Inn pavement could be built out, narrowing down the main road. This would allow traffic exiting from Manse Road to roll forward into a position where it can see around the blind corner. At the same time, traffic coming down the hill on the main road would need to proceed more cautiously because of the road narrowing and would be able to see any vehicles emerging from Manse Road.
- In association with this, the junction could be widened to give more through road space between parked cars in the car park. The improved sightlines would make the

failing No Entry signs redundant, as they would allow all Castle Inn traffic to exit directly onto the main road more safely. This would also reduce the amount of traffic around the Green, as the Castle Inn is the main generator of traffic movements.

- This build out would allow pedestrians to emerge from the blind corner and to see and be seen. The road crossing across the busier main road would be shorter.
- The road around the tower blind corner could be moved away from the tower sufficiently to allow for a 1.2 metre wide path, and a 2 metre wide 'joining up' of the existing road verge. This would provide a refuge for pedestrians wanting to cross the road. They would have better visibility around the corner before stepping onto the road, and would be seen earlier by drivers coming from the east.
- A further option was shown: a road narrowing a safe distance from the tower to slow down approaching traffic from the east before it reaches the tower bend.
- A change of road colour to say buff for the calmed section was also suggested. This would emphasise the different mixed user function of that section of the Green, and would further reduce the 'through road' and 'vehicle priority' characteristics of the present road.

## Questions and Discussion

Dave Holloway (DH) said that residents living along the Castle Inn section would not want any solution which increased the amount of traffic entering from the East Lodge crossroads and that making the Castle Inn junction two way would make it more difficult for residents entering from the main road. DC felt that the proposed widening of the bellmouth at the junction would make it easier to enter, and that it would be better for residents if all Castle Inn traffic could enter and leave by the direct main road junction. He said that the committee would look at the question of traffic flows into Manse Road south from the East Lodge crossroads.

Some speakers felt that there would need to be priority signs for the two road 'chicanes'. DC felt that this would speed up traffic, and that it would be better to use the uncertainty of no priority to slow traffic as it approached the road narrowings, but ELC Roads would make that decision.

Malcolm Davidson (MD) said that all that was needed was for the No Entry signs to be moved closer to the Castle Inn. DC explained that the parking bays in front of the Castle Inn required 5 metres out from the porch entrances.

The question of traffic speed was discussed. The majority of the speakers said that they had seen vehicles exceeding the 20mph limit. The traffic survey point at the Amalfi would give misleading information, because parked cars there reduced speeds at that point. DC said that even at 20mph, bad visibility and limited braking time at the two blind corners still creates a safety problem. He said that a proper survey of traffic speeds would form part of the Council's Road Safety Audit. This would form part of the Council's response to the community.

The question of buses and emergency access was discussed. DC said that the Council Roads department would need to consult the bus company and the emergency services, but that the opening up of the bellmouth at the Castle Inn junction would make access easier. The width of road narrowings to suit HGVs and buses would be determined by the Roads Department.

There was discussion concerning the likelihood of an accident happening. It was stated that the situation has existed for hundreds of years, so why does it need to be changed? DC said that there is an increased risk associated with faster, larger, quieter, modern vehicles. Fred McClintock said that with the existing road configuration it could be proved that an accident, involving injury or death will happen one day, the question is when.

DC said that this question is also related to responsibility for any future accident. The DVA committee is offering proposals which balance the community's worries about road safety with the need to protect the historic appearance of the Green, and in doing so it has discharged its responsibility. Responsibility now rests with the community as to what if anything is put to the Council.

Jim Hutchison (JH) said that he was against the proposals and that they were unnecessary. He read out extracts from a Department for Transport online article which identified problems which can occur with speed reduction elements, such as drivers accelerating towards chicanes to get through before oncoming traffic. DC said that East Lothian Council Transportation department would be the authority for road safety in this case, and they would make all decisions relating to design elements used in a Dirleton scheme in accordance with overall guidance from the Department for Transport.

Christian Lindsay asked about the side road from the car park which would be close to any build out at the Castle Inn corner. DC said that that is likely to be an issue for the Road department designers, and that 'Stop' white lining and a 'road narrows to the left' sign are currently shown on the DVA committee's proposals.

Anne Orr (AO) asked about financing. DC said that the Roads department would provide an estimate of costs for any agreed scheme. There is currently £44,000 left in the transportation Area Partnership budget for this financial year (post- meeting note- AO reports from the last Community Council meeting that Gullane plan to apply for £11,000). Next year's budget would be £50,000. SPB has received information from the Area Partnership about 2 other grant schemes.

DC then asked the meeting to come forward with any alternative suggestions.

Margaret Chynoweth asked whether a raised road 'table' would work. DC thought that the ELC Road department would probably want to avoid using speed bumps because it is a bus route, but that a table could certainly be put to them as an option.

Barry Thomson (BT) suggested traffic flow plates or alligator teeth to stop traffic from exiting at the Castle inn corner.

DH suggested CCTV. That would need to be monitored and enforced.

DC proposed that the meeting, rather than adopting any particular proposals, might forward all the committee's proposals and the meeting's alternative suggestions to the Council as 'suggestions and ideas' for the Council Roads department to come up with a proposal of its own. This way forward was seconded by Dave Holloway. There was one comment against. Malcolm Davidson said that he was against anything being forwarded to the Council.

## 2. Consultation about Reinstalling Kirk Railing

DC explained that the restoration of the railings removed during the war as part of the war memorial setting project was discussed and had been approved in a series of DVA meetings before Covid, and subsequently by East Lothian Planning and Historic Environment Scotland. However, since that time a number of individuals have said that they disagree with this. The DVA committee has therefore asked the community to vote on whether or not to action this, in order to find out the majority view. The church congregation has also been invited to take part in this vote.

## 3. DVA Summary of Discussion from Community Afternoon, 27<sup>th</sup> August

DC said that the DVA committee had used the event to ask the community about its wishes and priorities for the next period 5 year from 2022- 2027. This would be used to guide the DVA committee's work over the next 5 years. The community's 2017 priorities were on display, along with current projects. The top votes in order were:

1 The derelict village hall: restore for community storage use	18 votes
2 The traffic calming and streetscape suggestions for the Castle Inn Junction/Tower Main Road area	16 votes
3 Specifically: Widen the footpath at the castle wall tower.	8 votes
4 The derelict village hall: refurbish for a new use (craft centre, small business hub etc)	8 votes
5 Specifically: The build-out at the Castle Inn corner	7 votes
6 The derelict village hall: demolish	7 votes
7 Protect all green spaces in and around the village and support wildlife	7 votes
8 Complete the heritage lighting around the Green	6 votes
9 Campaign for a cyclepath to Drem Station	5 votes
10 Reinstate the bonfire	5 votes
11 Play facilities for younger and older child age groups	5 votes

The DVA committee would now organise a community-wide questionnaire to supplement the above. (As in 2017)

## 4. Planning Update

Castlemains Farm.

David Tait said that CH was continuing to follow up on aspects of the construction which are not in accordance with the approved drawings. For instance, the roof tiles currently being used are not to the agreed specification.

Proposal for a house behind the Castle Inn. Planning application **22/00978/P**.

Sue Oliver asked if the DVA committee would be putting in an objection. DC said that this was likely due to architectural design and conservation area concerns, and that neighbours' objections were always incorporated into DVA planning submissions if possible.

## 5. Appointment of Independent Examiner for DVA Accounts

The Independent Examiner (IE) for the DVA's annual accounts, Sandy Kirkwood, had indicated he would no longer be available to be the IE for this year's and subsequent year's accounts.

Mike MacPhee had indicated his willingness to undertake the role and his appointment was duly approved by two DVA committee members.

## **6. AOCB**

There was none to report.

## **7. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting (committee) was scheduled for Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October. The next full meeting, which would be the AGM, was scheduled for Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November.

## **ACTIONS**

Carried over