

Portmoak Community Council

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Jim Valentine
Depute Chief Executive,
Sustainability, Strategy and Entrepreneurial Development,
Perth and Kinross Council
2 High Street
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Dear Mr Valentine

Traffic in Portmoak (A911) and (B9097).

Response to PKC consultations on solutions to traffic problems in the villages of Scotlandwell and Kinnesswood and along the B9097 (South Loch Road).

Preliminary Comment: Westfield Restoration and Regeneration Project, Fife.

Portmoak Community Council (CC) is grateful to our Ward Councillors for their invitation to respond to proposals from PKC for improving pedestrian and vehicular safety across Portmoak. This letter summarises our view on what have been longstanding problems, on the solutions offered by PKC and on what we believe is a cost-effective strategy to achieve their resolution.

While these issues have long been recognised by the community, the current consultations provide an opportunity to bring together a number of disparate problems and to examine the case for a coherent solution. Our views have been informed by continuing and interested discussions with local residents, businesses, parents and our local school. Indeed, two recent meetings held to discuss: first, proposed traffic calming in Scotlandwell and Kinnesswood by traffic light control; and second, proposed traffic flow along the B9097, attracted upwards of 70 and 15 members of the public respectively.

Since our consideration of these proposals began some 6 weeks ago the CC has learned of an application for Planning Permission in Principle (PPiP), by Hargreaves Services (Westfield) Limited (the applicant) for the **Westfield Restoration and Regeneration Project** at the Westfield Opencast Coal Site (OCCS) near Kinglassie (Fife Planning Application 16/03361/EIA). Although in Fife this Site adjoins Portmoak. The proposed and only designated HGV route for servicing the Site links it from the M90 at Junction 5 along the B9097 to the Site entrance off the C50.

Background.

The parish of Portmoak extends for 5 miles along both the eastern and southern banks of Loch Leven. The 1,400 or so residents live mainly in the principal settlements of Kinnesswood, Scotlandwell, Wester Balgedie and Glenlomond. These lie to the east of the Loch and are served by the A911 which runs from Kinross and Milnathort en route to Glenrothes, central and east Fife. In contrast the five mile stretch lying to the south of the Loch is sparsely populated. It is served by the B9097 which also runs from the M90 and Kinross via Auchmuirbridge to Glenrothes central and east Fife. These roads differ significantly in two important ways:

1. Traffic flows:

- **B9097 (south Loch Road).** This eastern section of the B9097 carries more than 4,300 vehicles per day of which 52 (1.2%) are HGVs and 353 (8.2%) are light or ordinary goods vehicles.

However, as a consequence of the proposed **Westfield Restoration and Regeneration Project** the **PKC Action Plan for the B9097** will require review to take account of the projected and significant increased demand for HGV transport as set out in the Transport Assessment for this project.

- **A911 (through Portmoak settlements).** There are approximately 3,500 vehicle movements each weekday of which 48 (1.4%) are HGVs and 221 (6.3%) are two axle trucks or buses.

2. Road structure:

- **The B9097 (south Loch Road).** This section of the road from the junction with the B966 was built to support the open cast coal mine at Westfield and is up to modern standards. The road is a standard 7.3m carriageway (ie two standard 3.6 metre lanes) and has 3.0m wide verges.
- **The A911 (through Portmoak settlements).** This is a much older road running through the heart of three old villages and their associated conservation areas. Through most of its length it is narrow - some 25% narrower than the B9097! The carriageway is usually of the order of 5.4m (ie two 2.7 metre lanes). There are often no verges and steep banking often abuts the road edge.

The problems as we see them.

We believe that, just as our roads must be safe for vehicles, all pedestrians must be able to walk safely and without risk within and between our settlements. There are significant parts of the A911 as it passes through Portmoak where that does not happen:

1. The approach to **Scotlandwell** from Kilmagadwood (the Church and Hall) and within the village of **Scotlandwell**. The carriageway on the approach to Scotlandwell is narrow (5.4m), runs between steep banking and has poor sight-lines. The only pavement is also very narrow - barely able to take one person. As a consequence large vehicles (including some agricultural vehicles) regularly run their wheels along the gutter. This in turn means they pass close to pedestrians who, from time to time, have been hit by wing mirrors. Perth and Kinross Council

has recognised that this is an unacceptable route for children walking from the village of Scotlandwell to the primary school in Kinnesswood. While that distance does not justify the provision of special school transport in normal circumstances, such transport is nevertheless provided by PKC as the risk to children’s safety is too high. Out of school hours the same children and indeed adults at all times face risk as they use the footpath to reach the Hall, Church and onwards to the only shop in Kinnesswood. Within Scotlandwell the carriageway on Main Street is narrow and pavements on either side are virtually non-existent. We are also aware that, despite the use of build-outs, a number of vehicles travel too fast. It is our view that 30mph is too fast for the prevailing road conditions within this village.

2. Within the village of **Kinnesswood** pavements are either absent or very narrow and, taken with the already narrow carriageway, there are particular difficulties when HGVs meet on Main Street where they frequently require to mount the narrow pavements to pass. This means that they are passing close to the front doors of many homes. Houses are being damaged both from vehicles hitting rain water pipes and from vibration. Listed buildings are at risk. Importantly pedestrian safety cannot be guaranteed. We are also aware that despite the use of build-outs a number of vehicles travel too fast. As in Scotlandwell it is our view that 30mph is too fast for the prevailing road conditions. The photograph below illustrates the problem.



3. **The B9097 (South Loch Road).** The CC considered only that part of the PKC Action Plan for the B9097 relevant to the B9097 as it lies within the boundary of Portmoak. The CC recognises that:

- the eastern section of the B9097 (South Loch Road) carries more than 4,300 vehicles per day. (In comparison the western section of the same road carries 1,400 vehicles per day.)
- 14.7 percent of westbound traffic on the eastern section is recorded as travelling above 60mph and of that 0.7% is recorded as travelling at excessive speed.
- in contrast, 23.7 percent of eastbound traffic on this section is recorded as travelling above 60mph and that 1.5% is recorded as travelling at excessive speed.
- speeding is a recognised problem: drivers travelling at 60mph are regularly overtaken and speeding motorbikes are a problem particularly at weekends.
- there are three blind summits west of East Brackley and a number of unmarked entrances.
- there are major visitor centres at RSPB Loch Leven and at Findatie where there are large car parks.

The solutions as we see them.

The CC is conscious of the need to find cost-effective solutions to our traffic problems. It recognises that the A911 and B9097 routes across Portmoak are part of wider traffic flows from and across Kinross-shire to centres in central and east Fife. It notes that prolonging time along a route can be an effective way of discouraging Sat Nav driven transit vehicles, particularly HGVs.

The CC believe it is now timely to review traffic flows across Kinross-shire which, as a result, should include provisions for clearly marked and optimum routes for traffic:

- leaving and seeking to reach the M90;
- seeking to skirt around Loch Leven or the Lomond Hills; and
- seeking to take full advantage of the contribution of the new Kinross by-pass.

Within that context the CC strongly supports Kinross-shire Ward Councillors as they press for slip roads on the south side of Junction 7 at Milnathort.

PKC Traffic light proposals for Kinnesswood and Scotlandwell.

The CC considered the proposals for traffic light controls in both Kinnesswood and Scotlandwell. Across the community there was a unanimous view that these were not acceptable. They felt like a “heavy urban solution” where the costs outweigh the benefits. There would be significant problems in managing traffic flow over such long stretches of traffic-light controlled single track. For example: how would bulk deliveries to properties be affected? At busy times traffic would queue at either end and pass through in a convoy with, as a consequence, increased noise and traffic pollution in the vicinity of the lights. The specific needs of emergency services and of large agricultural machinery would need to be assessed. Specifically the CC acknowledged that in:

Kinnesswood - there was a real danger that the viability of the shop and garage would be compromised; and concern that it would not be possible to gain ready access to and from some 32 properties along Main Street

Scotlandwell - the proposed traffic light solution being three-way was more complex leading to longer wait times. Additionally it could mean: relocating bus halts particularly at the entrance to Well Road; easy entry and exit to the Well Inn could be compromised; and it could lead to traffic, once through the lights, speeding up through the village.

1. Alternative solutions for the A911

- a) **Signage:** new signage signalling entry to a “*traffic calmed zone for 4 miles*” placed at the entrances to Scotlandwell and Wester Balgedie;
- b) **Speed restrictions:** speed reduction to 20mph through the settlements of Wester and Easter Balgedie, Kinnesswood and Scotlandwell, backed up with appropriate warning electronic signs. This could also discourage drivers from accelerating to pass build-outs particularly at the periphery of villages.
- c) **Diversion of transiting HGVs:** The CC believes that transiting HGVs should as far as practicable be diverted away from the A911 settlements. (This would require appropriate signage: at exits from the M90; within Kinross and Milnathort; and at Auchmuir bridge.)
- d) **Additional build-outs** at particular pinch points to safeguard pedestrians.
- e) **Enforcement of the law relating to escorts** for certain large agricultural vehicles.

2. Alternative solutions For the B9097

The CC recommends the following solutions:

- a) **Speed restriction:** Whether or not the road meets PKC’s criteria for a restricted speed limit the community believes that it is desirable in the interests of the safety of ALL road users that speed should be restricted to a maximum of 50mph from the junction with the B996 eastward to the junction at Findatie and there should be a further reduction to 40mph around the junction at RSPB Loch Leven to lessen the risk of collision with vehicles travelling eastward and seeking to turn right into RSPB Loch Leven. Speed restrictions must be enforced.
- b) **Blind Summits:** There are three blind summits. All three require suitable warning signs with associated road markings.
- c) **B920/B9097 Junction Island:** The CC supports the installation of a bollard with a Keep Left arrow on an island at this junction.
- d) **Unmarked entrances:** Signs advising of entrances currently unmarked should be provided. This relates particularly to West and East Brackley and the Findatie cabins. East Brackley entrance serves six houses with planning permission extant for more.
- e) **Reclassification of the B9097 to an “A” classification.** The Community Council considers that re-classification of the South Loch section of the B9097 from “B” to an “A” classification be considered.

Although outwith the scope of the B9097 Report, the CC notes that Ward Councillors confirmed that within the next two years outstanding surfacing would be completed together with new cats eyes and fresh road markings throughout.

As already indicated any solutions for this road would need to take account of plans to commission the B9097 as the only designated HGV route for servicing the **Westfield Restoration and Regeneration Project** at the Westfield Opencast Coal Site (OCCS) in Fife.

3. Solutions for the narrow pavement extending from Scotlandwell up to the Church and beyond.

Arrangements to improve safety for all pedestrians using the pavement leading from the village to the Church and beyond. This is a longstanding and significant problem. It remains a priority for the CC that progress is made in reaching a solution for this particular section of the A911. The CC has been told that Ward Councillors have had preliminary discussions with PKC officers on the matter but that there are no specific proposals to consider at this time. The CC understands that, until an option appraisal by PKC of possible solutions is concluded, progress towards a solution is stalled. It recommends that options to provide an improved and safe pedestrian route from the village up to the Church Hall and beyond are presented in the near future for consultation.

The CC emphasise that identifying a solution for this problem is a priority. It acknowledges that it would be helpful to have a coherent solution that addresses both pedestrian and pavement problems within Scotlandwell.

Summary - Key Points.

Although the CC has rejected proposals for the control of traffic in the villages of Kinnesswood and Scotlandwell by traffic lights, it has identified significant problems in respect of traffic flow across Portmoak and of pedestrian safety. It recommends that the elements of a coherent cost effective solution should include:

1. Signage:

- a) Improved signage across Kinross-shire which provides for traffic leaving and seeking to reach the M90 with optimum routes that are clearly marked and which take into account of: the best routes for skirting around Loch Leven or the Lomond Hills; and the contribution of the new Kinross by-pass.
- b) New signage signalling entry to a “traffic calmed zone for 4 miles” placed at the entrances to Scotlandwell and Wester Balgedie;
- c) Signage that specifically discourages (or prohibits except for access) transiting HGVs from using the A911 as it crosses through the settlements of Portmoak.

2. Speed restrictions:

- a) Speed restrictions on the A911 to 20mph through the settlements of Wester and Easter Balgedie, Kinnesswood and Scotlandwell, backed up with appropriate warning electronic signs.

- b) Speed restrictions on the B9097 to a maximum of 50mph from the junction with the B996 eastward to the junction at Findatie together with a further reduction to 40mph around the junction at RSPB Loch Leven to lessen the risk of collision with vehicles travelling eastward and seeking to turn right into RSPB Loch Leven.
3. **Build-outs.** The Community Council affirms its support for build-outs and would wish to explore their further use.
4. **Safe pedestrian route from the village up to the Church Hall and beyond.** The CC requests that options to provide an improved route are presented in the near future for consultation.

Representatives of the Community Council would welcome an opportunity to discuss the points made in this letter.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Strang Steel
Chairman
for Portmoak Community Council

Hard Copy to Mr Valentine follows and to PKC Ward Councillors

cc
Councillor John Kellas
Ward Councillor Michael Barnacle
Ward Councillor David Cuthbert
Ward Councillor Joseph Giacobazzi
Ward Councillor William Robertson
Barbara Renton PKC
Willie Young PKC
Nick Brian PKC
Peter Marshall PKC
Steve Callan PKC
Charles Haggart PKC
Brian Cargill PKC
Daryl McKeown PKC
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