

To: Maidstone Joint Transportation Board
By: Tim Read (Head of Transportation)
Date: 23rd January 2013
Subject: Lorry Watch
Classification: Information only

Summary: This report gives background to the pilot Lorry Watch scheme launched in Leeds and Langley and provides information on the first two months of operation.

1 Background

- 1.1** Lorry Watch is a joint initiative between Kent County Council, Kent Police, The Kent Association of Local Councils and Parish Councils/local residents.
- 1.2** Lorry Watch aims to support and empower local residents in areas where issues with the through traffic of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) persist. Residents are provided with temporary signs to publicise the scheme and warn HGV drivers that it is underway. Local volunteers record the identifying features of large vehicles on unsuitable roads and these are passed onto Kent Police. Kent Police then contact the vehicle operators to enquire as to their purpose in the area.
- 1.3** It is important to note that the UK's economy relies on road haulage and in instances where it emerges that vehicles had a valid reason to be in an area e.g. local collections or deliveries this will be fed back to residents. Kent County Council appreciates the vibrancy of Kent's rural economy and in no way wants to penalise businesses that need to receive or dispatch HGVs. Lorry Watch aims to create an environment whereby the lines of communication between local residents and local businesses are open for all parties' mutual benefit.

2 Leeds and Langley Pilot

- 2.1** This pilot scheme was launched on the 14/11/12. This scheme focuses on the B2163 Leeds Rd which, although subject to a 17 tonne vehicle weight restriction, is often used as a cut through between the A20 and the A274. Temporary signs, provided by KCC, were erected by the Parish Councils on the 11/11/12 and the permanent width limit signs along the length of Horseshoes Lane are currently in the process of being upgraded.
- 2.2** The launch of the scheme went well and a number of local residents as well as journalists, Kent Police and KCC Members and officers were in attendance. Coverage in local media was positive and fairly widespread.

- 2.3** The local community has been encouraged and empowered to organise their Lorry Watch activities. Unfortunately following the launch the majority of those who signed up to the scheme have dropped out and currently the activities centre around two committed residents. The pilot was planned for three months but may have to be cut short due to these difficulties regarding retaining volunteers.
- 2.4** So far 186 vehicle reports had been received from the local volunteers. Of these:
- 100 (54%) vehicles had two axles and as such were not breaking the 17 tonne weight limit in place.
 - 48 (26%) of the vehicles reported were foreign registered.
 - 46 separate instances of UK owned vehicles that exceed the 17 tonne weight limit have been recorded by Kent Police.
- 2.5** Over half of those vehicles reported were not breaking the weight restriction. Although the volunteers have been provided with printed material to identify the size and weights of vehicles their perception is that these vehicles are too large for the road.
- 2.6** A quarter of all vehicles recorded were foreign registered and the majority of these were deemed to be exceeding the weight restriction. At the moment the Police are unable to contact the operators of foreign vehicles. KCC are currently working with the Police and others to explore ways of addressing this significant issue.
- 2.7** From the 46 reports where it has been possible to trace ownership details only three companies have appeared more than once. These three companies have been spotted in the area twice and as a result have been contacted by Kent Police and asked to explain their presence. The issues in the area do not appear to revolve around the same local companies frequently using the road but rather its use by a large amount of operators, based all over the UK. The next action to be taken forward by KCC will be to contact those named operators to identify any overlap regarding destination e.g. specific local farm. If this is the case it may be possible to ask the business to ensure that their delivery and collection routes are more suitable in the future.
- 2.8** The view of the volunteers is that less HGV traffic is now using the road. Whether this is also due to a slow down of economic activity around Christmas time will become apparent in the busier spring and summer months.
- 2.9** A number of other areas / Parishes have expressed an interest in the Lorry Watch scheme and these will now be moved forward where there is sufficient local interest.
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