

Dear Mr Preece

In a telephone conversation last week with Caroline at the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership, I was advised to write to you to register Bury Parish Council's application for an average speed camera installation in order to tackle the long-standing and many-layered problem of anti-social driving/riding on Bury Hill. I am a councillor with BPC and take the lead on road matters, among other things. The following notes are a summation of the reasons for our application:

Bury Hill acts as a magnet for motorcyclists from far afield at weekends, particularly through the summer, not least because many congregate at the White Ways cafe at the top of the hill.

A small but significant minority of those bikers persistently use Bury Hill as a racing circuit, often turning around at the top and bottom of the hill in order to repeat the circuit and often driving at excessive and dangerous speeds.

While many communities are currently trying to tackle the problem of antisocial driving/riding through their villages, Bury Parish Council considers the situation on Bury Hill to be exceptional if not unique in West Sussex, for the reasons explained here.

Bury Hill is currently governed by a 50mph speed limit. This means that Speedwatch activities cannot be carried out by the community.

Bury Hill is a particularly hazardous stretch of road: A steep incline, long bends and an uphill overtaking lane that is not separated from the oncoming traffic lane by any sort of central barrier.

The speeds at which some cars and a significant number of motorcyclists are travelling on Bury Hill are frightening. During the current police Operation Downsway, we have been informed by officers that bikers have even been clocked travelling at 120mph, which could attract a custodial sentence in the event of a successful prosecution.

The WSCC data box on Bury Hill is currently out of action. BPC has sent a request to WCC for this to be rectified. However, the data for the weekend of May 16/17 2020, when the box was working, makes shocking

reading. On the 16th, there were a total of 6,582 vehicle journeys on Bury Hill, of which 666 (10 percent) were motorcycles. Of those 6,582 vehicles, 2,684 (40.7 per cent) were travelling in excess of the speed limit. And of those, 112 vehicles were travelling in excess of 75mph. On Sunday, May 17th, there were 7,333 total journeys on Bury Hill, 1,490 of them being motorbikes (20.3 per cent). 2,515 vehicles were speeding (34.3 per cent). Of these, no fewer than 171 were travelling at speeds in excess of 75mph. The bulk of the speeding took place on both days between the hours of 0800 and 1600.

Anyone who has been in a car travelling down Bury Hill when speeding motorcyclists are travelling up it in the overtaking lane will know how terrifying this can be. When the bikers are taking the long left-hand bend they are leaning over so far their knees are almost touching the tarmac. And yet this incredibly dangerous balancing act at extreme speeds is being carried out only a few feet from oncoming traffic travelling down the hill, into which the bikers' trajectory would hurtle them and their machines if they were to lose traction. Without even a crash barrier between.

A commercial photographer is regularly stationed in the layby part-way up Bury Hill, taking photographs of bikers which are subsequently sold via the website Biker Pics. Irrespective of how unintended it might be, the photographer's actions encourage a minority of bikers to attempt dangerous and illegal speeds/manoeuvres. As does the presence of fellow enthusiasts at White Ways. Bikers are regularly seen performing 'wheelies' at speed along this stretch of road, for example.

Many of these speeding motorcycles are 'performance' bikes, with extremely loud engines. Some, as Operation Downsway has confirmed as well as previous such police operations, are fitted with illegal exhausts in order to make the noise even louder. Elsewhere in the county, the decibel level of some of these motorcycles has been metered, and decibel levels in excess of hearing of a 747 taking off from 300m have been recorded.

The noise from these motorbikes utterly wrecks the tranquility of the village of Bury, especially on a Sunday when motorbike numbers are greater. Bury lies in a hollow which acts as an amphitheatre, funnelling the sound through the village over long distances.

The screaming motorcycle engines are completely disrupting the 'relative tranquility' which SDNP Authority makes central to its planning policy. The SDNP Authority lists 'tranquil and unspoilt places' among the Special Qualities of the SDNP. However when you are walking on the Downs as far away as Amberley Peak or Bignor Hill on a summer Sunday, the sound of screaming motorcycle engines entirely disrupts the tranquility you might hope to enjoy there. This negates the very purpose of a national park.

Repeated exposure to these noise levels, especially over weekends outside normal working hours when residents might expect some relaxation, is detrimental to health. Causal relationships have been discovered between noise and psychological effects such as annoyance, psychiatric disorders, and effects on psychosocial well-being. Psychological health effects from noise include depression and anxiety. These psychological effects can lead to detriments in physical care in the form of reduced self-care, work-tolerance, and increased isolation. Auditory stimuli can serve as psychological triggers for individuals with post traumatic stress disorder.

For those walkers and cyclists using the South Downs Way, the problem is even more immediate as this National Trail has to cross the A29 at the top of Bury Hill and users must attempt to cross a road on which up to 40 per cent of traffic is speeding, with significant numbers travelling at over 75mph.

It can be seen from all the above that the problems of anti-social driving/riding on Bury Hill are far more widespread than a basic evaluation of KSI figures would reveal. Nevertheless, I have also requested collision data for Bury Hill over the past 5-10 years from SSRP, which of course you will have access to yourself. This can be appended to these notes in due course.

The residents of Bury have been deeply grateful for the 2020 police Operation Downsway which has seen police camera vans positioned on Bury Hill over a number of weekends and has brought about a corresponding marked reduction in speeding and noise levels.

Operation Downsway has been suspended, at least on Bury Hill, for the last few weeks at the time of writing and motorcycle numbers and noise levels have once again climbed. Residents and past parish council members report that this pattern is common to past police operations designed to tackle an anti-social riding/driving problem on Bury Hill that has grown ever worse over the last 15-20 years. Within hours of a police presence being withdrawn, speeding and noise begins to return.

Police presence clearly cannot be expected 24/7/365. Or even 52 weekends a year. For this reason, BPC is of the view that the only effective long-term solution to the unique problems of Bury Hill would be the installation of average speed cameras.

Evidence shows that where such installations have been used elsewhere in West Sussex and beyond, they significantly reduce speeding levels (and therefore decibel rates).

For BPC an average speed camera installation would have the added and significant benefit of not singling out any single type of road user for 'punishment' but instead deterring and recording illegal riding/driving by all road users.

There may be practical difficulties associated with siting such an installation on Bury Hill, given the lack of development at the top of the hill. However, in these days of technological advancement, it cannot be the case that such difficulties prevent a solution to what is a very pressing and long-standing issue, given a determined joint effort to resolve them.

While a camera installation would be our chief aim in resolving these very long-standing problems, BPC would also request that consideration be given to extending the 40 mph speed limit that begins around Bury Gate all the way up Bury Hill until the current national speed limit is reached at the top.

We would also propose some modest road lay-out changes, principally so that from the bottom of Bury Hill, the overtaking lane is not immediately available, thus discouraging traffic to accelerate heavily alongside the village. Plans for these suggestions can be provided.

