

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 24 February 2025

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Petition for traffic calming measures on Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne

Purpose: To consider a petition requesting traffic calming measures or speed reduction initiatives for Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to advise petitioners that:

- (1) Speed data gathered has shown that the vast majority of drivers are travelling at an appropriate speed for the conditions of the road and the environment through which it passes. For the reasons set out in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3, Beachy Head Road does not meet East Sussex County Council's policy criteria for a lower speed limit;**
 - (2) The road safety assessment of Beachy Head Road has concluded that the only highway measures that would potentially reduce the speed of the small number who drive in a dangerous or anti-social manner would be the widespread introduction of road narrowings and road humps. However, these measures would likely be ineffective due to the topography of the road and would have significant impact on emergency services vehicles and bus/coach services. For these reasons a street lighting and traffic calming scheme for Beachy Head Road is not appropriate;**
 - (3) A traffic sign and road marking enhancement scheme which will highlight the areas of the road where extra caution is needed will be taken forward and implemented in 2025/26 financial year; and**
 - (4) Concerns about vehicle speeds and driver behaviour has been shared with Sussex Police to enable continued targeted enforcement.**
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1 Background Information

1.1. At the County Council meeting on 8 October 2024, a petition was presented to the Chairman by Councillor Wright on behalf of a group of concerned members of the public, as well as local residents, following a number of incidents in 2024 including 2 tragic fatalities in April and August of that year. The petitioners are requesting traffic calming measures or speed reduction initiatives are implemented on Beachy Head Road in Eastbourne.

1.2. Standing Orders provide that where the Chairman considers it appropriate, petitions are considered by the relevant Committee or Lead Member and a spokesperson for the petitioners is invited to address the Committee. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment. A copy of the petition is available in the Members' Room.

2 Supporting Information

2.1. Beachy Head Road is a C class rural road which passes through part of the South Downs National Park. Except for a visitor centre and pub, there is no frontage development. The area

has no street lighting and is subject to the National Speed Limit. A location plan can be found at Appendix 1.

2.2. The setting of appropriate and effective speed limits has been subject to a significant level of research. It is important drivers are provided with a consistent message, so they know what is expected of them as they enter different road environments. A predominant factor considered when determining an effective speed limit is the number of properties that are visible to drivers.

2.3. Due to the very limited frontage development and local characteristics, Beachy Head Road does not meet the Council's policy requirements for a lower speed limit; therefore, the national speed limit applies. Whilst it is subject to the national speed limit, the onus is on the individual driver to drive in a safe and judicious manner, and to the conditions of the road and the surroundings through which they pass. It is recognised nationally that most drivers will travel at the speed they consider to be safe for the conditions of the road, and this is reflected in the speed data that has been collected. The vast majority of drivers using Beachy Head Road are choosing to travel at a speed far below the national speed limit.

2.4. Where the national speed limit applies, it is not necessary to provide repeater signs indicating the limit unless there is street lighting present. If a lower speed limit were to be introduced on Beachy Head Road, it would be necessary to provide speed limit repeater signs at regular intervals along the road. There is a risk that some drivers would see the new signed speed limit as a target or assume that it is safe and appropriate to drive to the limit throughout the area, which could result in increased speeds.

2.5. The Road Safety Team routinely engage with Sussex Police following crashes that result in a fatality or serious injury to discuss the full details of the crash, consider if there were any highway related causation factors and ensure appropriate action is taken if required. There were no highway related causation factors identified in the circumstances surrounding the fatal crashes that occurred on Beachy Head Road in 2024.

2.6. East Sussex County Council runs an annual programme whereby sites within the county that have 4 or more personal injury crashes recorded in a 3-year period are identified for investigation. For rural areas a radius of 50 metres is used. This analysis ensures that we are targeting our limited budget at the locations which will have the most impact at reducing the number of people being killed and seriously injured on our roads. No sites along Beachy Head Road have been identified for inclusion within this programme.

2.7. In addition to this, East Sussex County Council also runs an annual route study programme which focuses on A and B class roads, as they carry the highest volume of traffic, and the greater proportion of crashes occur on these routes. Beachy Head Road is a C class road and therefore does not form part of this programme of work.

2.8. The crash record for Beachy Head Road and Birling Gap Road shows there have been 19 crashes resulting in personal injury reported to the Police in the period between 1 October 2021 and 31 December 2024. A crash plan can be found at Appendix 2.

2.9. 24-hour speed data has been collected from 5 sites along Beachy Head Road and Birling Gap Road over a 7-day period between 21 and 28 November 2024. The full speed data, including a site map, can be found at Appendix 3, with a summary provided below:

	Site 1 (6346) near to coach parking	Site 2 (6347) near to zig-zag bends	Site 3 (6348) Shooters Bottom Car Park	Site 4 (6349) east of Birling Gap	Site 5 (6350) north of Birling Gap
85 th ile speed	38mph northbound 38mph southbound	26mph eastbound 29mph westbound	48mph eastbound 47mph westbound	41mph eastbound 38mph westbound	33mph northbound 33mph southbound
Average speed	29mph northbound 29mph southbound	22mph eastbound 24mph westbound	37mph eastbound 37mph westbound	35mph eastbound 32mph westbound	27mph northbound 28mph southbound

The speed data shows that the vast majority of drivers are driving at speeds that are appropriate for the road, with 37mph being the highest average speed recorded across all 5 locations. Average speeds of 22mph and 24mph were recorded close to the zig-zag bends. It is acknowledged that a small number of drivers will use the road to drive in a dangerous or anti-social manner. The responsibility to deal with such drivers and poor driver behaviour falls to the police and these concerns have been shared with Sussex Police to enable targeted enforcement to be carried out. It is important to highlight that Sussex Police can and do charge drivers who decide to drive in a dangerous manner, for example by overtaking at inappropriate locations, and not only those who drive in excess of the speed limit.

2.10. The road safety assessment of Beachy Head Road has concluded that the only highway measures that would potentially reduce the speed of the small number who drive in a dangerous or anti-social manner would be the widespread introduction of road narrowings and road humps. However, these measures would likely be ineffective due to the topography of the road and would have a significant impact on emergency services vehicles and bus/coach services. In addition, the proposed scheme would likely be opposed due to the location, the need to introduce extensive street lighting and the impact on drivers. For these reasons, a street lighting and traffic calming scheme for Beachy Head Road is not appropriate.

2.11. While Beachy Head Road does not meet our policy criteria for a reduced speed limit and a traffic calming scheme would not be appropriate, the Road Safety Team will be implementing a traffic sign and road marking improvement scheme in the new financial year. Enhancements to traffic signs, hazard marker posts and road markings will help to delineate the bends and make the road layout clearer for drivers, to aid them as they travel through the area.

2.12. An assessment to determine if speed cameras may be suitable for Beachy Head Road has been carried out, however the criteria has not been met to enable this to be taken forward.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the petitioners are advised that the implementation of traffic calming or speed reduction measures is not appropriate for the reasons set out in paragraph 2.3 and 2.10.

3.2. It is also recommended that the petitioners are advised that a traffic signs and road marking improvement scheme will be taken forward by the Road Safety Team in the new financial year, and that the concerns of the petitioners relating to poor driver behaviour will continue to be shared with Sussex Police to enable on-going targeted enforcement.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Wright, Councillor Shing

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None