

The returns from the survey of electors, and other residents of the area, which was undertaken in July 2011 to canvass views on the road system in the parish and particularly the Kentmere road from Staveley have been analysed.

The survey was mostly conducted using a free internet programme arranged by Jackie Bettess and sent to all those who subscribe to the residents e-mail system of communications. This appears to have been a successful approach. Those not on this distribution system were given paper copies delivered by hand.

Thanks must be given to all those who made returns which amounted to more than 60% in the end. This is a pretty good result, and the results seem to be fair and unbiased. The conclusions are set out below.

A copy of the survey form is appended.

Accidents and use.

Answers to the first four questions on the survey were devised to be able to judge the particular level of hazard posed by the road. The judgement was to be based on comparisons with published statistics for Cumbria.

The actual number of accidents compared with the overall county is inevitably small. Thus several tests were made to look for possible bias. These possibilities have been allowed for in the analysis. The results appear to show convincingly two conclusions.

- Kentmerians, per capita, are 'average' drivers; they do not form a cluster of special risk.
- The stretch of road between Staveley and Kentmere has a significantly higher number of accidents than the Cumbria-wide average when measured by the standard assessment of road risk. (accidents per vehicle kilometre).

The second conclusion, in the light of there being no particular bias from the first conclusion, is of concern. It suggests that improvements to certain aspects of the road warrant serious consideration by the CCC Highway's Department. The result should also be of concern to residents in their daily lives.

The message is probably no more than is felt by a good number of residents - in certain situations and at certain times of day the road reflects a serious accident waiting to happen. Statistically this is the case.

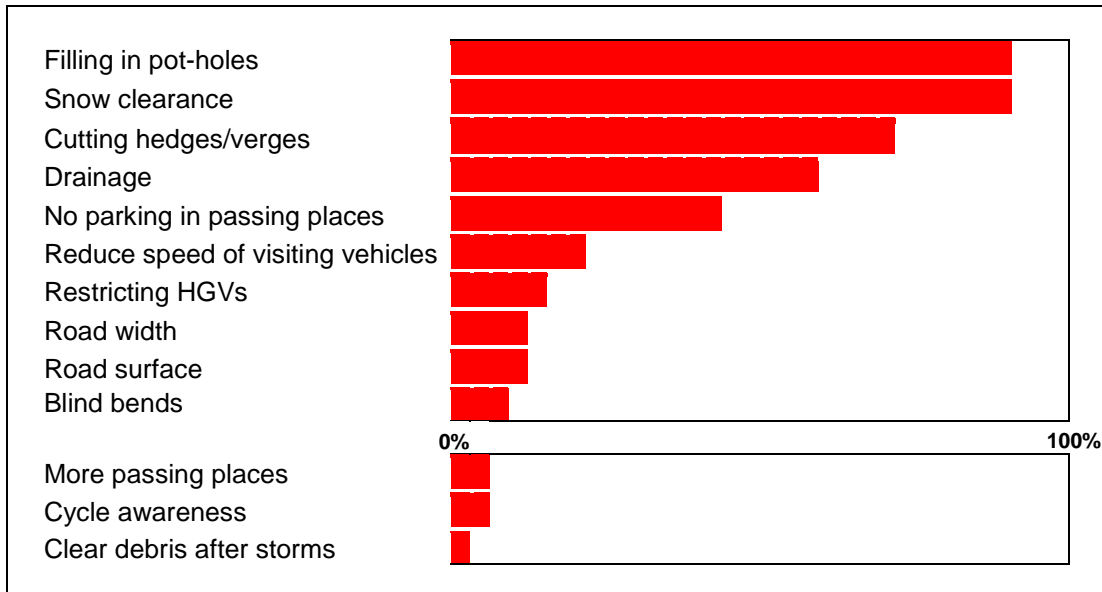
Improvements.

The key questions in the survey were those asking for the views about improvements.

The responses during the survey period showed very consistent results (the order did not change after the first 5 or so). It thus seems reasonable to take the outcome as a strong representation of the views of the whole community.

Table 1, below, shows the percentage votes for each of the ten options posed together with the additional suggestions.

Table 1



The clear favourites were pot-holes and snow clearance both receiving 90% of all preferences.

The others received varying levels of voting, some less than 50%, but consideration of the subjects voted for appears to show a clear overall view when these are added together.

Although concern about the road width, taken by itself, was not frequently voted for, the consequences of having a single track road underlie the aggregate of the responses. It would appear that the narrowness of the road is taken by most residents as a part and parcel of living in Kentmere, no more than a reflection of the fact that the boundary walls have been where they are today for more than 200 years.

What appears in the ‘complaints’ is the attendant aspects of hazard connected with the narrow width – such as reductions in apparent width and visibility by hedge and tree growth, flooding of the road, insufficient passing places and their further reduction in numbers caused by obstruction by parked vehicles, blind bends, and the general risk posed by visiting drivers who have not adjusted to the reality of these hazardous conditions.

The clear message seems to be a desire to remove these additional, and largely unnecessary, hazards on what is a single track carriageway for almost all its length. The writer of this report would contend that the increased accident rate above the average for Cumbria is directly attributable to these hazardous attributes, and this could and should be alleviated. The Parish electors are invited to consider this conclusion.

Some possible remedies.

An example of possible remedies would be to increase the number of passing places. Single track roads are best served with what are known as inter-visible passing places – that is where the next passing place can be seen from the one just passed. When this is not the case, the risks are clear – the head-on meeting of vehicles inevitably follows.

One way to improve this is to make more of the 'ad-hoc' passing places properly formed so that they are of adequate width and length with a robust and level surface. Without the risk of hitting a rock, hole or tree they would be more acceptable to visiting drivers. In addition, the use of black and white banded poles, possibly with red tops, tall enough to be seen from a distance could be used to mark the places. In principle, it should not be necessary to use excessive signage. Visitors to the Western Highlands of Scotland will be familiar with the generally excellent inter-visible passing places and poles without signs.

A second possibility is to try to encourage visitors to be aware of the risk of unusual road conditions. It is well known that it takes a reasonable time to adjust driving styles to markedly different road conditions. Many folk drive up from Staveley fuelled by a desire to 'get there' after 50 to 100 miles or more of high-speed driving on open roads (i.e. without walls). The result is all too familiar to us all.

A suggestion is to construct a 'gateway sign'. This is a way of demonstrating the hazard and has been extensively studied in Europe. The visible constraint of width has been found to provide a strong deterrent effect on speed thus reinforcing the message of a sign. Signs alone have a 'shelf life' after which their message is largely ignored. Signs which are reinforced by physical reality, however, are found to be psychologically much more effective and enduring.

A sign which reads something like "Caution - Single-track lane - limited passing places - be prepared to stop and reverse" , (words suggested by Max Biden) perfectly summarises the problem. If placed with a road width narrowing 'gate-way' which shows exactly what is to be expected, and placed at a location with otherwise good sight distance (say, just up from Fell Foot Cottages) then this could be a major benefit provided at low cost. The design would have to be approved, of course, by the Highways Department, and incorporate the use of flexible poles to demonstrate the actual road width so that accidents would not occur if they were struck.

A warning in Staveley, as the current standard limited-width sign, is valueless as there is no reason for the visitor to believe the message whilst travelling comfortably on a road with adequate width for passing.

Other issues.

Dialogue with CCC has already been initiated about the strategy of filling in pot-holes, but there are other particular issues which need to be raised for further, and possibly lengthy, discussion before proposals can be formulated. One is the joint top priority issue of snow and ice clearing. Others, such as the dangers to and from cyclists descending the steep and largely blind sections of road off the fells, notably down Hellwell Lane and Hollin Lane, and the 'Y' junction of Hellwell Lane and High Lane, will also require exploration of the CCC's position before viable proposals can be made.

This paper is submitted for discussion at the Parish Meeting on 8 August 2011

Kentmere Parish Meeting - Highways Issues

As part of the discussions with the Highways Department, it is necessary to have some facts available. This applies particularly to the Kentmere Road from Staveley. Although only half of this is in our parish, we are the predominant users and the most inconvenienced by problems. Staveley-with-Ings Parish Council accept this position.

This survey is to ask you for your views and experiences. It is most important to get the view of everyone who uses the road by vehicle in order that the statistics make sense, so PLEASE REPLY if possible, it will greatly help.

- 1. How many accidents have you been directly involved in during the last 10 years between Barley Bridge and Kentmere? If zero, please go to Question 3**

No. of accidents

- 2. If your answer to Question 1. is only 1, tick all boxes relevant to your accident in Question 2. If the answer to Question 1. is 2 or more, tick only one of the first four boxes below in Question 2. most appropriate for each accident. If any two are the same, still only use one box.**

Did the accident involve any of the following?

- Police
- Visit to A&E
- Vehicle damage only but needing significant garage/bodywork repair.
- Minor scrape, broken lights, wing mirrors etc. - small parts replacement only.
- Other driver from outside the area

- 3. On average, how often do you use the road to Staveley (do not count returns)**

- Once or twice a week
- Three or four times a week
- Pretty well every day
- Every day and sometimes several times a day

- 4. How many miles of driving do you do a year?**

- 5. What three features (up to five) of the road from your house to Staveley would you most like to see improved?**

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road surface | <input type="checkbox"/> Blind bends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Filling in pot-holes | <input type="checkbox"/> Cutting of hedges/verges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drainage | <input type="checkbox"/> No parking in lay-bys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road width | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced speed of visiting vehicles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snow clearance | <input type="checkbox"/> Restricting HGVs |

- 6. Are there any other aspects of the road you would like to see improved?**

- 7. It would be very helpful if you could supply your house name, or at the very least your Kentmere Quarter.**