

Wirral Pedestrians Association Newsletter



Number 6 Spring 2014

Annual General Meeting 12 April 2014 10:30am West Kirby

Anyone interested is invited to the third Annual General Meeting of the Association which will be held on Saturday 12 April 2014 at 10:30am at the United Reformed Church Hall, Meols Drive, West Kirby CH48 5DA (just 200 metres from West Kirby Railway Station). West Kirby can be reached by train and by buses 22, 38, 77, 77A, and 437.

We are planning to start with tea, coffee, biscuits and cake. The meeting will include talks from Katherine Culshaw who is Wirral Schools Project Co-ordinator for Living Streets, and from Sgt Paul Mountford who works in collision reduction for Merseyside Roads Policing Department.

This is your chance to chat to like-minded people, suggest campaigns and discuss your ideas. Non-members are encouraged to join (£2 per year).

Campaign for 20mph speed limits

This year's 20's Plenty For Us national conference was in Camden in February. Around the country, there are now 226 local groups (including our Association) campaigning for 20mph speed limits in residential areas, around schools and at shops.

This was the fifth annual conference and attendance has been steadily increasing with more councillors, council officers and academics as well as campaigners. Presentations covered the progress being made in different areas, but a common theme was lack of money (which is the main barrier on the Wirral). The Minister responsible (Robert Goodwill) said in a pre-recorded video that he



wanted to make it easier for local authorities to introduce 20mph limits in residential and shopping areas. He might have announced new funding - about £200 million would be needed for the whole of the country, which is about 1% of the current planned roads spending, but he failed to do this. So it appears that his "support" was just empty words.

Problems around the Wirral

Our member Wendy Evans in **Barnston** has written:

Hedges, bushes, trees. I love them all and they add a tremendous interest to the environment as we progress through the seasons. However, I have noticed over the years that households do not seem to be aware when their greenery is encroaching onto the pavement and impeding the passage of pedestrians. In some cases, hedges have been allowed to grow to such an extent that they have reduced the width of a pavement to a level that renders it unusable or dangerous, especially if the road is narrow and traffic is very close to the pavement. It is even more dangerous for the visually or physically impaired. For their sake, we should be trying to do better.

When walking in the country, I often take a pair of secateurs along to clip the odd hawthorn or holly bush that always seem to grow beside stiles. In this day and age, however, I suppose secateurs would be classed as a dangerous weapon in a town environment. Perhaps the better option is one I have used in the past which is to take a note of the offending overhanging/encroaching greenery and pass the address on to the local Council.

I hope this small item will inspire our followers to improve the pedestrian environment.

Anyone can report overhanging hedges to Streetscene via streetscene@wirral.gov.uk or 606 2004. The Council can give notice to

householders to take action, failing which the Council can undertake the work and pass the cost to the householder.

School gate parking seems to be steadily worsening. We have heard of problems at Mount Pleasant in Oxton around Prenton Preparatory School, at Brookhurst Primary School in Bromborough, and at Avalon School in West Kirby; but a recent Wirral Council report stated that illegal parking is now a major problem outside most of the school sites in the Borough.

Illegal parking outside schools is also a major problem around the country. In Sheffield recently, the local paper showed a protest from a row of parents lining the kerb with placards: "Pavements are for walking NOT for parking".

Two measures that are being tried are (1) a complete ban on school run parking (at five schools in Edinburgh) and (2) schoolchildren putting out cones to regulate parking (in South Wales).

Illegal parking on pavements

Our Association's recommendations for tackling illegal parking on pavements were sent to Wirral Council's Chief Executive (Graham Burgess) and others in September 2013. Despite several reminders, we have still not received a proper response from Council officers. They did however write a report on pavement and grass verge parking for councillors in January this year - this was done without consultation with us and without even letting us know - the first we heard was when we were contacted by a journalist for our opinion.

The officers' report states that parking around schools is a major problem outside schools but does not provide a plan to deal with it, merely leaving it to the new Constituency Committees. Most concerning is a plan that officers would take no action if a space of 1.2 metres was left for pedestrians. We do not believe that this is a safe policy to adopt as a routine since, in practice, the more aggressive and selfish drivers would leave an even smaller space. Our objections have so far been ignored.

We are still also waiting for proper responses to our recommendations from Merseyside Police and from the Police and Crime Commissioner, Jane Kennedy.

Merseyside pedestrian casualties: Vision Zero

Wirral Pedestrians Association and Merseyside Cycle Campaign jointly produced a document titled *Vision Zero Merseyside* (on our website). We feel that we should be aiming for zero serious or fatal injuries to pedestrians and cyclists, since they are not the ones who are creating the dangers on our roads.

Following the production of this document, we have been involved in meetings with three Merseyside MPs and others, and further meetings are planned. After our meeting with Alison McGovern MP, she asked a Parliamentary Question about what proportion of roads capital spending was spent on facilities aimed at (a) motor vehicles (b) pedestrians and (c) cyclists in the last year. The reply from the Minister Robert Goodwill was that he didn't know (!) - or, to be accurate, that the information is not held - but why not?

Bimonthly Meetings - all welcome

The Association meets every two months to discuss campaigns and other matters. These were initially Committee meetings but the last two meetings in January and March have been open meetings and several non-committee members have been attending.

Meetings have been held in Wetherspoons in West Kirby on the first Wednesday morning of alternate months (but the timing and location will be reviewed after the AGM).

So why not come along and get involved. The next meeting is planned for 7th May at 10:30am, but if intending to come, please check the week before in case of rearrangement. Membership costs only £2 per year.

Contributions invited for next newsletter

Are you experiencing a problem getting around on foot in your area? Let us know and we will aim to publicise it in our next newsletter.

Contacts

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