

Minutes of R.A.G.S./Peter Ward
in Salen, Tuesday 21st August 2007

Peter Ward explained his role as a civil engineer and the Principle Project Manager. He designed the new road. He was open to all suggestions but they must meet design standards and guidelines. He made it clear that it is very difficult to find a design that meets all the criteria.

PW had been asked to bring with him:

1. The Environmental Statement
2. Costs of the road across the bay
3. Original plan for the two lanes to go between Highwater and Glenstrae

As PW has the only copy of the Environmental Statement, he kindly offered to photocopy and send if MCC requested it. (Otherwise it could cost £50).

The cost of the road across the bay he estimated at only £140,000 because the infill would come from the rest of the project. The whole project is estimated at 9 million pounds.

The original design idea of the two lanes using the current road alignment had been rejected on the grounds that the width required for verge and cycle lanes etc approx. 10 meters, would bring it too close to the houses on either side and there was a problem with line of sight to the bridge due to the Craig. It would also cost more than going over the bay. RAGS have been asking them to use the current alignment (not two lanes) with traffic calming and a priority arrow system. RAGS had a sketch showing this and also a widening in places where possible. PW said he could not sanction that a) because it would be below the New Road Standards set and b) since the increase in traffic numbers were estimated at 800 cars per day, the Design Guidance for roads requires there to be two lanes. As the width of PW's two lane design does not fit comfortably between the houses, and knocking down houses is not an option, the Council has concluded that taking the road across the bay is the only possible route to take.

RAGS wanted to know if there could be a 20mph set instead of Traffic Lights and PW would look into this and let us know but thought it unlikely due to the current regulations.

The police are not happy about having traffic lights and the two lanes seem to encourage speeding into the village. On one Sunday, 17 people were found to be speeding from the Craignure end and 12 of them did not know there was a speed limit of 30mph despite the three large signs giving a count down. The police do not have the man hours to enforce the speed limit. RAGS feels that bringing two lanes into the village will encourage speeding and is therefore unsafe. PW thinks that Traffic Lights will solve the problem of slowing the traffic enough to get it through the single lane bridge. This will be a 'smart' light that stays green if nothing is coming the other way.

We walked the route with PW and the question of traffic counts came up again. It appears that the Council's count was from the Craignure side and that was some time ago (the figures fluctuate and this year they are down by 40%). It was pointed out that their count did not include the fact that a substantial amount of traffic turns to the left, before the bridge into the Gruline Road.

RAGS own count of the traffic coming across the bridge from Craignure has shown that on a busy Saturday in August, the count did not reach the 800 mark and this also included local Salen traffic going to and fro across the bridge.

PW asked if we would consider withdrawing our 130 objections that were lodged with the Council when the road plan was advertised in the Oban Times in 2006. We made no reply.

PW asked us why we did not want the road to go across the Bay. We said that if you ruin the Bay you will ruin the village. RAGS also maintain that it is a safety issue as two lanes encourages traffic to speed up. (Most villages these days are putting in systems to narrow their two lanes to slow up traffic.) Although we are aware that SNH has not chosen to protect our wildlife in the Bay as it will relocate apparently, we know that tourists and residents alike recognise this as a place of beauty and enjoy watching the otters and the varied birdlife the shoreline supports.

We understand that PW is still working on the planning application following adjustments requested by Scottish Natural Heritage to the Environmental Impact Assessment. PW hopes to have this done by Christmas.

We conclude that the insistence on there being two lanes to the bridge in Salen is the result of the perceived increase in traffic. **Should there be an independent traffic count?**

RAGS are concerned that the new road project will be unsafe for Salen due to the speed of the traffic going through it. We feel that once the two lanes are built across the bay, when/if the traffic lights fail to work appropriately, they will then widen the bridge to the two lanes and Salen will be a Drive Through Village.

RAGS have always insisted that we do not want to delay the whole road project so have suggested a) the two lane highway stops short of the village at the 30 mph or other appropriate place, and a priority arrow system is put in place. Or b) that Salen be taken out of the project altogether until the traffic problems are properly considered.