

John Russell meeting 21st June 08 - Minutes

Present:

Ruth Hawke
Jess McQuarie
Charlotte Mellis
Finlay Christine
Mike Hogan

Apologies; James Hilder
Cliff Moisey
Lorna & Jim McIntyre

The meeting started at 10.00a.m.. outside Rose Cottage and walked the route from there to the Old Grey Pier. The discussion continued at Highwater Cottage and finished at 3.0pm. approx. We showed JR maps and the EIA report.

JR was surprised that there seemed to have been so little consultation in the first place. He pointed out that on the Council's map showing the proposed traffic lights, it omitted to show the Grulin Rd which actually gives a false impression of the situation.

The Council's plans appear to be working to the "Roads and Bridges Design Manual" which does not need to be stuck to rigidly. He felt that the Council was not prepared to deviate from the manual which is designed for mainland roads with high volumes of traffic and should be used as a guideline only where appropriate. JR saw that traffic calming measures entering Salen from the north could be dealt with using the existing line of the road by widening and narrowing where necessary as there was enough room to do this.

JR felt the EIA report appeared to not go far enough with regard to the environment. He would need to look more closely at it but it did not seem nearly sensitive enough. CM showed that it was also misleading as it does not show and sometime ignores the area we call the Salen Bay Saltings.

Mike Hogan thought that the coastal route was unusual in that there very few, if any, places where you can turn off a road and view such a diversity of wildlife.

Finlay pointed out that the whole area along the coast is extremely good for wildlife and people stop and look at the otters, seals and numerous birdlife constantly and a slower road with viewing areas would be more appropriate as it would slow the traffic all along the coast line so that it would be entering Salen at a reasonable speed. The Council has designed a road for traffic to travel at 50mph(with few and inadequate viewing sites)

There are also problems with traffic speeds into the village from the south side due to the width of the road and it would be beneficial to have road narrowing there as well to slow

the traffic into Salen. Finlay explained the issue with children crossing the road on the blind rise in the village at boat traffic times. RAGS has already asked PW about 20mph signs and he came back to us to say that they would not be possible. JR said there are specific guidelines on Road Safety Priority in Villages to keep speeds down to safe levels and where necessary there should be 20 mph. zones on through-routes through villages. There seems to be conflict between local authorities and gov. policy.

JR thought the design of the A848 “appeared to run counter to the current thinking in Central Government of road safety philosophy.” The idea is to slow things down not to speed things up. Also there are new ideas on road speeds on single tracks. JR could not understand the need to save time for journeys on this proposed stretch of the road when any time ‘gained’ would be lost by the proposed Traffic Lights and the ferry queue.

Council officials had said to JR that he thought the objections to the plan were coming from one household but JR could see that that was not the case at all. There appear to be genuine concerns regarding road safety and destruction to the environment. (over 800 RAGS members for a start)

Finlay thought the traffic lights would cause more problems than they would solve, as has proved the case elsewhere. He was very concerned that the back up of traffic caused by the traffic lights at ferry times would mean major problems for school children crossing the road in the morning and afternoon.

JR said that if it came to a public enquiry, (130 people objected when the plans were shown in the Oban Times July 06) we would need to get a consultant to examine the EIA report closely and also it would be beneficial to have footage(video) of traffic travelling into Salen and over the bridge. He has asked us to give him our traffic counts(done by RAGS members in July 07) and also he would like the accident and speed statistics from the police and the statistics on their vehicle counts. There is some doubt that the Council’s vehicle counts were placed in the relevant places.

JR suggested that we ask the Council for the following information:

1. What are their current plans, are there any changes, if so what are they?
2. When do they expect to implement the plan?
3. Is the money confirmed?

We could ask our local Councillors to find out exactly what the current state of play is. All we have at the moment is an article in the Oban Times stating that the funding for the project was ‘on hold’ and we understand that the all further design work is also on hold at this time. Finlay said he thought they wanted to have a plan in place for the road in readiness for when the funding comes in. No one appears to have any idea on time scale or funding.

John Russell will make a report to RAGS on his findings.