

# ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ECCHINSWELL, SYDMONTON AND BISHOPS GREEN PARISH

**HELD ONLINE via Zoom  
WEDNESDAY 5th May 2021  
AT 7.30 PM**

**Present:** Councillors Dain (Chair), Bayliss (Vice Chair), Kearney, Stamp and Debenham  
S Jones (Parish Clerk) and 17 residents.

## **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Coward, Apologies were also received and accepted from Borough Cllr Izett, County Cllr Mellor and County Cllr Thacker, who are all in purdah pending tomorrow's election but have sent reports to be read out.

## **2. Minutes of Assembly held on 10th May 2019**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and will be pp signed by the clerk, and signed by the Chair as soon as is practically possible.

## **3. Chairman's Report**

ES&BG PC Chair's Report 5th May 2021

Firstly, I would like to welcome you all to our Annual Parish Assembly. I apologise for this being an online meeting where we can only tempt you with a virtual glass of wine after listening to our speakers. Next year we will do our best to make it up to you!

I am Marian Dain the ES&BG Chair and here is the rest of the team:

Jackie Bayliss, Rachael Coward, Paul Debenham, Elaine Kearney and Mark Stamp. (each to say hello so they come up on main screen)

Sadly, we have one seat at the parish council table empty, as Tim Hall has recently left for personal reasons – a new job covering a huge range of time zones. This would seem a good point to say a public 'Thank you' to Tim for all the hard work he has done for the council over the years and particularly in his time as Chair. I have some big shoes to fill!

The last year has been a challenge on so many levels and we are looking forward to resuming 'normal service' soon. I would like to thank my fellow councillors and our clerk for the positive way they have adapted to the changes required get the work of the council completed in a Covid-secure way. In particular, I would like to mention Rachael who took the plunge to join us via Zoom and has resurrected our Facebook presence – a very powerful way of communicating during the Covid restrictions. We are looking forward to having our first face-to-face PC meeting with her on 9th June.

It is two years since we had our last Parish Assembly so there are several items to tell you about. I apologise if the report this year is a little longer than usual. A trawl through the minutes of our meetings revealed these highlights.

#### Summer/Autumn 2019 Highlights

1. We undertook an audit of parish land since the historical parish documentation was not as clear as it might be. After some digging in the land registry, we are now clear on what land the PC owns, what it leases and what it just takes care of. We own Ecchinswell Village Hall, the Ecchinswell playing fields, and The War Memorial. We lease the allotments from The Sydmonton Court Estate and now have an updated lease agreement – rather more 21st century wording than the original 1978 document. I was surprised to find that the allotments were so new – I had thought of them as an ancient right. We take care of Digweeds, the area around the War memorial and the area opposite the school.
2. We made some improvements to two of these areas. After a long battle with British Telecom the old phone boxes in Bishops Green and Ecchinswell were removed. The Bishops Green box area was made good by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council as it was on their land but the Ecchinswell box left a very untidy area alongside the parking opposite the school. Jackie led a team of volunteers to create a gravelled area with raised beds. This improves the area significantly and is enjoyed by parents waiting to pick up their children and others who use that parking area. We also used a grant allocation from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council to improve the fencing at the allotments and install a back gate into the playing fields.
3. It will come as no surprise that the Newtown Waste Recycling Centre came up regularly in our minutes. The saga continues to this day, with no permanent solution as yet. The current arrangement continues until July 2021 and all the parish councils in this area are lobbying Hampshire County Council to negotiate our continued access with West Berkshire Council. I hope the report from HCC tonight will have some information on this.

#### 2020/1 Highlights

1. The first lockdown of the Covid pandemic took us all by surprise but it was pleasing to see how quickly support networks emerged – both formal and informal. Like most parishes around the country, we set up a Helpline for residents. For the most part we were able to match residents who were shielding and needed help with residents who lived close by. Our telephone service dealt with one-off requests. A big thank you goes to all the volunteers who made this support of our community possible.
2. The other main invasion of 2020 was the Azolla attack on the pond at the end of Hyde Lane. Our Victorian forebears have a great deal to answer for. Avid plant collectors admired this water fern in South America and brought it back to the UK where it wreaks havoc in ponds, displacing native plants and deoxygenating the water. The only solution is to introduce a tiny South American weevil to the pond to gorge on the fern! These must be hatched and raised carefully. We put in an order for 2000 (pinhead sized!) and while we waited for them to mature our only option was to dredge the pond regularly to keep the growth level down. A determined team of volunteers kept this up for four months and removed several tons of Azolla. I am pleased to say that the tiny weevils have done their job and the pond is back to normal – just waiting for the autumn pond clearance event.
3. In November the Parish Council received an email from a land promoter with a proposal to build 400 homes on a farm in Bishops Green. We publicised this information and held an

Extraordinary Meeting on 15th December 2020 to gauge the views of the community. This was very well attended. We also conducted an online survey about the development. The response of residents was overwhelmingly against the proposed development and a summary can be seen on our website. Since January all has gone quiet on this proposal but we cannot assume that it has gone away. The Parish Council is still monitoring the situation and is ready to act when needed.

4. The stimulus of a potential large development in Bishops Green has spurred the Parish Council to make a Neighbourhood Plan. A group of volunteers is working to produce a variety of initial consultation opportunities as Covid restrictions are loosened. Paul will tell you more about this in a few minutes.

5. Traffic issues and speeding are perennial problems in the parish. Earlier this year we conducted a survey to gauge strength of feeling of residents. We were pleased with the level of response and a Traffic/Speeding Working Party has grown from this. Mark and Jackie will tell you more.

6. Despite having fibre to the cabinets in Bishops Green and Ecchinswell, broadband access is still a big issue in the parish. We are currently undertaking an audit of the provision and have some links with a group looking to improve the situation for outlying homes. Please complete the survey on our website to help with this audit.

7. I am pleased to announce the completion of a countryside access project in the area west of Ratts Cottages. Thanks to a grant from Hampshire County Council and a generous donation from the Ecchinswell Panto Group you can now walk a route from Kingsclere to Burghclere without having to go over a single stile.

Finally, thank you all again for attending this online assembly. We really appreciate your time and, if you think you would like to become a Parish Councillor, we do have one vacancy. We would very much welcome anyone who puts themselves forward.

Now I would like to hand over to Sarah Jones, our clerk, for her financial report.

#### **4. Parish Financial Report**

##### **Parish Financial Report – 2021 Meeting**

The precept for 2020/21 was set at £11,888, for 2021/22 it increased to £12,396 - approx. 4% increase. Increased costs, mainly relating to village maintenance rubbish disposal and website costs. But we have as per the past few years, tried to keep any increases to a minimum.

The balance in the Parish bank account at 31/03/2021 was £25,320. Healthy. The accounts will be audited by the internal auditor 20th May.

To give you an idea of what the PC spends its money on:

During the year we spent £2900 on village maintenance – grass cutting and maintenance at the pond, the war memorial and the Digweeds site.

Insurance cover – we have to have it and this cost £700 last year. We are expecting a small increase as always this year when it renews on 1st June.

Monies for salaries and the litterwardens are the biggest expense and cost £10,900 last year.

Expenses have decreased over the past year due to no courses being attended. Whilst one might think meeting costs have decreased due to no EVH/BGVH room rental, we have had to set up Zoom which cost £115 for the year.

We have a small amount of money available for grants or donations. During the year we made a donation of £50 to the Basingstoke Conservation Volunteers for their help with Pond Clearance Day, and a grant of £550 to Ecchinswell Village Hall towards the cost of grass cutting at the playing field. We also contributed £252 towards the Covid-secure reopening deep clean of BG village hall ready for the pre-school to return.

The Lengthsman scheme is continuing this financial year and we participate in that. We are assigned hours and the lengthsman carries out a variety of projects in the parish including cleaning road signs and cutting back vegetation round them, additional litter picking in areas not covered by the Litter Wardens, and work to clear blocked roadside ditches. This scheme it is very beneficial to the parish, providing £1000 of labour for small, mainly Highways related, tasks like these.

Apart from the precept, we receive a grant to cover the cost of the litter wardens salaries, and a grant contributing to the cost of grass cutting in the parish. Other income is received from allotment rental, we currently only have 2 allotments free. Rental is £30 per annum.

Unlike charities the Parish Council is unable (by law) to carry out fund raising. Apart from the grants from BDBC and the small income from the allotments, the only way the PC can make money is through the precept. There are few opportunities for reducing expenditure, since most of what we spend money on is unavoidable expense

Overall the finances continue to look healthy. However as with most things there are unexpected expenses that crop up, such as the weevils for the pond as Marian mentioned, which cost some £924, so the parish council does need to be prudent and ensure monies are available for unexpected expenses which occur from time to time. I hope this gives you a good overview of the PC's finances.

## **5. Borough Councillor's Report**

Ecchinswell, Sydmonton and Bishops Green Parish Assembly 5th May 2021

Report by Borough Councillor- John Izett

I am sorry that the pre-election rules prevent me from joining you tonight but as requested here is my annual report:-

The year has been defined by the terrible ongoing consequences of the pandemic and the huge mobilisation at national and local levels to combat and defeat it. It has changed so many aspects of our lives including the new reliance on Zoom and Teams; there has been no physical council or committee meetings held in Basingstoke or in any of the parishes. As a rural

community we have pulled together and dealt with the pandemic extremely well. I am pleased that the borough council has also risen to the challenge, particularly in helping small businesses by allocating govt grants quickly. This all reflects greatly on the strength of our community and I would like to record my appreciation to all those who have helped others during this crisis, which appears to be coming to an end in terms of the disease.

Bin collections, BDBC's principal service, reverted to normal after a period of going from weekly to fortnightly collections and remarkably the service held up reasonably well overall, with a few exceptions locally, in the face of crew numbers being impacted by Covid.

The local Household Waste Recycling issue was resolved temporarily by Basingstoke and Deane BC and Hants CC jointly funding the cost of using West Berks facilities for another year. A long term solution is needed, and HCC, as the responsible body, are investigating local site options, but a renewal of the arrangement with West Berks will be required, something I support from the borough standpoint.

Planning has been hampered by staff turnover at Basingstoke and many applications have been delayed in recent times. I have raised the matter at a senior level and it is being addressed.

Pressures to meet govt. housing targets continue unrelentingly, exacerbated by a revised formula for counting numbers meaning that the Local Plan over the last year has been deemed not to protect fully against applications for housing on sites not allocated under the Plan. This has led to a number of unwelcome development proposals, notably, and out of the blue, the recent massive housing development proposed for Bishops Green. The formal planning application has yet to be submitted but, if re-elected, I will work closely with the parish council in support of the community's views to challenge on detailed planning grounds unsuitable development of the scale indicated.

The work now being done by the parish council on making a Neighbourhood Plan has always had my encouragement and support. A plan approved ultimately by referendum of the community will enable us to have more influence over the future shape and look of our parish while delivering more Community Infrastructure Levy payments for us for any small scale developments that do get approved. Without a Neighbourhood Plan we will be more at risk of opportunistic speculative development proposals.

A borough Local Plan Update is underway, timed for 2023, and I will use my influence, if re-elected, to ensure that new housing goes where there are existing services such as around Basingstoke and the bigger settlements. The parish should expect some limited housing allocation under an updated Local Plan but this can be positive especially in enabling local people to stay here by renting or buying new, more affordable housing,

Significant progress has been made with the borough's "Green Strategy" to address climate change. There is now a clear set of objectives and timetable. I would be keen that local involvement and delivery is part of this vital but challenging change in the way we lead our lives to help nature and the planet.

As from 6th May ES&B will become part of the Ward of Evingar. Basingstoke has been reorganised by the Boundary Commission into 18 Wards each with three councillors so 6 councillor positions have gone. Evingar is the Saxon name for this area and it will comprise this parish as well as Burghclere, Highclere, St Mary Bourne, East Woodhay and Hurstbourne Priors. It has been a pleasure to represent the parish at the borough council for a further year and to have been able once more to work so closely and effectively with parish councillors.

## **6. County Councillor's Report**

Hampshire County Councillor: Whitchurch and the Cleres.

Facts and Figures Hampshire's population is 1,376,300 (2018) the third most populous county in England (85% is rural and 15% urban). Hampshire CC maintains 5400 miles of roads, 4300 miles pavements, 133,000 streetlights, 481 schools, 45 libraries, 3 Discovery Centres and 1 e-library, 16 care homes with 960 beds for older people, 9 residential homes for children and young people, 24 Household Waste Centres and 5 Country Parks. Every year 94% of all household waste is diverted from landfill (40% recycled) is burnt for energy and powers 50,000 homes. Every day 454,000 people travel to work by car or van, 86,000 bus journeys are made, and 4% journeys are by train. More than half of Hampshire's EU citizens have signed up to the Government's EU settlement scheme.

Public Health -Coronavirus (Covid-19) Hampshire County Council continues to play a significant role supporting vulnerable residents and providing local guidance and information. To date over 32 million people in the UK have received their first dose of vaccine.

The Hampshire County Council helpline is available for frail or vulnerable residents who do not have support from families, friends or their local community, and who need urgent assistance with essential food or household supplies, collection of medication, or who are at risk of loneliness.

HCC approves £2.1 billion spending on local services in 2021/22

Plans for the next financial year focus on the county's ongoing work associated with the pandemic, support for vulnerable children and adults, investment in Hampshire's roads and infrastructure to support economic recovery, as well as climate change mitigation.

The annual council tax charge for a Band D property will be £1,350.45 – an increase of £1.23 per week, equating to 4.99%, of which 3% is for adults' social care – a Government request. The budget includes £13 million for the maintenance of 5,500 miles of roads and an extra £1.2 million in carbon reduction measures across the County Council. HCC's four-year capital programme of £744 million is one of the largest in the country.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/25022021HCCbudgetdecisionFeb2021>

The proposed capital programme includes: • £68 million in new and extended school buildings to ensure there is a school place for every child in Hampshire • £118 million for structural maintenance and improvement of roads and bridges in Hampshire over the next three years • £91 million for integrated transport schemes including over £18 million specifically focused on walking and cycling improvements • £141 million for major improvement of school and other County Council buildings and land holdings over the next three years • £33 million for decarbonisation schemes covering solar PV, single to double glazing window replacements, transition from oil to gas and the implementation of heating controls.

Climate Change Hampshire County Council has been taking active steps to ensure Hampshire is

resilient to climate change and in mitigating further changes through carbon reduction measures. HCC's own emissions have reduced by more than 43%, with more than a 50% reduction by 2025 and carbon neutrality by 2050. The 2050 Hampshire Commission of Enquiry placed climate change and the environment as its top priority. In the budget HCC pledged £2m towards climate change measures in addition to the capital schemes outlined above. HCC is aware its greatest leadership and influence will be achieved by working in partnership with the District, City and Parish Councils, businesses and communities via the Expert Forum. At a household level HCC is supporting the county-wide Greening Campaign (aims to find simple solutions around reducing and measuring power consumption, insulating housing stock, reducing water usage, sourcing local food, community travel and renewable energy schemes), the Help line, Solar Buy-in scheme and community energy projects.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/environment/climatechange>

#### West Berks HWRC

There is much concern in East Woodhay, Ecchinswell, Burghclere, Highclere and Kingsclere about Hampshire residents being granted continued access by West Berks Council to its site at Newbury. HCC does not own the West Berks site, so the decision cannot rest with HCC.

Four years ago, I and my fellow County Councillor, Derek Mellor, persuaded Hampshire County Council to come to an arrangement with West Berks to allow Hampshire residents, who live within a certain radius of the Newbury site, to receive permits to use the site, at a cost to Hampshire taxpayers of about £180,000 per annum. This was a temporary arrangement that was designed to give a breathing space for West Berks to introduce a pay to visit system and which ended last year. That arrangement was extended a further year, following representation from me and my colleague Derek Mellor, with Basingstoke borough and Hampshire collaborating and sharing the costs required by West Berks.

Hampshire County Council is looking at finding a permanent solution for this north western corner of Hampshire and is expecting a report on suitable nearby sites in the county by the end of May. I have told Cllr Humby, the Executive Member, that I want the current temporary arrangements to continue, until such a permanent solution is found.

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#### **7. Presentation by the Police**

Unfortunately, the police did not provide a report and did not respond to the invitation.

#### **8. Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Debenham**

Cllr Debenham gave a presentation regarding the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan. He advised a Neighbourhood Steering Group has been created which will lead the development of the plan.

Cllr Debenham's presentation is attached to these minutes.

**9. Traffic and Speeding working party – Cllrs Bayliss and Stamp**

Cllrs Stamp and Bayliss reported on the traffic and speeding survey and responses/issues identified by residents, as detailed in the attached report.

**10. Any Other Business**

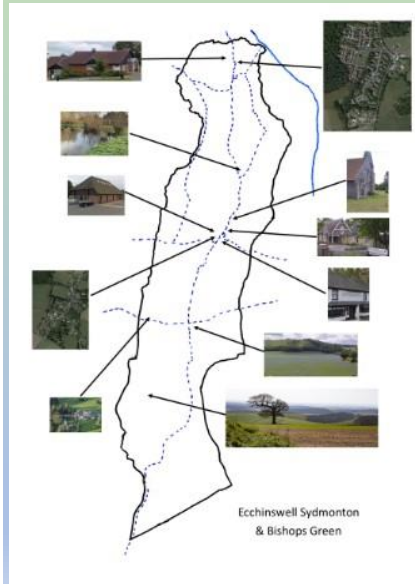
None.

Chair.....

Date.....



## Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan



- Basingstoke & Deane have approved the request by the ESBG PC to create a Neighbourhood Plan for our Parish
- A Neighbourhood Steering Group has been created which will now lead our development of the Plan.
- We start with little current information about our Parish
  - 2011 Census latest insight indicating 1048 residents, 402 household
- We do have a few community resource as a starting point
  - 1 convenience shop, 1 primary school, 1 pub, 2 village halls, 1 church
- But we must expect to have to accommodate more housing in the future

**So we have the chance now to define our Plan for the future of our community and seek B&D support for our vision.**

## Your opinion and involvement matters

In our Plan we want to set future housing development in the wider context of:

- The particular needs of our small rural community and its history and culture
- Future employment and business opportunities
- The environment and sustainability
- Our current infrastructure, including roads, power resources, broadband etc
- Our local needs for facilities including education, health, sports and leisure

**So we are about to reach out to the community to find out your views on our future**

We are looking to consult with as many residents as possible, as well as stakeholders such as business owners, farmers, land owners, infrastructure providers, schools, community organisations etc.

**From these consultations we can start to develop a Neighbourhood Plan that is responsive to your needs**

## **Our Next Steps, starting in June!**

By mid-June we all hope the lifting of Covid restrictions will allow real interactions.

We would like to set up a series of community 'pop -up' events around the Parish, suggestions including;

- Plant swapping, children's games, short walks around our Parish, perhaps a dog show
- Do please come forward with ideas!
- If you are a 'stakeholder' please do introduce yourself to the Steering Group so that we can touch base with you.
- Do please come along and enjoy the events, and at the same time give us your views on the Parish today and what is important for the future.

Keep an eye on our Parish website or Facebook page for events!

We have a team of volunteers but would very much welcome your support with events if you could?

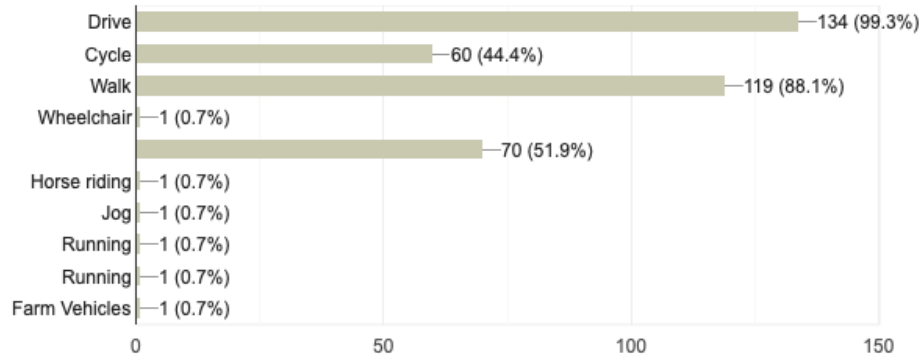
DRAFT

## TRAFFIC AND SPEEDING QUESTIONNAIRE OUTCOME

### 1. How do you use the parish roads? (select all that apply)



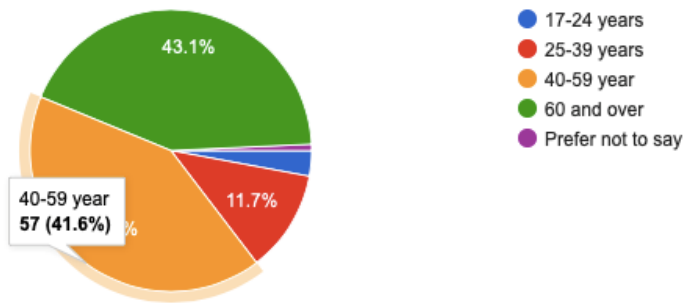
135 responses



### 2. What age group do you fall into?



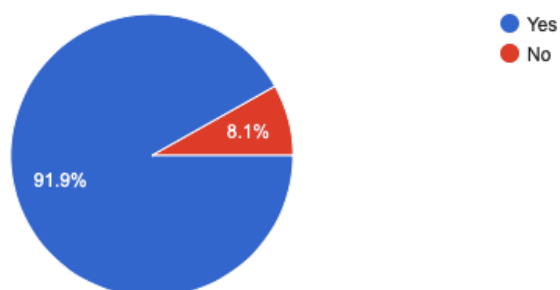
137 responses



3. Do you think that we have a problem with speeding in our parish? Yes/No



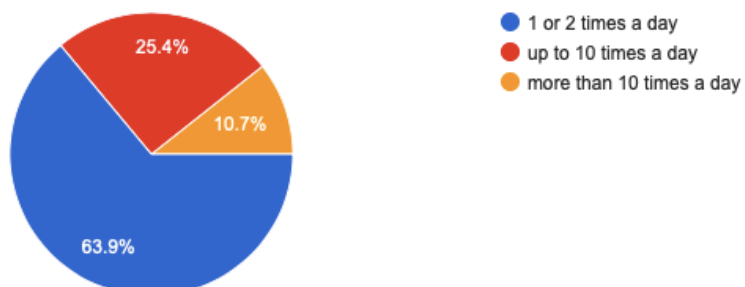
135 responses



3a. If Yes to Q3 then... How often do you witness speeding traffic on roads in our parish?



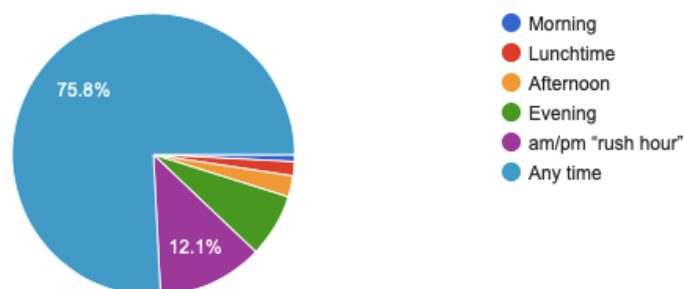
122 responses



3b. If Yes to Q3 then... What time of the day/night is it most common?

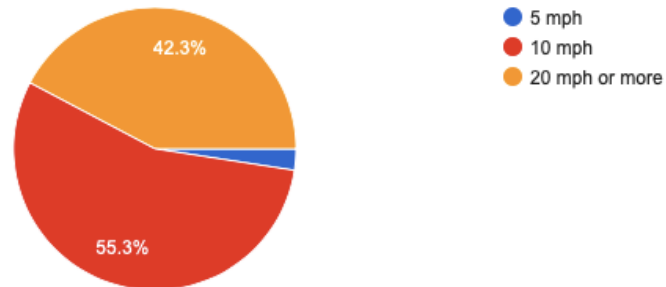


124 responses



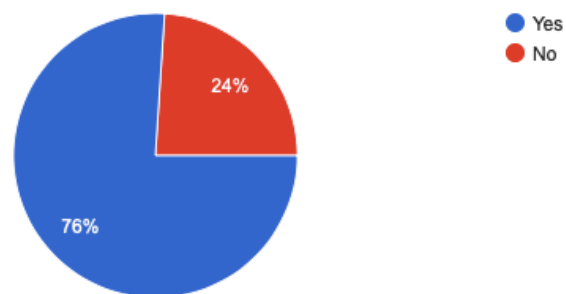
3c. If Yes to Q3 then... What level of excess speeding do you mostly see?

123 responses



3d. If Yes to Q3 then... Does this affect all parts of the parish – Yes/No?

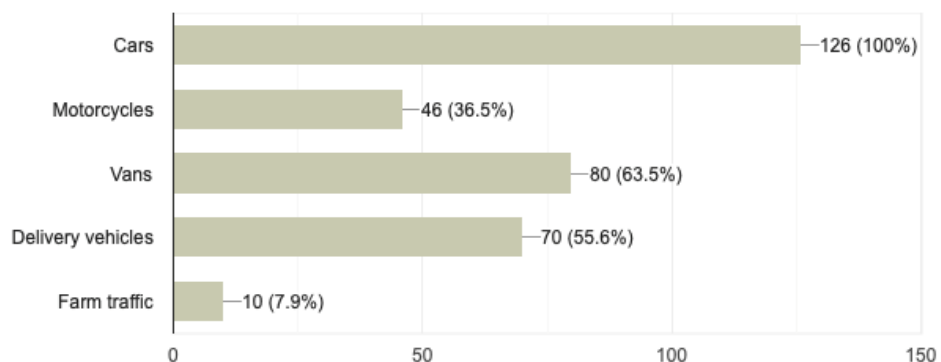
121 responses



If No to 3d then... what area of the parish is worst affected? 37 responses

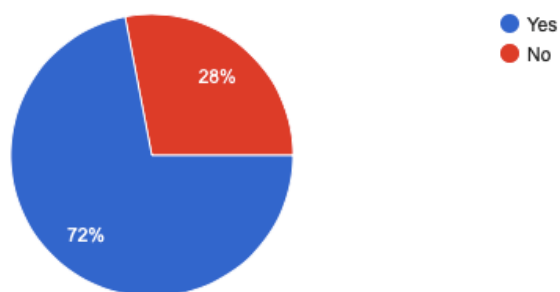
3e. If Yes to Q3 then... What type of vehicles do you see speeding? (select all that apply)

126 responses



4. Are local speed limits sufficiently frequently and clearly displayed? Yes/No

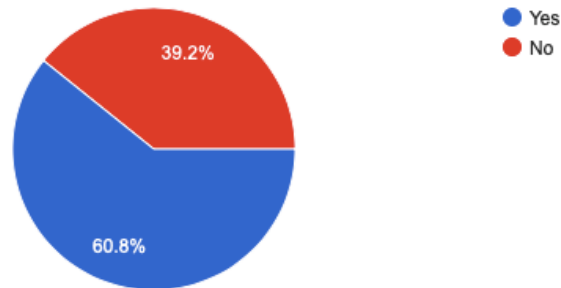
132 responses



4a. If No to Q4 then... where are the problems? 35 responses

### 5. Do you consider local speed limits appropriate? Yes/No

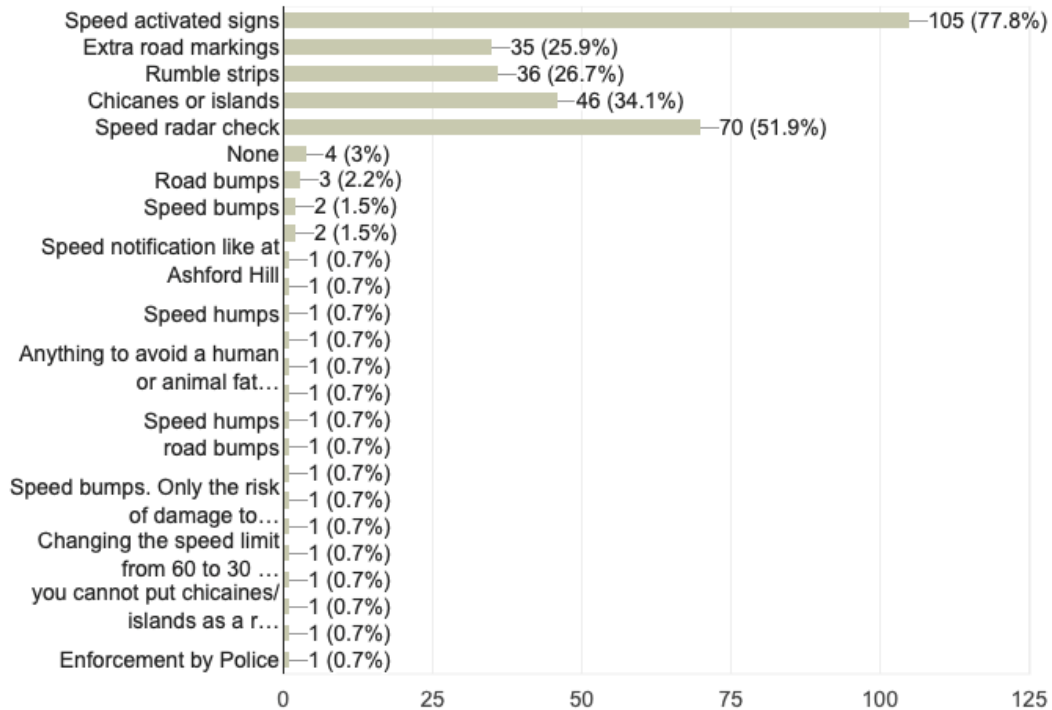
130 responses



### 5a. If No to Q5 then... for which roads? 51 responses

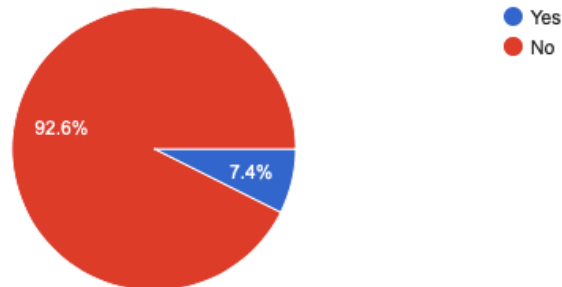
### 6. Which of traffic control/calming measures do you think would help? (select all that apply)

135 responses



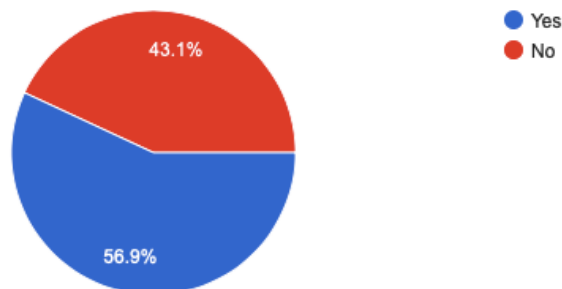
7. Have you ever noted down speeding vehicle number plates and reported to police or parish council? Yes/No.

135 responses



8. Would you be willing to record speeding vehicle number plates? Yes/No - If yes, please send the information you collect with location, time and date to the PC at [clerk@ecchinswell-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@ecchinswell-pc.gov.uk) All reporting by the parish clerk will be done anonymously.

130 responses



9. Would you be willing to help the Parish Council by becoming part of a working party on speeding in ES&BG and having your voice heard? If yes, please put your Name and email address or phone number here.

47 responses