

Action note from Thurso Ward Forum (Thurso High School A.S.G.) held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 in Pentland Hotel.

### **Present (top table)**

Cllr Gail Ross (GR), Chair – Elected Member, Wick Ward, Highland Council (THC)  
David Sutherland (DS) – Ward Manager, Thurso, Wick and Landward Wards, THC  
Stuart Bell (SB) – Assistant Area Manager, Community Services, THC  
Inspector Nick Clasper (NC) – Police Scotland (PS)  
Sgt. Debbie Simpson (DS) – PS

### **Present**

Cllr Gillian Coghill (GC) – Elected Member, Landward Ward, THC  
Cllr Matthew Reiss (MR) – Elected Member, Landward Ward, THC  
Cllr John Rosie (JR) – Elected Member, Thurso Ward, THC  
Cllr Donnie Mackay (DM) – Elected Member, Thurso Ward, THC  
Cllr Willie Mackay (WM) – Elected Member, Landward Ward, THC  
Jean Lipa (JL) – Thurso Community Council  
Don Smith (DS) – Thurso Community Council  
Bob Earnshaw (BE) – Thurso Community Council  
Elizabeth Geddes (EG) – Castletown Community Council  
Brenda Herrick (BH) – Castletown Community Council  
George Carson (GS) – Caithness West Community Council.

### **In attendance**

Alex Macmanus (AM) – Chief Executives Office, HC (clerk)

Nine members of the general public.

No members of the Press.

### **1. Welcome and introductions (GR)**

GR advised the rationale behind tonight's Forum following issues raised at meetings of the Caithness Community Safety Action Team (CCSAT)

### **2. Traffic management in Thurso and surrounding area.**

#### **a. Safer Routes to School (SRtS) improvements.**

Miller Academy is in the process of setting up a SRtS committee to look at traffic issues in Princes Street and Janet Street. Various ideas already noted e.g. making the whole of Janet Street 20mph, moving disabled parking bay closer to Davidsons Lane, consulting with the school pupils.

DM critical of cars parking all over the area with no police presence to discourage this. Member of SRtS group have spoken directly to parents and she has noticed a difference but alternatives need to be explored including encouraging folk to walk.

SB would make contact with the Council SRtS officer and arrange a meeting between all relevant parties ASAP. ACTION

DS commented that people will not use the parking spaces in Janet Street and that enforcement is the only answer.

NC remarked that the Thurso Traffic Order contains blanket exclusion on dropping off and that there was a miss mash of prohibition around Miller Academy.

SB advised that the markings at Miller Academy would be refreshed and added that a lot of the issues are being compounded by general driver behaviour.

DS suggested that zebra crossings be sited at Trostan Terrace and at the bottom of Castlegreen Road. GC suggested one at the shop on Castlegreen Road

WM reminded the meeting that the installing of road crossings do take a fair length of time.

SB advised the meeting that the draft drawings for an improved layout for Mount Pleasant Road under SRtS are due to go to Council Committee in September.

## **b. Enforcement**

This sits entirely with PS. NC provided some statistics to the meeting

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 – 54 fixed fines for speeding in Landward Ward (A9/A99), 1 fixed fine in Thurso, 9 no seat belts and 6 using mobile phones. Next year it is envisaged that HC would be responsible for issuing parking tickets. Two vehicles have been seized and 3 asbos issued in Thurso. One driver charged with having a vehicle with excessive noise.

Local police work with the road policing unit (RPU) from Dingwall who are in the County many times during a calendar week.

NC has concerns over driver's behaviour and would like the general public to raise any concerns they may have over drivers and the areas that these concerns occur. The unmarked police car does have a significant impact in the County. There has been a reduction in noise complaints.

Issues identified over vehicles double parking by commercial vehicles on Princes Street, parking on double yellow lines, single yellow lines, on corners and pavements. PS need information from the general public to be able to check on any such incidents.

Concerns raised from the floor over the dangerous speeds witnessed on Castlegreen Road at various times during the day and night which is compounded by the parking of vehicles which leaves a single track and also the many junctions leading off Castlegreen Road. Again PS need information on any such incidents e.g. registration number of vehicle.

SB/DS would investigate the concerns raised over the taxi ranks in Princess Street and write to the taxi firms concerned. ACTION.

Concerns raised about the number of people that are still using mobile phones whilst driving. NC defended his officers to a claim of nothing was being done by confirming that his officers are tasked daily with looking out for drivers using their mobile phones whilst driving.

On the spot offenders who accept the £100.00 penalty and 3 points on their licence cannot be named and shamed and will only go to Court if the fine is not paid. PS have to work within the current legislation.

PS and THC continue with their Driving Ambitions event which is aimed at addressing driver behaviour whilst young people are still at school/college. Any car that is seized can be released by payment of the current fine of £145.00. Many of those in attendance felt this was far too low a figure.

DS enquired about the proposed one way system for Shore Street. SB would chase the traffic order. ACTION.

Other issues raised included – speeding in Castletown; sites of Camera Partnership van and rational behind advertising its position; apparent soft sentencing on drivers in particular where vehicle is needed for work; length of A9 closure following fatal crash.

### **c. Council road maintenance**

Princes Street surface dressing carried out although edges have been missed out due to budget. Problems experienced in getting in a road sweeper to clear the loose chippings. Complaints that chips were dusty and not washed but suppliers say they were washed. Regular traffic will push chips into road surface.

Member of public stated that most of the roads and pavements in Thurso were in a poor state. SB explained that with the budget cuts there was no money to enable his squads to work on the roads. Central Government would need to come up with further funding.

Verges – Council no longer cut verges out in the country but do cut at junctions to improve sight lines and at accident black spots. SB acknowledged the good work being done by local farmers in cutting verges.

Weeds are being sprayed in the towns but by a weak solution along adopted roads and footpaths. Comments passed about the general public taking responsibility for their surroundings and picking weeds

SB would look up the legislation covering weed killer and advise, in a few lines, the Members in attendance. ACTION

DS – requested that a 2<sup>nd</sup> Thurso River Bridge should now be on the planning, possibly at the Ellan Bridge. Concern expressed that when the river bridge is being worked on the only possible way through the town is around by Halkirk.

GR suggested that when reporting faults to THC that the electronic reporting link be used. SB echoed this

Link here -

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/591/council\\_and\\_government/548/report\\_a\\_problem](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/591/council_and_government/548/report_a_problem)