

Tue 23/01/2018 12:05

chairman@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

Gritting Batcombe roads

To: JWoodman@somerset.gov.uk; NAHewittCooper@somerset.gov.uk

Cc: david.warburton.mp@parliament.uk; clerk@batcombe-parish-council-somerset.org.uk

Dear John and Nigel,

The Parish Council does not meet until 7th February 2018. As I cannot instruct the Clerk to write to you [though no doubt the Parish Council will do so] this email is to alert you of an issue of concern.

On Wednesday, 17th January 2018, the school bus for King Arthur's school was involved in an incident involving black ice on Hinchcombe Hill in Batcombe. The location has previously been identified to you as a known hazardous location because of blocked gullies, water running across an adverse camber and a frost friendly orientation.

Fortunately there were no injuries although the pupils, and perhaps the driver, were alarmed and distressed by the incident. If you look at the Batcombe Facebook page you will see the concerns expressed there by parents and other villagers.

Quite why the County Council is quite so intransigent about this matter is incomprehensible to many in the village. You should know that, having exhausted all avenues with the County Council, the Parish Council has approached our MP, Mr David Warburton, to see if he will meet with constituents who will ask him to bring his influence to bear on SCC.

I take this opportunity to remind you of our meeting on 4th December 2017. I asked that you make a specific exception for this parish given its topography. You refused stating that no exception to the policy could be contemplated yet you authorised the pre-gritting from Stoney Stratton to the edge of Westcombe though it too is outside the SCC policy parameters for pre-gritting and benefits only one property. The proposal to grit to the church crossroads by Nigel went even further beyond policy and you saw fit to agree to that too. Not adhering to SCC policies is obviously feasible when you choose so to do.

All we have asked for over the last two years was a recognition that, since 1965, the road through Batcombe has been included in the pre-gritting programme despite the fact that for much of that time it may well have been outside SCC policy guidelines. Thus a de facto variance to SCC policy was in place and accepted by officers, if not members, over decades. A simple return to the status quo ante, at negligible cost to SCC, will make this issue go away to everyone's relief.

At this time as I am still awaiting a reply from you to my email of 2nd January 2018, acknowledged by Sara Mein on the 4th. That said the following paragraph I think makes clear the situation in the parish.

There is a clear and present danger to the children and adults in this village which you ignore at your peril. This email, the Facebook entries on the topic and previous correspondence are an audit trail which provides clear evidence that you know of the hazards posed by not gritting the route through Batcombe. The issue of the obstruction of the highway, which SCC should have resolved, has been dealt with by the Parish Council in conjunction with Avon and Somerset Police. Should there be injuries or worse, you will not be able to evade your responsibilities. The Parish Council has no resources to pursue the consequences of an incident causing injury or worse but parents no doubt have. Whether legal responsibility lies solely with the transport provider or not, SCC will, I strongly suspect, be in potential litigants' sights for failure to react to identified risks.

Regards

Chris Wildridge