

## **LHSRG, Chairman's Report for 2019/20 and 2020/21**

I would like to begin by congratulating Marie, our Minutes Secretary on her well-deserved success in the local election. We regret that our group will lose her precious skills but wish her success and satisfaction in her new role as councillor. Well done Councillor Cooper!

It was December 2019 when James was elected MP and we are now accustomed to his being "James Grundy M.P." but this is the first opportunity to record our congratulations to him on his achievement and wish him well. In fact, one of his first initiatives was to raise the subject of a by-pass for Lane Head!

On a very sad note, our thoughts and sympathy are with Dennis our deputy chairman on the sad loss of Christine. We continue to think of him, thank him for his valuable work for us and wish him well in his new home in St. Asaph where he is nearer to his son, Martin.

Because of the Pandemic, our 2020 AGM could not take place and consequently our last AGM was in 2019. Thus, we are now looking back over two whole years, for one of which we have been unable to hold meetings.

This report therefore covers the period since March 2019.

### **2019/2020, 2020/2021**

Both of these years were dominated by the subjects of traffic issues, air quality particularly in the Winwick Lane area of Lane Head, local development, speed and noise of traffic on Newton Road and of course the proposed Parkside Development with the loss of a vast area of greenbelt land and generation of more traffic using Lane Head. We now also have concerns about the defensive measures being proposed by Warrington Council, particularly their proposal to impose 7.5-ton weight limits on the A574 (Glazebury) and other roads leading to their villages. We fear this will leave Wigan roads through Lowton as the only alternative for much of the traffic and have spoken to the Wigan planning department, requesting their help.

### **Winwick Lane**

We are hugely indebted to Gill for her unswerving and persistent work regarding the Winwick Lane traffic and air quality, repeatedly contacting key personnel who could be helpful, until a positive answer was given.

The signage at M6 J22 has now been changed after a five year wait.

A very positive and co-operative connection with Inspector Coburn, Greater Manchester Police, has been established with the particular situation and difficulties of Winwick Lane and Lane Head area clearly set out. Sadly, he has now been promoted and has moved on, but we hope the same information is passed on to his successor, Inspector Andrew Smith (whose grandfather was a policeman, based at Lane Head!) He has in fact already made contact.

Similarly, thanks to both Gill and Kath H. who have reported more than 2,000 HGV companies seen contravening the 7.5-ton limit. They personally contacted them, (50 e- mails to one firm alone!) which generally resulted in a promise of co-operation in future.

Another recent result of this marathon of vigilance is that a CCTV camera is actually due to be installed at the Winwick Lane/Newton Road junction – again our thanks to Kath H. with her Councillor's hat on.

We have also maintained links with Andy Burnham and Transport for Greater Manchester, such that he can be contacted regarding traffic matters affecting our area. We have been involved in several meetings with Andy, all concerning traffic/air quality including the proposed Clean Air Zone for Greater Manchester.

### **Meetings with Wigan Council**

Last year, 2020, the Council Officers arranged a series of meetings to which the Chairpersons or representatives of local groups were invited to view and discuss possible ideas for the use of S106 monies (that is money paid by the developer in respect of each house built, to be used for mitigation of the effects of development on the community). All of this was done virtually on Zoom or Teams and the first meeting I attended was in September 2020, followed by further meetings. Maps, diagrams and illustrations of planned possible changes were provided on screen. It was agreed between the groups that each of the proposed ideas should be commented upon by each representative, in the form of a Likert scale which enables one to state the degree to which a proposal is liked/disliked and where appropriate, alternative suggestions made This was submitted to the Planning Department and subsequently both the Council and also LaGTAG on behalf of all local

community groups, distributed further surveys independently, but so far we have not been told of any further developments or the results of the surveys. We await those further developments.

### **Local Developments**

We have submitted formal objections to planning applications which would cause loss of Green Space or heritage assets such as Oaklands on the corner of Hesketh Meadow Lane – sadly to no avail, even when positive and possible alternative uses were suggested.

### **Work with LaGTAG and LaGTAC.**

All the residents' groups in Lowton try to work co-operatively, giving mutual support and sharing information. Thus, we have been involved with LaGTAG (Lowton and Golborne Traffic Action Group) and LaGTAC's work on traffic problems affecting the whole of Lowton.

### **Traffic Problems**

All parts of Lowton are affected in some way. On the A572 Newton Road, our particular problem is that of speeding /road noise/driver behaviour. A letter requesting help on this matter resulted in a promise of support from police who sent a mobile speed camera van and arranged for the CPSO team to be deployed to give us that support, but the council – resort to old guidance of insufficient accident figures.

One of the earliest actions of LHSRG, many years ago, was to obtain 7½ ton weight limits for Stonecross Lane and Heath Lane. Unsurprisingly, residents now feel that the excessive speeds and associated noise and use by an increasing number of HGVs, can only be resolved by another 7½-ton limit and 30 mph speed limit, this time on the entire length of Newton Road from the boundary to Lane Head.

2019/20 and 2020/21 were very busy and dominated by the Parkside Development and Link Road threats. In preparation for the "Call in" by the Secretary of State of this development it was necessary firstly to decide how we would represent the residents of the Lane Head area and the potential traffic problems we might face.

It was decided to support Parkside Action Group as witnesses who could represent the effects the development could have on the Lane Head area, considering our particular geographical situation as a neighbouring community. We owe another huge "thank you" to Gareth who prepared and presented a daunting mass of information, figures and argument on our behalf on the subject of vehicle movements and air quality with great expertise, dealing calmly with QCs and expert witnesses.

Thus, 2020/2021 was particularly busy, being dominated by weekly preparatory "Teams" meetings with PAG, preparation of material and ultimately the month-long Inspector's Hearing. The decision is due to be published by the end of August.

On more mundane matters, sadly we have obviously been unable to hold any social occasions. I think we all missed our "Carols Round the Tree" in December! We hope for better times to come and as soon as it becomes possible perhaps, we will once again enjoy Darts and Dominoes and Bank Holiday Revels on the green. (Mt Tabor) "We will meet again!"

Litter picks as group activities have not been possible, but individuals or families have taken it upon themselves to litter pick independently to help keep our footpaths and verges clean. Immense thanks to Terry Hewitt for his daily "picks" which mean our area is kept spick and span. Wonderful work Terry! Thanks to every adult or child who takes the time to pick up other people's litter to help Lowton look good!

The Council Street Scene waste collection service has always been most helpful in responding to requests for their professional assistance or equipment on these occasions and this is much appreciated.

I would like to emphasise how fortunate we are in having such a supportive group of Councillors who have stood by us through thick and thin. They are much valued.

## **Open Spaces**

We all regret the reduction in the amount of open green spaces the latest being the Bottle Pit field, used by residents for as long as anyone remembers. This last year's problems have demonstrated the value of such spaces for healthy exercise as we have all witnessed the numbers of walkers and runners using the green space, we do have left. The Jubilee Wood and village green area have been in constant use and Highfield Moss and the public rights of way, rarely empty. The road pavements can be nearly as congested as the roads! All of which shows how valuable are our green spaces is to everyone.