

Slaley woods Protect Group

Held Monday 7th March 2022 at Whitley Chapel Village Hall

18 people present

Insp Kate Benson from Northumbria Police (who initiated the meeting) was present by Zoom.

Between 1st Dec 21 to 1st March 22 there were 26 ASB incidents reported – no crimes. Motorcycles/4x4 incidents in Slaley area account for 0.3% of Police demand. Therefore, the demand is not high enough for the police to justify any more resources.

Reporting via 101 is not working and many conversations took place about the problems with 101. If you wait 45 minutes to talk to a call handler then you are likely to give in and therefore the incident is not logged/reported. As so few calls are being logged then the Police cannot justify any further resources on Slaley Woods, so the most important thing is for everyone to report all incidents. (details of how at the end of this report)

Insp Benson stated that the Woodland Protection Group has now been passed onto the local community and/or the 3 Parish Councils to progress matters around restoration etc. *(not that the other groups were aware of this until the meeting?)*

She reinforced that other organisations including the Police still remain committed to protecting the woodland area but will no longer take the lead and will only provide representation when required to do so at any future meeting etc. They will continue to work towards common goals that include law enforcement activities and will be accountable for them.

On slides that Sgt Benson displayed she stated:

- Consider enforcement action through Operations.
- Increase visibility at specific times.
- Provide better reporting mechanisms – (Many people in the room felt this was one of the main issues and the fact that the percentage of calls logged is only 0.3% is due to the wait on 101.)
- Engagement – attend parish council, working group meetings, support future activities

Northumberland County Council - Update

Longedge Road (Slaley Byway No.48 and Healey Byway No.14) temporarily closed to motor vehicles and horse drawn vehicles until 2nd June 2022. NCC are currently carrying out a feasibility Study with an aim of repairing the route next year if funding available.

All byways subject to TROs and TTROs are in the process of being signed appropriately with prohibition of motor vehicles and prohibition of horse and carriage signs at the closure points for the period of the closure.

Forestry type vehicle Barriers are being installed at each end of the Longedge Road Route (Slaley Byway No.48 and Healey Byway No.14) and on the Lower Lead Road route (Slaley Byway No.38).

A feasibility study is to be carried out for the repair of the byway across Blanchland Moor to Penny Pie (Blanchland Byway No.26). Timescale for actual works is dependent on results of the feasibility study and funding availability.

MAP AVAILABLE

NOTES FROM THE MEETING

Many suggestions were put forward

- Hidden Wildlife cameras could be used at particularly bad areas (top of the sand track)
- The wildlife cameras could help with issuing 'section 59' notices
- Public Space Protection Order would help
- More involvement with Forestry England and other landowners.
- A police/volunteer day in the forest would be productive - need 'rural crime volunteers' involved to cover H&S & RA.
- Suggestion to contact Guy Opperman
- Keep contacting Highways – especially regarding the state of some of the BOATS
- More Police training needed as they have a Lack of understanding of powers relating to S59, ASB, FPN for off-road vehicles, therefore more training to student officers.
- Valid point was raised regarding restricted access to Viewley Farm if the ford is inaccessible, and unable to get fire or ambulance to location.