

Weight Limit changes for Agricultural vehicles

New regulations have just been approved for the weight and speed limit for agricultural tractors and trailers. From 9th March 2015 an agricultural tractor towing an agricultural trailer will be able to travel at a higher combination weight limit of 31 tonnes (previously 24.39t). Furthermore, agricultural tractors and agricultural trailers which are currently restricted to travelling at 20mph will be able to travel at 40kph (approx. 25mph).

These changes have been justified mainly on financial and social benefits as it will reduce farming costs by reducing the number of trips needed to haul goods and will improve traffic flow along narrower roads where cars cannot overtake. However, these increased loads and speeds will have an impact on the road structure across the county and more importantly the bridges and culverts under the tracks and droves.

As vehicles have become heavier and wider over the last ten or twenty years the damage to the road edges has become an increasing problem. The verges are pushed into the roadside ditches which blocks them so that surface water runs along the edge of the tarmac, causing rutting, potholes and dangerous surfaces. The County Council Highways have taken the stance that these roadside ditches are the responsibility of the adjacent (or Riparian) landowner to maintain, which would normally mean keeping the channel clear of silt and vegetation, but not stopping the road traffic damaging the verge.

This is leading to all sorts of safety issues for road users. When there is water on the road drivers invariably avoid driving through the water as they are wary of hitting hidden potholes, this pushes vehicles out into the centre of the road and increases the chance of collisions, especially on corners on narrow country roads. During winter the ineffective road drainage causes water to freeze on the road and this ice is extremely hazardous for cyclists, horse riders, pedestrians and motorcyclists. When the road base remains saturated this reduces the strength of the road so that heavy vehicles damage the edges and form craters, again making drivers keep out into the road.

The Parish Council are aware of some of these drainage issues and have been asked by the County Council Highways to speak to the landowners concerned to try and resolve the problem at a local level. However, the Parish Council does not have the powers to enforce this like the District and County Councils. It may be worth bringing these problems to the attention of the Parish Council so that a full picture of the extent of poor drainage and road condition are mapped so that they can be reported to the County Highways for a coordinated approach in our parish.



NEW EDITOR(S) STILL REQUIRED

An opportunity is becoming available at the end of the year for some local people to help out with the production of the Spaxton Community News. After 33 years of helping out or compiling the village magazine I intend to step down as the main editor, so new editors are required to help the existing people prepare the magazine every two months. I have thoroughly enjoyed my involvement with our village magazine and I've got to know so many more people in and around our village, from contributors to delivery people and arranging the printing and distribution for each issue.

When we started producing the magazine in 1982 it was to take over from the Parish Magazine that Alan Anderson had faithfully prepared and printed for local village and church news. He had reached the stage that I think I'm at now, so it's time for some new blood to get to grips with this much appreciated village newsletter. Originally we did actually have to get articles typed, then cut and paste them manually to create the originals for printing. Nowadays the word processing and publishing programs make this so much easier to prepare quite professional documents. So, if you can help with this please do join the rest of the editorial team to keep our excellent magazine going for many more years.

If you want to know any more about this please give me a call to discuss any questions you may have on the matter.

Philip Ham, Spaxton 671626