



Bicton Arena Neighbours Forum March 2018

All residents of Yettington and East Budleigh, East Budleigh with Bicton Parish Council, neighbouring businesses and farmers were invited to attend a meeting at the Estate office on 7 March 2018.

16 local people took the opportunity to submit their thoughts beforehand and 35 were able to attend the forum. The evening was led by Bicton Arena Manager, Helen West (HW) and Estates Surveyor, Clare James (CJ) supported by Countryside Learning Officer, Kate Ponting (KP), Bicton Arena Events Coordinator, Beccy Barrett (BB) and an independent facilitator, Lester Willmington.

The feedback submitted was collated, and two main issues were identified: **Noise** and **Traffic**. There were a number of suggestions for **Alternative Routes** and improvements to **Communication**. Below is more detail of each of the issues raised, further explanatory information and the actions we will be taking now and over the coming season.

1. Noise

Three residents identified noise as an issue beforehand, but during the evening other residents explained they can hear tannoy announcements during certain events, and at times, for some, this was felt to be intrusive.

- Tannoy announcements can be heard by some properties across the parish.
- Cross Country events are probably felt to be where the noise is loudest.
- During certain competitions extra sounds such as bells, horns and whistles are also a factor.

The Arena team explained that two communications contractors are employed to cover the in-house managed events, but that external hirers are free to use suppliers of their choice. It was suggested that further feedback would be appreciated to help us get the best possible picture of which events cause a sound issue.

What you can do:

Please report to us on noise levels

What we will do:

Monitor sound levels and keep a note of dates and events reported to us to help us build up a more informed picture. Helen West will meet with our two communications providers and discuss several actions including directions; orientation of speakers; limiters on volume control for all events; increase the number of speakers so that overall volume can be reduced.

HW will also look to amend the hire agreement for external hirers by stipulating that they must use one of the two recommended communications suppliers.

2. Traffic

The bulk of the issues raised before the meeting and many topics during the evening related to traffic. This has impact on anyone using the roads locally, but we recognise that Yettington home owners are those most impacted. Bicton Arena have always been open to gaining a better understanding of the issues and finding solutions to reduce impact where we can. Safety of all road users is of paramount importance to us.

Volume

- Yettington residents felt that volume of traffic reached an all-time high last year (2017)

- One resident commented that it felt like traffic came all day and all night throughout the week without an event being held. HW explained that the all-weather arenas can be booked between 09:00 and 18:00 during the summer months and 09:00 and 16:00 during winter months.
- It was highlighted that the “Next Event” sign at the bottom of the drive is not kept updated. This was noted, and residents were informed that ALL dates can be found on the Bickton Arena website (as stated in the new notice now erected at the bottom of the drive) and in the parish magazine. We gave out details of the event dates for this season with those at the meeting. Letter drops to be made to residents in the future, informing them not only of event dates but with times to expect a higher volume of traffic.
- Huge issues were reported when lorries meet going in opposite directions and also when they meet farm and holiday traffic.

Vehicle Size

- Reports of large vehicles eroding the hedges and changing the landscape.
- Concerns that the road cannot sustain the size and types of vehicles. Reports of houses shaking and concerns that the fabric of buildings, especially cob may be affected.
- Mid-range lorries reported to be the worst drivers, possibly due to inexperience.
- The largest horse lorries are the most intimidating and cause problems when in convoy and needing to pass other horse lorries or large vehicles.

Speed

- It was agreed that fast moving vehicles are not the horse lorries, and that traffic calming measures would be welcomed as part of a wider issue particularly with vehicles coming downhill from Four Firs.
- BA confirmed they would fully support any traffic calming measures i.e. gateways into the village, reduction in speed limit to 20mph, but these would be Parish Council driven.
- It was pointed out that the Arena traffic actually slows down other drivers through Yettington.

Attitude/Behaviour

- Residents indicated that most of horse boxes drivers were polite but there had been a couple of incidents in the past. One resident had her front door knocked on and she was asked if she could move her car as a lorry couldn't pass.
- Rudeness of any kind is not acceptable.
- It was reported that in the past year BA have installed signage as you exit the Arena, requesting customers to drive with consideration through the local villages.
- HW asked that any residents affected record registration numbers, vehicle details and descriptions of drivers with any incidents of damage to property, vehicles or antisocial behaviour and forward to her. She will also be asking any Arena attendees involved in incidents to report in the same way.
- HW to check about new GDPR laws but plans to ask for all lorry registrations when bookings are taken and will get in touch with any offenders and potentially ban them from Bickton Arena.

Timing of arrival/departure

- HW explained how multiple riders, have dressage as early as 08.00 at the Horse Trials. They will need to walk the cross country before getting on to warm up for their first dressage test, hence needing to arrive early. Late arrival times were also required for those travelling long distances after school and for those arriving directly after the conclusion of another show.
- Suggestions were made about restricting when competitors may exit the arena i.e. not departures between a certain time. We will consider this but animal welfare issues would need to be considered and looked in to first.

- Suggestions were made about widening passing places across the Common to allow horse lorries to pass more comfortably. Some were opposed to this as they did not want to alter the landscape of this important site. To clarify; under the Commons Act 2006 everything that isn't road, is designated Common land and the existing legal designations (SSSI/SAC/SPA) will constrain what could be done to any laybys or expanding car park curtilage on any of the commons. However very minor tweaks which might help to visibility spays are possible.
- One-way systems have been suggested by residents to alleviate this issue.

Parking/Other vehicles

- Pinch points in the village are not helped by residents needing or choosing to park in the road.
- A couple of residents admitted to parking on the road on purpose to stop speeding but acknowledged this caused congestion.
- The Arena team have never applied for a coned, 'clearway' during events as it perceives this would be unpopular.
- Clare James explained the CDE owned land in the village did not provide obvious solutions for additional parking. Other alternatives villagers might investigate include the Village Hall, The green space at Shortlands through an approach to EDDC although (not a popular suggestion).
- One resident offered parking on show days in his yard.
- A suggestion was made to ask local farmers to keep away during busy times.

What you can do:

We would ask that local people continue to show courtesy to all road users but if they witness rudeness or aggression they can record vehicle make, model, colour and registration number and pass onto the Parish Council and Arena team. If an accident/serious incident occurs, we would remind you that contacting the Police and your Insurance Company should be your primary course of action.

What we will do:

Continue to publicise events dates locally along with information on when a high volume of traffic is expected.

Look into offering off-site trailer/horsebox driving courses to increase confidence and skill.

Support any village plans to warn/calm traffic

Investigate procedures to hold vehicle details to enable them to follow up on reports of aggressive driving. If rudeness is identified, banning competitors in the future is something HW has no qualms about doing.

Trim our hedges more regularly this season and see if this improves large vehicle road positioning and general visibility.

We will not be telling tractor drivers or anyone else who has a right to use the public highway to avoid the area but will continue to look at improving our communications to the local community and other local businesses such as holiday parks to let them know them when equine traffic to and from the Arena is likely to be heaviest.

Alternative Routes

The two main suggestions received were:

- One-way system via B3178 (Newton Poppleford)
- Bypass/Access Road

HW explained that these suggestions had in fact been explored by herself and the Parish Council in 2016 and the following conclusions reached:

- Access via Brick Cross is not suitable for vehicles over 7.5 tonnes.
- High incidence of road traffic accidents on B3178.
- The Commando Challenge operates a one-way system, but does not involve any large vehicles, it is mainly cars.
- Devon County Council can only issue 2 – 3 one way permits per year, one of which is used by the Commando Challenge.
- An enforced one-way system is considered to be dangerous by DCC and they will not consent to this.
- Residents had differing views on which events are the worse ones for traffic.
- Some residents understand there is always going to be an impact, we just need to find a way to best manage it.
- One residents suggested traffic leaves the arena in half an hour slots, other residents opposed that, saying 20 lorries going through Yettington would be more of an impact.

Voluntary One way:

A voluntary one-way system was trialled briefly in 2015 but HW suggested trialling this again. This suggestion was well received by residents, but HW has asked for clearer information as to which events residents would like this trialled for.

Bypass/Access Road:

Clinton Devon Estates land ownership does not include the fields to the west of Southfield Lodge, so creating an entrance/exit route directly onto B3178 is not an option.

What you can do:

Keep us informed of the issues

Help us monitor volume and numbers using voluntary one-way systems

What we will do:

Draw up a Traffic management plan and liaise with DCC to investigate possibility of a voluntary one-way system at future events. Consider trialling an allotted number of entries taking 3 different routes (Colaton Raleigh, East Budleigh and Yettington);

Look at potential to exit the Arena via Aldergrove Lodge through Bicton College.

Communication/Future Actions

- One comment was received about not knowing when events were to take place.
- We were asked why we didn't use AA signage for all the events as it is a good warning. AA signage costs around £500 per event so we only currently advertise the Horse Trials but will look into other options.
- Most attendees thanked us for the opportunity to explain their concerns and better understand the wider issues at an open forum.

What you can do:

Complete the feedback questionnaire to tell us what we got right and what else we can do to work together to reduce negative impacts of living close to Bicton Arena.

What we will do:

Continue to respond to comments, observations and questions and consider all suggestions that are within our power to action.

Organise further meetings and opportunities to provide feedback, such as an annual forum as well as inviting the local community to events at the Arena.

Deliver a schedule of events, updates and contact details to all Yettington residents and share this information through the Parish News and with local businesses.