

Highways chiefs and police quizzed over traffic concerns at packed public meeting

Residents call for action on pollution after lorry invasion

By Victoria Chessum
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THE ongoing issue of noisy lorries polluting the air near a housing estate was thrashed out at a public meeting.

Residents who live at Aycliffe, in Dover, have long had to put up with traffic congestion and trucks clogging up the A20 that leads through the town and to the busy Port of Dover.

Highways chiefs and MP Charlie Elphicke met in the community in a bid to resolve the issues on Friday night, July 7.

Mr Elphicke said: "It was fantastic to see so many people turn out to make their voice heard on traffic issues.

"Every seat was filled, such is the strength of feeling in this community.

"At least 20 more people stood at the back."

The meeting was organised by the MP who retained the Dover



Dover MP Charlie Elphicke

and Deal seat for the third time during the June snap election.

He added: "I organised this meeting to give everyone a chance to put their views to those in charge - so we can work together

to fix our roads. And it was great to see so many residents come along and ask important questions.

"Much has been done to tackle gridlock and fix our roads. It is vital we work together to keep up the pressure."

Aycliffe residents raised the issue of lorries parked up by the Western Heights roundabout causing noise and air pollution. They said they want the traffic lights moved back down the A20, away from their estate.

Speed limit

Mr Elphicke urged Highways England's area managing director Simon Jones to look again at whether this can be done.

Others highlighted the number of foreign lorry drivers flouting the A20 40mph speed limit.

Kent Police's Inspector Ian Swallow said the force lacked the powers to give these drivers on-the-spot fines, like they are able to



Lorries heading for the Port of Dover from Aycliffe

do in France.

Mr Elphicke said he will keep up the pressure in parliament to change the law and give police the powers they need.

After a long and hard-fought campaign, Highways England have finally started scrapping the hated 40mph limit.

Soon work will be complete to return the road to 70mph - with the 40mph limit only enforced on

the rare occasions Dover TAP is in place.

Dover TAP was introduced more than two years ago and is controlled by traffic lights at the foot of the Western Heights.

It prevents lorries from queuing in Dover and blocking the roads for residents.

Mr Elphicke said: "This should tackle the problem of lorries using Capel, Elms Vale and the

Alkham Valley Road as rat-runs.

"Yet we must remain vigilant."

Mr Jones said he would look at how HGVs can be stopped from diverting through these routes. He said Highways England and the port are working together to redirect trucks onto the M2/A2 rather than the M20/A20.

Mr Jones confirmed Highways England are looking at whether the A2 can be dualled.

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Police appeal for witnesses after pensioner neighbours are burgled

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after two pensioners in their 90s were burgled in Deal.

The burglaries took place between noon and 5.40pm on Monday July 3 at neighbouring properties in Manor Road.

It was reported that during the afternoon, a woman in her 90s answered the front door to a man who offered to carry out work on the gutters.

The work was agreed and carried out that afternoon. A second man was seen to assist with the work.

Later, the man returned to ask for payment and waited in the victim's kitchen. The victim paid

part of the bill and it was arranged for the man to return at a later date for the rest of the money and he left.

A short while later, the victim realised her empty money box had been stolen and her neighbour, a man in his 90s, reported his property had also been burgled that afternoon.

Items including cash, watches and wedding rings were reported stolen from his house.

Officers believe the two burglaries are linked and are keen to speak to anyone with information about them.

In particular, they are appealing for any witnesses who

might have seen a white Ford Transit van in the area that afternoon.

The van was described as having a roof rack on top.

Investigating officer Detective Sergeant Richard Cordery said: "We ask residents to remain vigilant against burglars, ensure your doors and windows are secure even if you are leaving them unattended for a short while, and be wary of who you let into your home."

Anyone with information about the burglaries, or if they saw the van, is asked to contact Kent Police on 01843 222289 quoting ZY/29266/17.

Sexual assault man jailed for two years

A MAN from Walmer has been jailed for two and a half years for sexually assaulting a woman while he was carrying out community service.

Billy Merchant, 50, of Liverpool Road, made an unwelcome advance to the victim at a shop in Deal on January 29.

He was under the influence of alcohol when he tried to hug her and attempted to kiss her on two separate occasions.

He also touched her inappropriately on top of her clothing.

The woman screamed and told him to get out of the store. He was arrested later that day.

He pleaded guilty to sexual assault prior to his sentencing at Canterbury Crown Court on Thursday, July 6.

Investigating officer Detective Constable Melanie Winter said: "Merchant has displayed little remorse for his actions and does not appear to understand the seriousness of his crime. He will now have plenty of time to reflect in prison."



Billy Merchant has been jailed