

Our farming life.

Firbeck was built as an estate village economically dependent on farming. Historically, most if not all of the villagers would have been involved with the land and everyone would have been engaged with their environment. People living in the village now have little or no connection to farming. Many do not know what is happening in the fields around them and why and generally do not know what to expect by way of agricultural equipment on the roads until tractors, combines, pea viners actually appear.

The village and the roads serving the village were constructed at a time when farming machinery and practices were on a much smaller scale. The village infrastructure now struggles to cope with the size of the agricultural equipment used in the 21st century. Over the last three years there has been a number of incidents involving heavy agricultural traffic which have given rise to grave concern as to safety of other road users. Keeping all road and other public highways (footpaths and bridlepaths) safe for all users is a now priority for the PC.

Our ambition is to help villagers relate to what is happening in the fields and to alert them to what they might encounter on our roads. We are talking to local farmers so that we can get an overview of what is planned on the fields farmed around us. For instance, we hope to establish, on an ongoing basis, the timing of and frequency of vehicle moving crops off the fields and to identify routes to be used by farmers. This will allow people to find alternative routes for their journey/activities and avoid the risk of encountering large heavy vehicles on the narrow roads or bridle/foot paths.

The land surrounding the village is farmed by and large by two farmers - the Hollingworths at South Farm Letwell and K.H Taylors of Oldcotes and we are talking to both farmers on a regular basis.

So whats happening right now?- Expect to see lorries on the roads this month.

If you have been across the airfield recently you will have noticed that the sugar beet is being lifted and stored on the side on the path leading from Stubbings Wood and directly adjacent to the bridlepath. This is the Hollingworth's sugar beet crop and it is being temporarily stored in this way pending haulage to the sugar beet factory in Newark.

The usual time to harvest sugar beet is throughout Oct/Nov/Dec but because of the exceptionally dry summer last year the crop has been left in the ground for longer to develop the sugars. The knock on effect of this is that, whereas the crop would have been taken off site over a period on time, this year it will be uplifted and taken en bloc over a 10 day period in February. There will be a total of 150 lorry movements - 15 per day operating from 5am - 6pm. Weekends included. The route to be taken is from the Maltby Road accessing the airfield at the new gated entrance to the track. The lorries will then turn at the top of the stone track where it branches off towards Stone - a turning circle has been created there using scalplings. The lorries will then be loaded and return the same way that they arrived.

The timing of haulage of this crop off site is not under the farmer's control but at the dictate of the sugar beet factory. Each farmer is part of a delivery group and is told when his crop will be moved. Further information will be posted when we hear of exact timings for this haulage operation.

After the sugar beet has been lifted those fields will then be sewn with Spring Barley for malting - this is for the brewing of the brighter sharper beers that are popular and which apparently we are good at brewing here in the UK. Cheers!

Fields which have been laying fallow around the village since harvest last year are to be planted with sugar beet for the Taylors which, all being well, we can expect to see harvested in the autumn.

If you would like any further information or have an issue you would like me to raise with our local farmers then please contact me - Cllr Caroline Jopling - by e mail at cjoplingfpc@outlook.co.uk.

Cllr Caroline Jopling