



Department
for Transport

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Dear Miss Robinson,

Thank you for your letter of 29 July 2020, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding the removal of Chideock as a pinch point in the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2). Your enquiry has been passed to the Correspondence Team, Strategic Roads division for a response.

Following your letter, Department officials raised your concerns with Highways England. In connection to the 2019 Safety and Severance Report carried out by Highways England, it has informed the Department that the four options recommended in the report have been included for further consideration in the 'A35 Charmouth to Yellowham Hill Route Safety Study', which included Chideock village. The A35 remains a priority for Highways England, and once the feasibility study outcomes are known, it will be able to produce a business case based on value for money appraisal and preferred cost options. Highways England plans to include the four options in Chideock with other measures along the A35 in Dorset as a package of improvements.

This improvement scheme is included in its current South West Regional Capital Forward Programme for delivery within RIS2, subject to prioritisation and budgetary constraints. Highways England recently had confirmation, as of June 2020, of funds to progress work on the next phase of the A35 Charmouth to Yellowham Route Safety Study. Regarding speeding traffic through Chideock village, the study includes recommendations to make permanent changes to speed limits by extending the 30mph zone at the western end of the village, and providing average speed cameras that would cover the whole existing and extended 30mph zone. The outcome of the study stage is currently planned to complete by the end of April 2021.

Additionally, the existing speed limit signage provided meets the required standards. The A35 Route Safety Study includes an option to undertake minor improvements to signs and lines within the village, principally to increase the conspicuousness of the 30mph gateway signage entrances to the village. This element is included in the next phase of the Route Safety Study.

With regards to your comments on Highways England's working relationship with the Police; officials have informed us that the former meet and engage the latter at many levels. Highways England attends the Dorset Strategic Road Safety Partnership meetings, and collaborates with Dorset Police on emerging safety schemes, such as the A35 Route Safety Study. The Police have been provided with copies of Highways England's initial draft report for comment, and are supportive of the range of safety measures it is seeking to introduce. Highways England held a strategic networking event with Devon & Cornwall and Dorset Police forces in September 2019 to bring together a wide range of expertise and different operational areas within Highways England and the Police forces in order to build understanding of the different roles each organisation plays and improve collaboration.

Turning to the Council's desire for a cycle and public footpath between the village of Chideock and Bridport, Highways England's Users and Communities Designated fund in RIS2 seeks to support walkers, cyclists and horse riders by addressing the barriers and severance that the Strategic Roads Network can create, and to provide better integrated facilities and crossing points to encourage these sustainable forms of transport. Highways England would welcome further discussion with Dorset Council and Chideock Parish Council (CPC) on this matter, to explore the potential for funding to contribute to improvements to cycling and walking routes.

Funding is limited and there is significant interest from all parts of the region on the improvement of cycling and walking links. Therefore, Highways England needs to prioritise its funds to the areas of greatest need and those that provide the best value for money. It would need to understand the scope, potential nature of benefits and costs and other sources of partnership funding for such a cycle or footpath proposal before being able to commit resources. All funding this financial year is already fully committed, but Highways England would be happy to explore the potential for contributory funds towards a study in subsequent years of the RIS2 period. Even if it cannot contribute funding, it would be willing to collaborate and potentially provide access to existing operational resources to assist.

Highways England published its Route Strategies in March 2017, following a wide consultation. The 2017 published Route Strategies include consideration of the concerns raised by CPC about Chideock village, and Highways England has embarked on a number of feasibility studies with the intention of

generating improvement schemes, funded through RIS2 Designated Funds, to address many of the Council's concerns.

Highways England has recently accepted an invite from Chris Loder MP to attend the next meeting of the A35 Working Group on 30 October 2020. As a member of the working group, we would encourage CPC to join this meeting, as Highways England intends to present progress on the A35 Charmouth to Yellowham Hill Route Safety Study and explain the next steps.

Thank you for taking the time to write in on behalf of CPC.

Yours sincerely,

Correspondence Team, Strategic Roads, Economics and Statistics