

CHIDEOCK PARISH COUNCIL

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Clerk: Miss Sal Robinson, 60 North Allington, Bridport, DT6 5DY 01 308 426327

22 October 2020

Your ref; 304079

Dear Mr Schapps,

Re: Chideock, Dorset and response regarding RIS2.

Thank you for your reply dated the 26th August 2020 in response to our letter dated the 29th July 2020.

First of all, the Parish Council would like to acknowledge the response and to thank you for giving the Parish Council the first of any form of communication in regard to an update on the A35 and the issues that directly concern the village of Chideock. It is important that it is stated, and noted with sadness, that over the last 12 months, both pre- Covid and during Covid, there has been no direct communication between the village and Highways England or our constituency MP, Chris Loder despite many attempts from the village to engage with them. I am sure that you will appreciate that given the strength of feeling in the village as expressed in our letter on the 29th July 2020, that when such concerns are universally ignored that this then leads to an intense feeling of frustration for all concerned.

However, the question needs to be asked why it took a written response to RIS2 from Chideock Parish Council, to then get an update on the current thinking regarding Highways England from the Department of Transport.

Meanwhile, although it has been good to get an early update on the current progress that Highways England are making in what it considers are its priorities, the response from the communications team does not deal with the issues raised in our last letter, where the Parish Council has asked for specific inputs and outcomes to be actively considered in the letter to the Minister. They are as follows: -

In the short term

We ask

- That the current RIS2, although now in agreed format, should have an urgent additional report which identifies that the village of Chideock remains a specific pinch point on the A35 and that nothing has changed since RIS1 to alter this fact. **This remains a significant issue and the evidence of the past 20 years suggests that this situation will continue because of the topological features of the village and the fact that no consideration has been given to how to deliver a more effective East – West strategic route.**
- Furthermore, that the additional report should focus upon the fact that the A35 from Dorchester to Honiton, as an East- West strategic route, is not fit for purpose and an action plan needs to be prioritised within the RIS2 report that is in addition to the current proposal of the M4 corridor from Bournemouth and Poole.

- A full implementation of the HE Safety and Severance report 2018. **The current outcomes from the report do not address the very serious health and safety issues that remain for villagers including those who are disabled, children and families who cannot cross the road in the west of the village because there are no pedestrian crossings and there are in places no pavements. This means in practice that those who are disabled and in pushchairs/wheelchairs must go onto the A35 alongside passing traffic. Why is this acceptable for the village when it would not be acceptable for a more urban environment?**
- DEFRA instructs Dorset Council that particulates from brake dust and tyres should be measured in Chideock. **This is a very serious public health risk and one which has recently been highlighted in the BBC's Countryfile programme, where actual evidence was recorded of the significantly higher levels of PM_{2.5} on the main road. The question is why are the residents of Chideock not being protected from this dangerous level of particulates through effective monitoring and through the early consideration in RIS2 of how traffic can be diverted or another route identified to avoid Chideock, thus reducing the high levels of pollution?**
- The DVSA recognise and implement HGV testing at Eype and at the Honiton end of the A35 on a regular basis. **It would appear that this is now only currently being carried out at the junction of the M5. As such it means that overloaded HGVs continue to divert through Chideock adding and creating higher levels of particulate pollution through smoking brakes/tyres. Effective monitoring and prosecution would raise the fact with road hauliers that they cannot get away with this practice-this needs to be addressed.**
- The police enforce the speed limits regardless of the advice from HE. **Although it is good news to hear that the Police support the introduction of the proposed average speed cameras, it would be helpful in the interim if they could appear on Chideock Hill to catch speeding motorists who are still in evidence, regardless of the current roadworks being carried out by HE .**
- The pollution trial is fully implemented as initially agreed. **This has never properly happened and as a result invaluable data and evidence continues to elude the village.**
- That villages that sit on strategic routes should be legally included in the current environmental legislation so that measures to reduce pollution including seeking alternative routes for HGVs and polluting vehicles can be economically supported through government funding, as currently applies to towns and cities. **This remains the case and, since the last letter sent to you, Friends of the Earth have named Chideock as the most polluted place in the country!**
- Government funding and support for the active development and delivery of a cycle path and public foot path between the village of Chideock and Bridport. **It is good to hear that this request has been heard but with the caveat that there are many other worthy contenders and that there is a limited budget. Chideock would like to point out that currently you are likely to be killed if you cycle or walk up either of the hills/A35 road that rise from the village at each end. If there is an accident on the A35, then villagers are effectively cut off and have no ability to access either Bridport or in the alternative direction East Devon. It would be helpful if full equality impact assessments were carried out on each contender in order that priority could be given to those who have the highest need, which this Parish Council believes Chideock has.**

In the long term: -

The Parish Council still considers this to be appropriate, and asks for a response: -

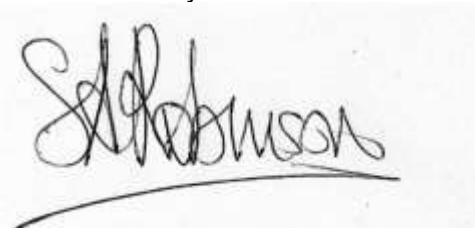
- The inclusion of a study and set of business proposals prior to RIS3 of the East –West corridor that is the A35 from Dorchester to Honiton and includes the pinch point that is Chideock.
- Specifically a focus upon the village of Chideock and the seeking of alternative route options for the SRN that would release Chideock from the impact of sitting on an SRN and return it to a normal road status within Dorset Council Highways Department.
- Recognition in RIS2 **AND** in RIS3 that the SRN that runs through Chideock is not fit for purpose and is a strategic pinch point.
- Villages that are intersected by an SRN to be included in the new environmental legislation in order that funding can be released to support monitoring and measures being applied regarding all forms of pollution.

In conclusion, the Parish Council recognises that Highways England are not in the driving seat, but they are tasked with delivering whatever has been agreed at a strategic level in the Department of Transport. Given the level of public concern about COVID, it should come as no great surprise that in this village individuals feel more vulnerable to Covid due to the high levels of pollution they are breathing on a daily basis and the consequences for their long term health and that of their children. Effectively, this letter and the previous one was about raising the serious concerns about the impact of this road on citizens from crossing the road, to walking/perambulating along the road and being able to breathe clean air.

The Parish Council is appealing to the Minister to RECOGNISE and ACCEPT that the A35 in its current form and location needs to sit within RIS2/RIS3 for a fundamentally different approach to be taken to achieve a new and defined traffic management system for East/West traffic that directs such traffic away from the current villages that sit on the A35. We understand that budgets are tight. We are asking the Minister to listen to a Parish Council who are concerned for the health and welfare of their citizens, who recognise that solutions can only be agreed by those who have the power and who hold the purse strings. We are asking for a creative and collaborative partnership which places Chideock back in RIS2 and RIS3.

The Parish Council looks forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sal Robinson', written over a horizontal line.

Sal Robinson (Miss), Chideock Parish Clerk