

Our ref: 12108513

Andrew Roberts
Highways England
Ash House
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Miss Sal Robinson
Chideock Parish Council
Chideockpc.org.uk

20 August 2020

Dear Miss Robinson

General dissatisfaction

Thank you for your letter of 30 June 2020 in which you raise a number of issues in relation to the A35 which runs through Chideock.

Taking each issue you have raised in turn, we respond as follows.

Village Flooding

Gullies and drains are cleaned, cleared and emptied during periodic maintenance intervals throughout the year, in line with our approved Maintenance Requirements Plan. The next inspection is currently being undertaken and drains or gullies will be cleared, cleaned or emptied as required, as part of this work. In line with the contractual requirements, our maintenance contractor, has and will continue to respond to reports of blocked drains or gullies in the village and anywhere else on the network, either from observations by route maintenance teams or through direct reports from residents.

Flooding of the A35 occurs at the eastern end of the village and the principal cause is water running off the higher fields on the northern side of the A35. The agricultural field water run off causes the A35 drains to rapidly silt up. We engaged some years ago with the tenant farmer who, as a direct result of our contact, changed the farming practice to leave a fallow strip on the edge of the field and to plough the field parallel to the road to minimise rapid water run-off. This practice significantly reduced the field water run off issue. Unfortunately, more recently this practice was not followed. The fields were ploughed perpendicular to the road and the field water run-off and silting of drains significantly worsened. We have recently engaged with the land owner who has agreed to ensure that the previous land management practice is reinstated.

Utility Covers

The responsibility for maintenance of service covers lies with the utility providers. When we or our maintenance contractor either observe or receive reports of a defective cover on our network, we contact the utility company directly giving a precise location and nature of the defect. Unfortunately, beyond notifying the utility provider, we have no control as to when they may attend site nor to the scope of their repairs.

Current 30mph Speed Trial

You will recall we have provided recent updates verbally and in writing to the Parish Council about the speed limit reduction trial. We understand that the Council are disappointed that the trial speed limit is not enforced, however this is because it is a trial being undertaken under a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order for environmental purposes.

Noting your further comment, the vehicle activated sign battery ran out of charge and it could not be removed during lockdown. The trailer has recently been removed following relaxation of travel restrictions. The Police have agreed to park the mobile camera van on occasions to monitor the situation. The trial is still in progress and we are collecting the data before reaching a view on the outcome of this.

Outcomes of WSP Safety and Severance report

Andy Roberts met with you on 15 May 2019 and provided the Parish Council with a presentation of the findings from the completed phase 1 study. We have provided a complete copy of the final phase 1 report.

As you will recall from the meeting, we explained why 11 of the options were not recommended and would direct you to the copy of the report for further information. The remaining 4 options are being explored and are included within the A35 Charmouth to Yellowham Hill Route Safety Study.

The A35 Working Group, where we would provide an update, has not met since September 2019 due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are in the process of seeking to establish a virtual meeting of the A35 Working Group through Bridport Town Council, who are in turn liaising with Chris Loder MP to find a suitable date and time.

Average speed cameras

You may recall that in August 2019 we informed you that the A35 Charmouth to Yellowham Hill Route Safety Study was commencing and that concerns regarding average speed cameras would be taken into consideration. The initial phase of this study has recommended the use of average speed cameras in Chideock, along with other measures along the A35 in Dorset as a package of improvements. Having recently had confirmation of funding, we are now planning to complete the feasibility study by the end of this financial year. Once the feasibility study outcomes are known, with value for money appraisal and the preferred costed options, we will be able to produce a business case.

This improvement scheme is included in our current South West Regional Capital Forward Programme for delivery within RIS2 (2020-2025), subject to prioritisation, value for money appraisal with our budgetary constraints.

Levels of pollution in Chideock

Our engagement with Dorset Council Environmental Health Department and yourselves continues following designation of the village as an Air Quality Management

Area in 2007. Exhaust emissions from vehicles travelling along the A35 are the main contributory source of the exceedances in levels of nitrogen dioxide. You will, no doubt be aware that members of the Parish Council have been present at meetings where the issues that drive the air quality problems have been discussed, including the physical constraints that are a significant factor in the issue.

We remain engaged with the Parish Council around to the various initiatives that have been explored to tackle the air quality problems. You will note our correspondence regarding the planning and delivery of the speed reduction trial. As above, the trial is still in progress and we will be in a position to provide an update once the data has been assessed and a view on the outcomes made.

We were delighted that our recent application for funding resulted in the installation of a rapid charger for electric vehicles in Chideock. The electric vehicle charging facility will allow the use of zero emission vehicles.

Attendance at Chideock quarterly meetings.

You will know from recent correspondence, that we had to review our engagement with all our regional stakeholders noting the constraints on our resources. We meet with the A35 Working Group (which Chideock Parish Council have representation) and it is appropriate that we use our resource to attend that wider forum.

We would like to assure you that we continue to take the issues in Chideock seriously. We trust this addresses your complaint. If you require any further information please contact our Customer Contact Centre on 0300 123 5000 or info@highwaysengland.co.uk, or visit our website at www.highways.co.uk. As you have been dissatisfied on this occasion, we have handled your correspondence in accordance with the first stage of our complaints process. For further details, please click [here](#).

Yours sincerely

Andy Roberts
Route Manager