

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Thursday 20 February 2025

**1. QUESTION FROM Marina Pusey (in attendance)
Re: Warfleet Road Closure and Maintenance**

With respect to a year's closure of Warfleet Road, Dartmouth, according to the Highways Act 1980, "A highway maintainable at public expense is one which highways authorities are required to maintain." Why hasn't Devon Highways acted on their responsibility to maintain and keep open one of only two main thoroughfares in and out of Dartmouth?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Devon County Council have firm evidence that the wall is the responsibility of the adjacent landowners and have been actively trying to get the landowner to undertake the work since the wall collapsed. The landowner has only been saying that they will not take action since October. The County Council has now had to undertake legal action to try to force the landowner to repair wall, but this has not worked. We are now in the position where we are having to undertake the work ourselves and attempt to reclaim the cost from the landowner. At this stage in the financial year it is difficult to identify the necessary budget, as this will mean that other schemes may have to be delayed.

**2. QUESTION FROM John Ellwood (in attendance)
Re: Warfleet Road Closure and Inspections**

With respect to a year's closure of Warfleet Road, Dartmouth, Devon Highways was alerted to the instability of a section of Warfleet Road in November 2023 (acknowledged 4th December 2023), and two more alerts were sent up until 18th February 2024. Two separate engineer inspections were carried out, explicitly stating that it was not a wall issue. No action was taken, and on 23rd February 2024, the road and adjacent wall collapsed, and the road was subsequently closed. In noted correspondence on 5 occasions, DCC have committed to carry out the works but again nothing has so far happened. Please can DCC explain why they cannot carry out what they have said they would do many times?.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

We have at no time been able to give any timescales for the works since the wall collapsed because it is the responsibility of the landowner and they have not fully engaged with us in the process. The timetable is still unclear because we have to go through a rigorous legal process before undertaking the work to safeguard

public spending as much as possible, and this process is open to challenge by the landowner.

**3. QUESTION FROM Peter Adolphus (in attendance)
Re: Warfleet Road Closure and Community Impacts**

With respect to a year's closure of Warfleet Road, Dartmouth:

- Surrounding minor roads which are steep and narrow are constantly being used as 'rat runs'. (I would ask you all to refer to the attached map)
- The effectiveness of the Emergency Services has been compromised and indeed last summer attendance to a critically ill patient was significantly delayed.
- There have been two accidents on Swannaton Road (one of the aforementioned 'rat runs') during the closure, and large lorries have become stuck, causing major blockages.
- How many more emergencies and accidents have to take place before Devon Highways acts?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

We are aware of the local issues that have been created by the closure of the road, but please see answer to Q1.

**4. QUESTION FROM Carl Farrell (in attendance)
Re: Warfleet Road Closure and Communications**

With respect to a year's closure of Warfleet Road, Dartmouth. Communication from Devon Highways to the residents and businesses has been poor.

How are Devon Highways intending to inform Residents and Businesses as to a time-bounded plan for reopening the road?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Because we are going through a legal process it is difficult to give a clear timescale as the process may be challenged by the landowner.

**5. QUESTION FROM Lucy Haigh (in attendance)
Re: Floating Bus Stops at Rifford Road**

The Cabinet Member for Highway Management confirmed to Cabinet 11/9/2024 "*I have no details of the quoted RNIB correspondence from 2nd May 2023*" referring to the RNIB's written submission to the "*Rifford Road Walking & Cycling Scheme, Bus stop alignment Exeter*" consultation meeting, convened on the 15/5/2023 as part of the Members' decision making process.

Will the Cabinet Member for Highways Management please explain why the RNIB's (a key stakeholder representing blind and visually impaired residents)

categorical objection to the introduction of floating bus stops was not considered relevant for referral to Members' decision making; at Cabinet and to this Council?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

As you have noted, I have no details of the objection from the RNIB prior to the Cabinet decision on 10 May 2023 which approved the scheme construction. However, as with all our decision making processes, an Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken and is detailed in the report. This enabled Cabinet to make the decision based on a range of needs for users of Rifford Road. This included the fact that there is limited alternative options for routing the cycle track and that delineation between the footway and cycleway is achieved by providing coloured surfacing and a trapezoidal kerb. It also notes that the segregated route reduces the conflict between pedestrians and cyclists on footways, particularly for pedestrians with sensory disabilities, who may be less able to identify approaching cyclists, and cyclists with sensory disabilities, who may be less able to sense vehicular traffic so are particularly vulnerable to road safety issues, and therefore this scheme is beneficial to them.

I have had recent correspondence with the RNIB and look forward to continuing the discussion with them as to how we can support the full range of users along Rifford Road.

6. QUESTION FROM Neil Martin (in attendance) Re: Floating Bus Stops at Rifford Road communications with RNIB

Would Cllr Hughes please confirm today to the full Council, what was the earliest date that he was informed that the RNIB are against the use of Floating Bus stops, and that the RNIB representative stated with regards to Rifford Road Planning Officers, 'that at no time would I condone a bus stop bypass, for many reasons, irrespective of the colour, they are an accident waiting to happen'?

Therefore, can I ask him to clarify on official record, the date that this Council's Highway and Transport planners were informed that the RNIB were not in favour of the introduction of bus stop bypasses?

I would assume that the dates for both would be very close to each other?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

I received an email on 20 December 2024 from the regional representative for the RNIB stating that he does not condone floating bus stops. Whilst officers did not receive this correspondence, I alerted them to its content upon receipt and this is the first time Devon County Council received such correspondence. The project team met with the RNIB representative in May 2023 and set out the proposed design for the bus stops as well as indicating alignment with Inclusive Design principles. This showed that efforts have been made to support all users, including people with various disabilities, with mitigating design features such as contrasting coloured surfaces, tactile paving and side road priority measures.

During scheme development, it is typical to work with stakeholders to mitigate their concerns and to continue doing this as schemes progress. We will be undertaking monitoring of the bus stops and will have Road Safety Audits commissioned which will highlight residual areas of concern for which the Council will explore ways to remedy this. The Road Safety Auditors will be asked to particularly comment on risk to people with visual disabilities given the recent correspondence received from the RNIB.