

## Cabinet 6 October 2020

### Questions and Statements from Councillors

#### Statement from Councillor S Jespersen

The proposal for the Dinah's Hollow Slope Stabilisation includes the requirement to close the C13 for seven months.

You may recall, as I most certainly do, that during the previous work on Dinah's Hollow the road was closed from April 2014 to July 2015. I also recall the impact this had on the lives of the residents in the villages in the area, which bore the burden of the displaced traffic.

So bad was this damage and disruption that DCC eventually suggested, in 2015, that the risk associated with the continued road closure was greater than the risk of the slopes collapsing.

The Report to DCC Cabinet in May 2015, on *The Risk Comparison Analysis of the Decision to Close the C13*, stated:

"The closure of the C13 at Melbury Abbas ...has had significant ramifications on the community and the local road network in terms of both the size and the number of vehicles now using unsuitable roads to circumnavigate the road closure and also the subsequent impact this increase in traffic is having on the roads themselves.

...a number of neighbouring hamlets and villages are now experiencing an increase in traffic volumes. This is having a dramatic effect on residents' quality of life and has led to considerable disquiet from those living in these communities.

It has been suggested that the damage and disruption caused by the road closure outweighs the perceived damage of the slopes collapsing"

The Report further refers to increase in collisions, damage to vehicles and property and serious damage to the highway itself resulting from the road closure, and describes how vehicles, including HGV, avoiding the diversion route are having a disproportionately high impact on those living alongside these roads.

The residents in these same villages are now to be asked to endure this disruption and serious impact on the quality of their lives once again.

Could I ask, therefore that the lessons learned during the previous closure of the C13 are used to

- i. Provide all possible mitigation measures to reduce the impact of the road closure on the neighbouring communities
- ii. Introduce, in good time, a wide and full communications plan to keep the local communities informed of plans and progress

- iii. Plan and budget for the inevitable repair work to the surrounding road network
- iv. And, above all, make it a priority to keep the length of the road closure as brief as possible.

### **Question from Councillor Jane Somper**

I have read both the cabinet report and previous reports from 2013/14 in relation to the works to the slopes at Dinah's Hollow where a geotechnical engineer identified potential complete failure due to the instability of the slopes. The report delivered by Brody Forbes did state the chance of this is rare with no significant slippage where the slopes have existed for hundreds of years.

However the report also states that there is chance that changes due to climate change with extreme weather becoming more frequent and the impact on the vegetation conditions, damage caused by intense periods of rainfall could trigger a major collapse of the slopes and the concrete barriers currently in place would not be sufficient to hold back the tonnes of soil that could fall.

The decision to put on hold the original scheme to provide the required stability of soil nails and mesh in 2015 was due to a discussion on funding bids in relation to the North South corridor of the M4 and ports of Poole and Portland. This has of yet not moved forward although at the last cabinet meeting approval was given for DC to join the Western Gateway Partnership where this and other potential routes are to be looked at in a Government funded strategic transport report.

I recognise and fully accept that this Council must take all measures to protect all road users who drive through the hollow and cannot allow any risk to life.

My question to the Portfolio Holder is:

This is an extremely sensitive and protracted issue for all residents living in Dinah's Hollow, Melbury Abbas and as a result of this, and in order for me to fulfil the commitment that I have made to my residents I expect to be kept fully informed of all developments leading to the decision as to how the council intends to proceed with Dinah's Hollow. My engagement with officers must enable me to report to residents on the progress being made at every stage. Can you kindly confirm that this will be in place.

### **Question from Councillor Nick Ireland**

The recent comments by a Dorset Councillor at the Police and Crime Panel have highlighted the need for at least some councillors to receive Equality & Diversity training.

Will this council's leader organise an appropriate course for those in need of such training?