

Councillor Questions for Cabinet 5 September 2023

Question from Councillor K Wheller

There are accidents that are sadly that – unforeseen events that no-one could predict and therefore no mitigation measures can be taken.

And there are those which we all anticipate at some time and the risk of which can be reduced.

We in Weymouth as everywhere experience both but there are two I wish to highlight.

The traffic lights next to the Asda supermarket. Travelling along Westway Road to the lights there are three options – turn left on a filter with no light presents no problem; Straight across to Boot Hill on a green light requires vigilance but not essentially a problem . Turning right into Newstead Road towards Asda on a green light requires nerves of steel or ignorance.

Ignorance because despite having a green light indicating ‘ go, your way is clear’ – vehicles in two lanes travelling in the opposite direction also have a green light and believe the way is also clear for them. Locals have over the years since this design in 2012 become used to this hazardous junction, our population trebles in the summer with visitors. People do not expect to meet traffic coming towards them at speed when the green light indicates they can GO. I know roundabouts will not be reintroduced and for the most part the replacement traffic lights work in the other locations but please could engineers be instructed to look at this junction with some degree of urgency and find a way, it can't be rocket science, to create a designated filter light so that if you turn right on a green light you are not risking your life .

Portland Beach Road, despite promises to improve traffic safety in this location accidents still occur, some slight bumps but as recently some fatal. I know we are waiting for accident assessments and I am not pre-empting that. But we know that this road with its different speed limits and exits and entrances off is not potentially but actually a problem. There are a number of roundabouts along the road so that it would not require lengthy additional journeys to restrict exit from the businesses and car park preventing turning across fast moving traffic. Please can this be investigated, consulted on and hopefully implemented. I know that most road users would be pleased.

Finally, I have been in consultation with DCC and now DC engineers for many, many years, about the junction between Wyke Road and Portland Road next to All Saints Church. The mini roundabout installed in 2012 is not fit for purpose. There are never fatal accidents here because drivers exercise great caution but there frequent bumps. Most notably lorries hitting the historic wall. This wall is the responsibility of DC to repair and has to be repaired using specialist contractors which is costly. It is hit on average once a month. How much money could we save?

Please;

1. When I report it could it just be repaired without an inquest into whose responsibility the repair is every time ?
2. Could the work to design a better junction be a priority as it impacts upon the Portland to Dorchester Corridor. Instead the project drops

down just as it looks as though things are moving forward and money has been allocated?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

In response to the request to create a filter light at the junction at the bottom of Boot Hill, Engineers have assessed this option and found that introducing a filter would mean holding North bound traffic on Boot Hill, resulting in longer queues. Queuing at Boot Hill is already an issue and the assessment's recommendation is not to introduce a filter sequence, as the additional queuing is likely to create a greater safety risk.

The junction was designed to relevant safety standards and the current system of giving way to oncoming traffic when under a green light is a requirement under the Highway Code.

Our Road Safety team monitors and analyses collision data and makes recommendations about where improvements will be most effective based on the evidence. There have been some collisions at this junction, and we will continue to monitor the situation, but it does not currently meet the threshold for action.

In response to Portland Beach Road, we express our deepest sympathy to all those affected by the very sad recent accident. There is an ongoing investigation, and we need to wait until the investigation is complete before we comment upon potential measures.

1. When I report it could it just be repaired without an inquest into whose responsibility the repair is every time?

The Council is aware of the damage to the wall and in conjunction with the Diocese, we are trying to establish ownership and liability for repairs. The Council is continuing to pursue the Diocese regarding ownership and if the wall turns out to be the responsibility of the Council, the ivy will be removed, and a full structural and condition survey will be carried out with a view to instigating a repair programme.

2. Could the work to design a better junction be a priority as it impacts upon the Portland to Dorchester Corridor. Instead, the project drops down just as it looks as though things are moving forward and money has been allocated?

I can confirm that this junction improvement is a priority and has been allocated funding. We have already implemented a new HGV route to reduce emissions at Boot Hill and this scheme is needed to make it easier for HGVs to navigate the bend. This is an essential part of our strategy to maintain access to Portland. The scheme will also create considerable improvements for pedestrians and people with poor mobility, including people attending church.

Options have been developed, but the final scheme design will depend upon land negotiations with the Diocese of Salisbury. This offers a potential solution to the issue of frequent vehicular collisions with the wall by enabling the relocation the wall away from the highway. We will be approaching the diocese shortly.