

13 March 2022

Duncan Smith
Executive Director of Operations
National Highways
Birmingham B1 1RN

Dear Mr Smith

A69 Warwick Bridge and Corby Hill

Thank you for your letter of 9th March and for the interest you and your team are taking in this matter.

I was pleased to learn that the safety concerns I have raised were addressed by your representatives, the County Council, Police and other interested parties at the local casualty reduction and safer highways (CRASH) group last week.

I am also reassured by your commitment to carry out an updated Route Safety Action Plan and that this will be completed by May 2022. I note that the plan looks at incidents, incident hotspots and areas of interest. I discussed this focus on data analysis with Kevin Dobson and Michel Morgan. Whilst I support analysing accurate data, I am concerned that you also consider other important factors.

When I met the Warwick School Chair of Governors after the lollipop man incident, she immediately shared her concern about near misses. The number of near misses is unknown, but I suspect significant and important. Similarly, we do not know how many pedestrians cross the road away from the safety of the Corby Hill traffic lights, or the number of wheelchair users and people who are visually impaired or others at higher risk.

We know that the Government is promoting active travel, but we do not know how many local people are deterred from walking or cycling by the challenge of negotiating traffic on the A69. We do not know the exact impact of heightened exhaust gases and particulates but there must be an impact. I do not believe there is comprehensive data on damage caused to kerbs and buildings when HGVs stray from the carriageway.

Only yesterday I discovered a new problem. I parked my bike at the West end of the bridge to take photos and then wanted to cross to the Wetheral road. Because of the parapet wall and the bend, it is impossible to see westbound cars until one reaches the middle of the carriageway. I cannot imagine many people will want to cross the road at this point, but I can say with confidence that they cannot do so safely.

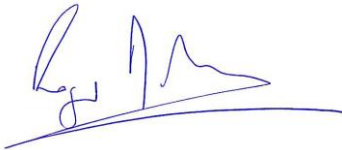
I believe your Safety Action Plan should encompass these compelling reasons for action along with incident data.

At our February meeting your colleagues highlighted their responsibility for reconciling competing priorities and emphasised cost considerations required by the Treasury Green Book appraisal process. Reflecting on this I have been thinking about whether there might be an early low-cost intervention that could have a significant benefit. Replacing the current 30mph zone with 20 mph could be attractive 'low hanging fruit'. I suspect this could be achieved at very low cost with very considerable benefit for safety and the environment. Changing signage would cost hundreds or at most a few thousand pounds. There is no need for additional traffic calming measures given the presence of average speed cameras.

I am disappointed that you predict de-trunking will not be resolved until the end of the Design, Build Finance and Operate contract (31 March 2026). It is regrettable that your predecessors agreed a long contract without providing some flexibility for amendment. However, if this is an insurmountable barrier then it is important that any change is well planned and results in overall improvement especially for safety. If this can be achieved in time for 2026, I accept that the time will be well spent.

I very much look forward to hearing about progress with introducing some additional safety measures at the June meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Roger Dobson

Cumbria County Councillor, Corby and Hayton
roger.dobson@cumbria.gov.uk