

## **CHIDEOCK PARISH COUNCIL**

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**Chair: Cllr Vanessa Glenn, 6 Winniford Close, Chideock, DT6 6SA 01 297 480810**

**Clerk: Miss Sal Robinson, 60 North Allington, Bridport, DT6 5DY 01 308 426327**

**20 January 2021**

**Re: Complaint Response Review - Air Quality Chideock**

Dear Ms Punchard

Thank you for your response to Chideock Parish Council's complaint concerning Dorset Council's continuing failure to address the illegal levels of traffic related air pollution in Chideock. Unfortunately, the Parish Council remains dissatisfied with your reply and with that from your consultant and wishes to inform you that, as you suggested, this matter will now be taken forward to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The Parish Council will write separately to the LGSCO seeking their comment but feel that the points raised in your response to the Parish Council must be addressed.

Chideock Parish Council acknowledges that the complaint and associated issues are of a specialist nature, however councillors find it a little odd that you have requested this review to be undertaken by your own retained consultants, Air Quality Consultants (Bristol) (AQC), which must surely raise the question of impartiality and a conflict of interest.

Thank you for clarifying the Parish Council's concern about the "Environmental Searches" in the conveyancing / purchasing process which is noted.

The Parish Council is also pleased to note that Dorset Council will, in due course, be participating in Highways England's (HE's) preparation of RIS3. However, you must appreciate the Parish Council's frustration that your participation within the RIS2 process, if

any, resulted in not a single comment being taken forward for Chideock, this despite the village previously having been identified in RIS1 as a crucial pinch-point on the A35 east-west corridor. Indeed, there was no mention of the A35 west of Dorchester, neither in RIS2 nor in the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body's (WGSTB) review of this supposedly critical Western Gateway for trade and tourism into the West Country.

Dorset Council (and its predecessors Dorset County Council and West Dorset District Council) has done nothing in the past twenty years in any Local or County Plan to encourage any Government to improve the infrastructure of the A35 in Chideock. Putting Chideock's cause back into RIS3 (at best) is too far in the future and is totally unacceptable for the health and well-being of the village and its visitors and must be addressed with a far greater urgency.

The Parish Council would expect Dorset Council to pursue Highways England to spend some of the RIS2 monies, allocated for small projects under £20million, to redress the considerable problem in Chideock with Infrastructure improvements.

Regarding the specifics of AQC's review Chideock Parish Council comments as follows: -

**Points 2.1 - 2.5 - Failure to resolve the known illegal levels of traffic related NO<sub>2</sub> pollution within the village.**

The Parish Council remains frustrated that AQC simply repeat the dialogue that has been ongoing since 2008 which is:

- That there are illegal exceedances of traffic related pollution;
- That it is difficult to resolve; and
- That all the attempts to date have been futile with pollution getting progressively worse.

The Parish Council is aware of this, but Dorset Council (and previously West Dorset District Council) has a legal duty to address this situation and has failed miserably to even prevent it from getting worse. This is just not good enough for the Public Health of this village. Some Residents are now calling for an investigation into possible clusters of life-threatening illnesses caused by this pollution.

**Points 2.6 - 2.11 - Dorset Council's continuing refusal to monitor Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>) air pollution within the village.**

The Parish Council understands the different nature of PM pollution but notes that AQC make no mention of the fact that much PM<sub>2.5</sub> is actually derived from traffic, especially within the topography of Chideock (brake, tyres and clutch linings breaking down and being emitted into the atmosphere partly arising from the excessive braking necessary on the hills on both approaches into the village).

The Parish Council would remind Dorset Council that they are monitoring PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> in some locations but have repeatedly failed to include Chideock as a monitoring site and have not explained the reason for this. The monitoring of PM<sub>10</sub>, according to AQC, is within Dorset Council's remit but has followed Defra Technical guidance TG16 to exclude it. This appears to be incorrect – there is nothing in TG16 to suggest that PM<sub>10</sub> does not have to be monitored, in fact the opposite. PM<sub>10</sub> has never been monitored in Chideock. Solely relying on mapping does not identify Hotspots. The nearest AURN is in Southampton.

The Parish Council is aware that the excessive level of PM<sub>2.5</sub> revealed on BBC Countryfile was a short-term reading, although would point out that this programme was recorded in late summer when domestic log burners were not yet in use and therefore would not have been contributing to the excessive level recorded.

The Parish Council would point out that there never will be knowledge of the annual mean limit referred to by AQC if Dorset Council continues to refuse to monitor it. Once again, the Public Health of this village is being sacrificed whilst the "Authorities" debate responsibilities for monitoring and "pass the buck" on measures to reduce it.

In their Review AQC states:

"As concentrations of nitrogen dioxide reduce, the focus of air quality work in the UK is likely to turn to Particulate Matter (PM) which is less locally controllable but is a more important metric in relation to health effects."

Chideock Parish Council considers that surely, with this expectation, Chideock village must be a prime subject for such attention.

Dorset Council appears to believe that there will be an immediate reduction in Nitrogen Dioxide will be achieved by the move to electric powered vehicles. However, the use of electric vehicles in sufficient volume to make any significant difference is many years away, due to price, distance on one charge, and battery cost and life. Even **IF** the production of fossil fuel vehicles stops in 2030 many car users in the UK, currently approximately 32 million, will probably keep their fossil fuel vehicles for at least 15 years which takes us to 2045. This is the time it will take to save the money to buy an electric vehicle and to allow for developments which, for example, improve performance and distance obtainable from a single battery charge. There are currently 9 million plus highly polluting vehicles over 10 ten years old, none of which are Euro 5 or 6 compliant. Current pollution emitting vehicles are going to be on the A35 through Chideock for many years if no local remedial action is taken.

In summary:

Dorset Council's Air Quality Action Plan for Chideock (which is already a year late) will be greatly devalued if it only:

1. Sets out the current air quality conditions in Chideock - These are already known and well documented;
2. Describes measures which have already been investigated - All of these have already been discounted as ineffective except the ongoing 30mph speed trial from which no conclusions have yet been drawn. Until now no data is viable as the project has no means of controlling speed and most of 2020 was in lockdown or reduced road use under the various Tiers.

If Dorset Council maintains that the monitoring and reduction of PM<sub>2.5</sub> is not a part of their "statutory responsibilities" then please advise the Parish Council exactly whose responsibility it is because the health of this village's inhabitants and visitors is being ignored by these Authorities / Bodies.

Chideock Parish Council repeats the earlier request that you look very closely at your own well produced Air Quality Management Action Plan from 2008 to see how much has **NOT**


been achieved, and the Parish Council confirms that it is very willing to assist you fully in the process of updating the Air Quality Action Plan with Chideock specific knowledge.

Finally, the Parish Council would like to confirm its overall dissatisfaction with this situation and advise you that the complaint against Dorset Council will now be elevated to the Ombudsman.

Last words.: -

3 facts from the Defra Technical Guidance - Air Quality - objectives to achieve: -  
PM<sub>10</sub> - maximum of 40UG/m<sup>3</sup> by end of 2004  
NO<sub>2</sub> – maximum of 40UG/m<sup>3</sup> by end of 2005  
PM<sub>2.5</sub> – maximum of 25UG/m<sup>3</sup> by end of 2020.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sal Robinson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Sal Robinson (Miss), Chideock Parish Clerk

**Copied To:** Cllr Simon Christopher, Dorset Councillor for Marshwood Vale Ward  
The Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food & Rural  
Affairs  
Chris Loder, MP for West Dorset