

## 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: Chideock Parish Council Complaint to Dorset Council (Previously Dorset County Council and West Dorset District Council (WDDC)) concerning Air Quality in Chideock**

Dear Ms Sykes

### **Introduction**

Chideock Parish Council commenced a "Complaint Procedure" with Dorset Council by letter dated 19 Oct 2020. This has now progressed through two stages, the second of which was responded to by Dorset Council letter dated 8 January 2021, which concluded by saying that if the Parish Council was still not satisfied then it should approach your offices.

Chideock Parish Council is not satisfied with Dorset Council's response and therefore is writing to you.

### **Background**

Chideock is a small and historic village with an adult population of approximately 550, sitting astride the A35 Strategic Highway in West Dorset. It has been described as a unique English Country Village with no industrial sites, has a designated Conservation Area, and the Jurassic Coast is just one mile away. It is also within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Yet an air quality management area (AQMA) was declared for Chideock in May 2007.

Since then monthly diffusion tube analysis of the traffic related Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) pollution has been published on Dorset Council's website ([www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)) and the levels have got progressively worse ever since, with no measures ever having been introduced to even attempt to reduce this illegal level of NO<sub>2</sub> pollution.

In fact, Chideock has been identified as the worst NO<sub>2</sub> polluted "Hotspot" in England with an annual average reading of 95.47microgrammes/m<sup>3</sup> of air (Source: Google Hotspots and Friends of the Earth) which is well in excess of the Government's own statutory limit of 40 micrograms of NO<sub>2</sub> per m<sup>3</sup> of air.

West Dorset District Council (WDDC) produced their first Air Quality Management Action Plan in 2008 (copy attached) and have subsequently failed to address many of their own objectives and have been criticised by DEFRA for continually failing to either implement this Action Plan or to update it.

More recently there has been much attention to Particulate Matter (PM) pollution but to date Dorset Council has refused to implement even short-term monitoring of either PM<sub>2.5</sub> or PM<sub>10</sub> within Chideock.

### **Complaint**

Chideock Parish Council has long been in discussion with WDDC / Dorset Council about the traffic related air pollution within the village and accepts that the unique topography of the village, with steep hills leading into the village from both directions, is a major factor in this pollution, combined with the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Flow of 16,000+ vehicles.

The Parish Council also understands that the A35 is a National Strategic Highway managed by Highways England (NOT by Dorset Council) and therefore there is split responsibility for the effects of this road. However, Government legislation is clear that the responsibility for ensuring clean air lies with Dorset Council, and the Parish Council has received the following statement from the Department for Transport (DfT) making it clear that although HE assists Dorset Council the "delivery" remains the legal responsibility of Dorset Council.

"Turning to the Parish Council's air quality concerns, Highways England is actively performing its duty to assist Dorset Council in the delivery of its legal responsibilities for local air quality management, despite not being legally obligated to do so."

In October 2020, and in frustration, PC finally started a formal complaint procedure with Dorset Council on the basis of two major failures:

1. Although the high levels of NO<sub>2</sub> have been monitored since 2007 **NOTHING** has been done to reduce this pollution which has in fact steadily worsened over the years, nor to mitigate the Public Health issues arising from this pollution.

Please note that Chideock Residents have lived with this problem for a very long time, since long before pollution monitoring was started.

2. Dorset Council's refusal to monitor for Particulate Matter (PM) pollution in the village even on a short-term basis to determine whether or not there is a problem.

This issue came to a head when an episode of BBC Countryfile featuring Chideock was broadcast in October 2020, in which their expert showed immediately with a simple handheld monitor that the levels of PM<sub>2.5</sub> in the village were at 130 micrograms/m<sup>3</sup> air. The WHO guideline for this pollutant is an annual average of 25 micrograms/m<sup>3</sup> air. The UK Government is expecting to target a level of an annual average of 10 micrograms/m<sup>3</sup> of air as advised by WHO by 2030.

The Parish Council understands that background PM pollution adds to this level but has reminded Dorset Council that this reading of 130 was taken in late summer before domestic log fires etc were being used.

### **Conclusion / Summary**

Despite making numerous attempts to get Dorset Council to address and mitigate the Public Health dangers from the excessive levels of air pollution present in Chideock, Dorset Council has failed completely to implement any reduction measures and continues to refuse to monitor PM pollution.

Dorset Council has failed to include the A35 through Chideock in any Local, County, or National consultations, for example Highways England's Road Investment Strategies RIS1 and RIS2 and the creation of a Major Road Network; and the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body's Consultation on the Sub-National Transport Strategy. Such inclusion could lead to central government and its Agencies acknowledging that there is a very serious public health problem in Chideock that can only be resolved by road improvements.

Chideock Parish Council, having instigated Stages 1 and 2 of a formal complaint to Dorset Council, remains dissatisfied with the responses and has therefore, reluctantly, chosen to elevate this complaint to yourself and look forward to hearing your review in due course.

If there is any further information that the Parish Council can provide to assist you in this review, then please contact the Clerk.

Yours sincerely

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

Sal Robinson (Miss), Chideock Parish Clerk

**Correspondence attached:**

Parish Council initial complaint letter to Dorset Council dated 19 Oct 2020.

Dorset Council response dated 16 Nov 2020.

Parish Council letter to Dorset Council dated 30 Nov 2020 escalating the complaint to Stage 2.

Dorset Council response dated 8 Jan 2021.

Dorset Council report from the Air Quality Consultancy sent 8 January 2021.

Parish Council letter to Dorset Council dated 20 Jan 2021 escalating to LGSCO.

**Documents Attached.**

West Dorset District Council Air Quality Management Action Plan (2008).

West Dorset District Council AQMA Actions List last updated 2011.

Defra Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance (TG16).

**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