

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

29July 2020

Re: The removal of the village of Chideock, Dorset as a pinch point in the new RIS2 dated March 2020.

Dear Grant Shapps,

Chideock Parish Council has decided to write to you to raise its very serious concerns that the new RIS2 has not addressed the significant and long-standing issues that the A35 brings to this village. The Parish Council contributed to both the RIS2 and the MRN consultation, outlining the fact that this old coach road has not been fit for purpose as part of the strategic road network over the last twenty-two years. Although the RIS2 makes interesting reading, it might be helpful for you to consider the contradictions that are thrown up throughout the document in regard to the outcomes that this village experiences on a daily basis even though it is not a town or a city.

Chideock sits in a deep valley with steep hills on its East and West edges; the western Chideock Hill poses significant issues for heavy traffic and high levels of pollution through the village.

In your Ministerial forward, you state,” A document with people at its heart... to improve the lives of all... to create a road network that safe, reliable and efficient for everyone - whether they are cyclists or drivers, passengers or pedestrians”.

In the village of Chideock many of the actual footways were removed over a number of years to widen the road; the cambers where footways exist are steep and slope toward the road. There is only one pedestrian crossing; the severance issues mean that people(both locals and tourists) take their lives into their hands attempting to cross the road; and there are no disability enhancements to the footways where they exist so disabled users risk their lives in their wheelchairs and have to go onto the carriageway. Cyclists on the A35 are put in immediate danger of HGVs, congestion and speeding traffic and there is no option to introduce cycle lanes due to the width of the road and furthermore no possibility of enhancing a pedestrianised footpath to Bridport for the same reasons.

In your Ministerial forward you state, “that the first priority is to fix the strategic roads we have today, ensuring that they are well designed, well maintained and well connected, serving road users into the future”.

Yet, not only has the issue of Chideock as a pinch point on the A35 been completely forgotten in RIS2 but it is clear that when considering projects for RIS3, the focus is on a South – North corridor to the M4. The current A35 from Dorchester to Honiton, forms an East - West Corridor from the ports of Dover, Portsmouth, Southampton, and Poole with high levels of HGV traffic, work traffic related to housing developments and employment in Exeter and Poole / Bournemouth. In addition, during six months of the year tourists flow through the village on their way to Devon and Cornwall. In the summer, the population of Chideock swells from 550 to approximately 3,000 as a result of tourists. The traffic flows along this A35 corridor and not necessarily up to the M4. This seasonal increase in holiday traffic is not commented upon at all in RIS2.

In your Ministerial forward you state, “where existing roads are not up to the job, the country asks Highways England to develop wider, realigned or wholly new roads to keep people moving.”

Chideock's view is that the A35 through Chideock is not fit for purpose and a new East / West corridor needs to be developed that identifies a different transport route for HGV traffic by road or freight being carried by trains. Your document states that that RIS2 was developed on the basis of a well-informed picture of future pressures and opportunities for improvement. However somewhere along the way, the A35 and Chideock have dropped off the list of priorities. Highways England is described as the “steward of the strategic road network and that they will have a new set of KPIs in regard to outcomes”. The reality is that the KPI that drives performance is ensuring that the road network runs smoothly, not whether the health and welfare of those who live next to it is protected and that Highways England are liable for this impact. Highways England must be held to account for this oversight.

In your Ministerial Forward you state,” that this strategy is focused on not just road users but focuses on fulfilling our obligations to communities living next to major routes”.

The reality is that for over 22 years Chideock's concerns over the impact that the road has on the community have either not been heard or have been officially managed by a range of professionals in order that the balance of risk to road users takes priority over the health and well-being of the residents of this village.

In your ministerial forward you state the importance of environmental impact, green technology and reducing emissions. In section a) of the report you raise the vision of the

possibility of contributing to wider climate change through a number of mitigation measures including the following:

- **A greener network**
- **Mitigation of air, noise, light, visual and water quality, sustaining and enhancing biodiversity.**
- **Creating roads that are completely collision free.**
- **Consistent high-quality road surfaces and problems fixed early**
- **Better information about how to use the road network.**
- **A resilience to climate change e.g. flooding, weather conditions and blockages on the road network.**
- **High quality routes have been provided for cyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians.**

The reality is that this vision does not apply to Chideock. In 2019, the outcome of a Highways England Safety and Severance report recommended 11 changes including a further two pedestrian crossings, average speed cameras and a number of measures to deal with footways, adverse camber, and disability access. Highways England agreed to only four recommendations being put forward for further consideration.

The village of Chideock currently has no mitigation measures as described in this report 'Vision for the future'. Instead high levels of pollution are experienced on a daily basis with poor air quality from the high level of traffic congestion producing both NO₂ and the more serious issues of particulates relating to tyres and brakes (an issue which your green technological approach does not deal with). In fact, Chideock has the highest levels of recorded NO₂ in the country (see attached appendices). Furthermore, although the Parish Council has repeatedly requested that the level of particulates is monitored, both Dorset Council and Highways England refuse to put in place measuring devices. Instead residents who live on the South West Chideock Hill and in the centre of the village, regularly experience the intense smell of burning brakes due to overweight HGVs travelling through the village at speed and applying the brakes at the last minute in anticipation of hitting the speed camera.

Under section 3, the report describes what it considers a safer and reliable network should be including the following: -

- **Addressing severance issues both as part of new schemes and through improvements where existing problems are severe.**

The problems in Chideock are not just severe, they are chronic both in regard to the village traffic (including large farm tractors and machinery) seeking to turn out from North road and Duck street and with regard to pedestrians attempting to cross the road at both ends of the village. At times it

is like trying to cross a motorway because of the high volume of traffic which includes large HGVs and speeding traffic.

- **Provision of safe crossing facilities through infrastructure separated from traffic and safe and direct crossing facilities over the SRN.**

As the Safety and Severance report (2018) outcomes to date have demonstrated, Highways England are not prepared to consider any alteration to the road (extended footways/disability crossings/traffic lights) that may inhibit the flow of traffic on the SRN. So, what meaning does this statement have for a village such as Chideock?

- **Provision of better information to customers during their journeys on the potential hazards and speed compliance.**

Clearly, Highways England has not read this document. The number of actual speed signs in Chideock is exceptionally low. In September 2019 Highways England implemented a project to extend the 30 mph speed limit boundary to include Chideock Hill, in order to ascertain if this will reduce pollution on the westbound approach to the hill and on the westbound carriageway on the hill itself. In reality, the signage that has been put up is poor, cannot actually be seen on the ascent up the steep hill and the temporary Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) half-way up the hill has stopped working from February 2020. Today, vehicles stream up the hill and the loud noise from motorbikes zooming through fills this deep valley. Meanwhile Dorset Police refuse to enforce the speed limit because they have been told not to by Highways England. The consideration of average speed cameras to enforce the speed in this pollution project has been refused by Highways England.

The other key area that Highways England fails to manage is the flow of traffic at an earlier point in the strategic network. The signage on the A30 at Honiton, directs the traffic to go along the A35 to Dorchester. Yet, the quicker route is to carry on the A30 to Yeovil and then down the A37. Again, the management of traffic at an earlier point on the M3 and the M27, is missed and traffic flows through Chideock instead of the A303.

- **Supporting the activities of partner agencies such as DVSA and the police to improve vehicle safety and compliance.**

The evidence is that currently these agencies do not work together. Instead Chideock's discussions with the DVSA about overloaded HGVs has not led to any change in their approach. Very, very occasionally they have looked at HGVs at Eype, but in reality, they believe that their targets are the M5 junction at Taunton and Puddletown in Dorset. By this approach they miss the fact that

HGVs from Poole avoid contact with the DVSA by actively bypassing the A35n Puddletown site, going through Wool along the Dorchester bypass and coming straight through the A35 via Chideock and the A35.

As stated above, the police appear to work in partnership with Highways England to avoid taking measures about compliance forward in regard to speed. However, when accidents occur at this pinch point (Chideock) it brings the scarce West Dorset Police resources in the area under a lot of pressure – while residents struggle to actually get home due to road closures and the lack of an alternative route into the village.

- **The Placing of Measures to protect and to address heritage assets at risk because of the negative impact of the SRN.**

This is clearly not the case in Chideock where there are significant heritage assets including an 11th century church which sits next to the road. This village has heritage houses within a conservation area which sit on the side of the SRN, man with no foundations. They date back many centuries and their infrastructure is affected by pollution eating into the stone and brickwork, and serious vibration from HGVs. This road was not designed to take the weight of these vehicles over a consistent and sustained period of many, many years.

- **The Holding to account of Highways England on its environmental performance and other KPIs.**

The reality is that Highways England's performance is driven by faster traffic flow and accident deaths and not a consideration of the impact environmentally upon this part of the SRN. The role of the Parish council over many years has been to raise all the issues that impact upon the village as a result of the SRN, directly with the responsible authorities including Highways England. The impact of these discussions has been zero with little or no progress made. Therefore, who holds Highways England to account and on what basis can the necessary improvements be implemented?

In conclusion, Chideock Parish Council would like to understand why there is not one mention of the need to consider the A35 East - West corridor that forms a strategic highway through West Dorset. This route provides a flow of traffic that is based economically on freight, local employers and tourists flowing across the county from Dover in the South East, along the M27, A31, A35 and into East Devon / South Devon and through into Cornwall and North Devon. Why has this strategic route been ignored in both RIS2 and in the planning that has commenced for RIS3?

Chideock Parish Council is a stakeholder both with Dorset Council and in this discussion with central government about the SRN, but we have not been listened to and instead we are clearly seen as an irritant. However, we are here to represent our citizens who live in a place that is the most polluted from road congestion in the country.

It should be obvious from this letter, that the desires expressed by your 'vision' cannot to be applied to Chideock, sitting as it does on an SRN that is currently not fit for purpose. The level of frustration is high in this village after 22 years of inaction and we need to have the same rights applied to our citizens that are being given to towns and cities under the new environmental legislation.

The answers are quite simple, and we would ask on behalf of our village that as the Secretary State for Transport that you consider the following-;

In the short term - We ask

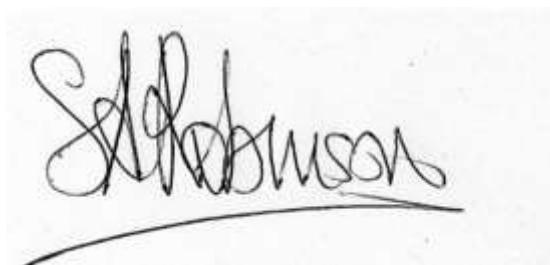
- That the current RIS2, although now in agreed format, should have an urgent additional report which identifies that the village of Chideock remains a specific pinch point on the A35 and that nothing has changed since RS1 to alter this fact.
- Furthermore, that the additional report should focus upon the fact that the A35 from Dorchester to Honiton, as an East- West strategic route is not fit for purpose and an action plan needs to be prioritised within the RIS2 report that is addition to the current proposal of the M4 corridor from Bournemouth and Poole.
- For full implementation of the Highways England Safety and Severance recommendations in the 2018 report.
- That DEFRA instructs Dorset Council that particulates from brake dust and tyres should be measured in Chideock.
- That DVSA recognise and implement HGV testing at Eype and at the Honiton end of the A35 on a regular basis.
- That the police enforce the speed limits regardless of the advice from Highways England.
- That the pollution trial is fully implemented as initially agreed.
- That villages that sit on strategic routes should be legally included in the current environmental legislation so that measures to reduce pollution including seeking alternative routes for HGVs and polluting vehicles can be economically supported through government funding, as currently applies to towns and cities.
- That Government funding and support is provided for the active development and delivery of a cycle path and public foot path between the village of Chideock and Bridport.

In the long term - We ask

- For the inclusion of a study and set of business proposals prior to RIS3 of the East – West corridor that is the A35 from Dorchester to Honiton and includes the pinch point that is Chideock.
- For a specific focus on the village of Chideock and the seeking of alternative route options for the SRN, that would release Chideock from the impact of sitting on an SRN and return it to a normal road status with Dorset Council Highways Department.
- Recognition in RIS2 **AND** in RIS3 that the SRN that runs through Chideock is not fit for purpose.
- That villages that are intersected by an SRN be included in the new environmental legislation in order that funding can be released to support monitoring and measures being applied in regard to all forms of pollution.

We look forward to your response,

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sal Robinson". It is written in a cursive style with a prominent, sweeping flourish at the end of the last name.

Sal Robinson (Miss)
Chideock Parish Clerk

APPENDIX 1

Google Pollution Hotspots

Notes:

Source data: Google Pollution Hotspots Feb 2020

Pollution figures are mean annual figures given in micrograms per m³ Air Data from 2017 / 2018 as shown in charts

No	Location	Pollution	Year	Specific Location
1	Chideock N14S	97.70	2018	Chideock Hill House
2	Sheffield	92.00	2018	Station Taxi Rank 1
3	Brighton	90.80	2018	Clock Tower
4	Leeds	88.00	2018	Tunnel
5	Doncaster	86.00	2018	Hickleton
6	Doncaster	82.00	2018	John O'Gaunts
7	Maidstone	77.20	2018	Sports club
8	Cherwell	74.90	2018	A422 Banbury Hennet Way
9	Birmingham	74.00	2018	St Chad's
10	High Wycombe	72.10	2018	Abbey School Accommodation
11	Newcastle	71.30	2018	Old Eldon Square
12	Sheffield	70.00	2018	Station Taxi Rank 2
13	Caerphilly	70.00	2017	A472 Hafodyrynys
14	Kidderminster	68.51	2018	Hudson Florist at Horsefair
15	Stoke	67.90	2018	Etruria Rd
16	Maidstone	67.30	2018	The Pilot PH
17	Oxford	67.10	2017	A34 4 Yarnells oad
18	Epping	67.02	2018	Belle Vue Close to M11
19	Dudley	66.53	2018	Halesowen Rd
20	Dudley	66.13	2018	Halesowen Rd
21	A1 Sandy	66.10	2018	A1 Carter Street
22	Bradford	66.00	2018	Queens Road
23	Newcastle	65.90	2018	Market St
24	Maidstone	65.90	2017	Upper Stone St
25	Leeds	65.00	2018	Tunnel
26	Sheffield	65.00	2018	Platform 3A
27	Birmingham	65.00	2018	McLaren Building
28	Birmingham	65.00	2018	Priory
29	Uttoxeter	64.40	2018	A50 Bypass
30	Plymouth	64.30	2018	A38 1 Quay Rd Tideford Car 22
31	South Hams	64.10	2018	A38 Dean Prior Road
32	Calderdale	64.00	2018	New Bankworth A58
33	Sheffield	63.00	2018	Platform 6A
34	Sheffield	63.00	2018	Sheaf Street Station Side
35	Brighton Road	63.00	2017	A23 Hooley
36	Maldon	61.80	2018	6 Market Hill
37	Birmingham	60.00	2018	Liverpool St Station
38	Chideock 727S	57.20	2018	Main St

	London			
39	Strand	88.00	2018	Wellington House
40	City of London	87.00	2018	Walbrook Wharf
41	Marylebone Rd	85.00	2018	
42	Euston Rd	82.34	2018	Dukes Rd
43	Cromwell Rd	77.40	2018	Earls Court
44	Westminster	76.00	2018	Oxford St East
45	Lambeth	75.15	2018	A23 Brixton Rd Outside KFC
46	Wandsworth	75.00	2018	York Rd Battersea
47	Hammersmith	74.80	2018	Hammersmith Rd
48	Lambeth	74.20	2018	A23 Brixton Rd
49	City of London	74.00	2018	Bishopgate - new St
50	City of London	73.00	2018	North Old Bailey Newgate St
51	Wandsworth	73.00	2018	Battersea Park Rd
52	Peckham High St	72.96	2018	No. 88A
53	Lambeth	72.90	2018	A23 Streatham Hill
54	Earls Court Station	71.50	2018	
55	Brent	71.00	2018	A406 North Circ Rd IKEA
56	City of London	71.00	2018	Liverpool St
57	City of London	71.00	2018	Seething Lane
58	Earls Court	70.10	2018	
59	City of London	70.00	2018	St. Dunstan's Church Fleet St
60	Ealing	69.40	2018	A40 Hanger Lane Gyratory
61	Euston Rd	69.20	2018	Camden Town Hall
62	City of London	69.00	2018	Beech St
63	City of London	69.00	2018	Princes St
64	Putney High St	68.00	2018	
65	Upper Richmond Rd	68.00	2018	301 Upper Richmond Rd
66	City of London	68.00	2018	Camomile St Houndsditch
67	City of London	68.00	2018	Victoria Embankment - Middle Temple Lane
68	Ealing	67.90	2018	A40 Hanger Lane Gyratory
69	Croydon	67.82	2018	Wellesley Rd Northbound
70	Borough High St	67.65	2018	A3 Just off London Bridge
71	Ealing	67.60	2018	A40 Western Ave Acton
72	Southwark	67.56	2018	A3 Newington Causeway
73	375 Old Kent Road	67.52	2018	
74	Lambeth	67.44	2018	A23 Streatham Hill Station
75	City of London	67.00	2018	Bywood St (Gt. Tower St)
76	Lambeth	66.95	2018	A23 Streatham High Rd
77	Haddon Hall	66.2	2018	Tower Bridge Rd
78	Haringey	66.00	2018	Archway
79	City of London	66.00	2018	Cornhill
80	City of London	66.00	2018	55 Moorgate
81	City of London	66.00	2018	London Museum
82	Camden	65.70	2018	Tottenham Court Road
83	Haringey	65.00	2018	Wood Green
84	Hackney	65.00	2018	A10 Stoke Newington High St
85	City of London	65.00	2018	3 London Wall
86	City of London	65.00	2018	King Edward St
87	City of London	65.00	2018	London Wall
88	Southwark	64.21	2018	14 Hanover Park / Rye Lane Peckham
89	Hackney	64.00	2018	Mare St - Iceland

90	Westminster	64.00	2018	Cavendish Square
91	Redbridge	63.80	2018	A406 North Circ Rd Wanstead Park
92	Papa Johns	63.71	2018	Tower Bridge Rd
93	Tower Bridge Approach	60.91	2018	Bridge Rd

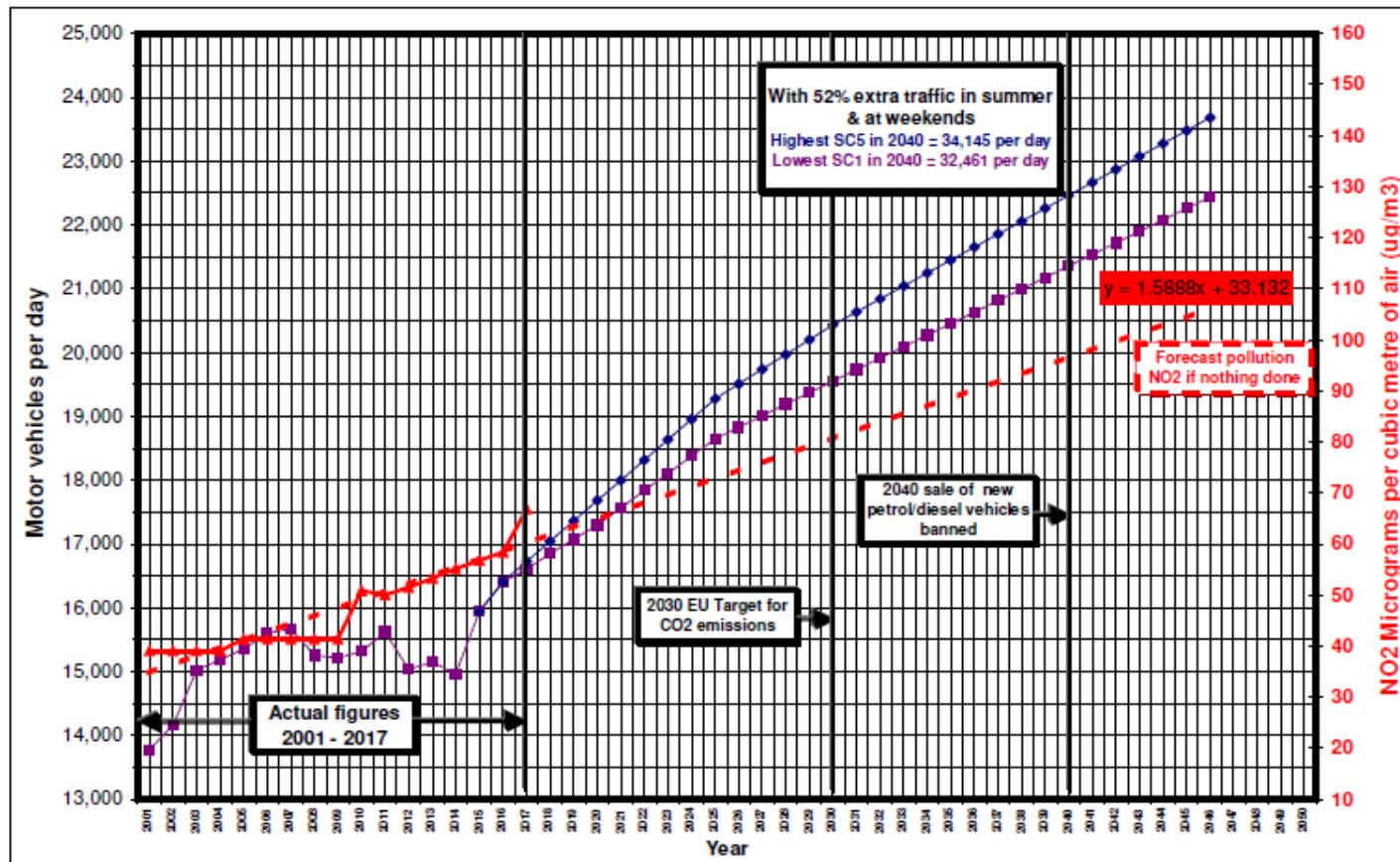
NOTE: It should be noted that Google pollution figures (shown above) are different to the Dorset County published figures inasmuch as:

Item No 1 - DC record 96.42 (full year 2018 / 2019) micrograms per m³ Air (Google 97.7) and

Item No 38 - DC record 64.3 (after bias actual figure is 60.42) micrograms per m³ Air (Google 57.2).

APPENDIX 2

Traffic Pollution Forecast 2017-2046



Department for Transport

Table TRA 9905

Scenario = SC