

## **COUNTY COUNCIL – 8 FEBRUARY 2022**

### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

#### **1. Question from Emily O'Brien, Newhaven, East Sussex**

A freedom of information request shows that East Sussex County Council recently spent over £9,000 on a series of verge marker posts on the 'S' bends in the road on both sides of Foxhole Farm on the A259 between Newhaven and Bishopstone.

An earlier petition requesting that the speed limit be reduced there, to improve road safety not only to motorists but to the many cyclists and pedestrians crossing the road at this 60mph stretch, was refused on the grounds that not enough people had been killed or seriously injured to make money available to 're-engineer' the road to reduce speed.

It now seems that the council has acknowledged that the road is indeed dangerous just as residents had said. In fact enough people have now been killed or seriously injured to allow money to be spent on it after all.

Can the Lead Member please explain then to the over 250 people who signed that petition, plus all those who have campaigned for a safer junction at Bishopstone yet despite endless promises are still waiting for action, why instead of spending that money to make the road safer, the council has instead chosen to spend thousands of pounds on a measure which will inevitably make the road faster - actually increasing the danger to the many pedestrians and cyclists who use the road there.

#### **Response by the Leader and Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

In July 2019 a petition to reduce the speed limit to 40mph on the A259 between Seaford and Newhaven, enforced by speed cameras, was considered by the Lead Member for Communities and Safety.

Speed surveys undertaken on this section of the road prior to the meeting indicated that average speeds were between 42 mph and 47 mph westbound and 45 mph and 48 mph eastbound.

Previous assessments of the A and B class roads in the County had identified that the level of fatal and serious injury crashes recorded on this section of the A259 was 7.1 per 100 million vehicle kilometres. This was below the County average of 8.9 per 100 million vehicle kilometres. The crash rate (all crashes) was also calculated at 22.6 per 100 million vehicle kilometres which was below the 35 per 100 million vehicle kilometres previously recommended by the Department for Transport as a threshold above which the investigation of a lower speed limit might be appropriate.

The Lead Member therefore resolved that a 40mph speed limit on the A259 between Seaford and Newhaven was not a priority for the County Council, the location did not meet the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership criteria for speed cameras and that the Strategic Economic Infrastructure Team had recently commissioned consultants to carry out a feasibility study of possible improvements at the junctions of Bishopstone Road, Marine Parade and Hill Rise.

This feasibility study was completed in 2019/20. It identified and modelled several potential junction and accessibility improvements to address concerns about road safety and community severance between the Bishopstone Road and Hill Rise junctions. These included the introduction of traffic signals and standard roundabouts at the Bishopstone Road, Marine Parade and Hill Rise junctions as well as a gyratory incorporating the Marine Parade and Hill Rise junctions.

The findings of the study indicated that, apart from the introduction of a gyratory, it would not be possible to formalise the current situation without creating significant and potentially unacceptable delays on the A259. However, the introduction of a gyratory would potentially require land acquisition and be prohibitively expensive to implement.

A Notice of Motion, considered by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment in February 2021, requested that a study was undertaken, and proposals developed, to improve road safety for car users, cyclists and pedestrians at all junctions with the A259 in Seaford. At this meeting it was resolved to recommend that Full Council did not support the motion as two further studies were already underway to consider these issues.

The Transport for the South East's Outer Orbital Corridor Study will consider strategic and regionally significant interventions on the A259 corridor. The County Council led A259 South Coast Road corridor study will identify, using appropriate evidence, more localised interventions for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users as well as congestion and safety measures along the corridor.

Both studies will enable business cases to be drawn up that assist in the development of bids to central government for specific funding to be allocated to this route.

As the local Highway Authority, the County Council has a statutory duty to identify crashes occurring on our road network and put in place a programme of works to address these crashes. To discharge this duty, we use crash data provided by Sussex Police, recorded in line with Department for Transport requirements to identify sites where four or more personal injury crashes have occurred in the previous three years. This criterion has been in use for more than 20 years and regularly identifies 60 to 80 sites that require further investigation.

We have limited funding for road safety interventions, and it is important that we target this funding to sites that will produce the biggest impact in terms of casualty reduction.

We give priority to sites that have the most personal injury crashes, especially those involving fatalities or serious injury. In 2020, we looked at crashes between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2019 and identified 75 sites with four or more personal injury crashes. The Foxhole Farm site was ranked 36 out of the 75 sites.

A detailed study of the descriptions and causes of the crashes occurring at this location suggested that, to help reduce the number of casualties, it would be appropriate to introduce a series of verge marker posts on the bends on both sides of Foxhole Farm, to help advise drivers of the road alignment.

The vegetation cutting was carried out as part of our cyclic maintenance contract with East Sussex Highways, and the cost of installing the verge marker posts was £9,205. This type of scheme is typical of the localised interventions undertaken by the Road Safety Team as part of their annual programme of work.