



Mr D Winter
(Senior Coroner for the City of Sunderland)
Office of HM Coroner
Sunderland Civic Centre
Burdon Road
Sunderland
SR2 7DN

Date: 9 January 2015

Your ref:

Office of the Chief Executive
Jack Crawford House
Commercial Road
Hendon
Sunderland
SR2 8QR

This matter is being dealt with by: -
Network Operations Manager

Dear Mr Winter,

Re: A690 Junction at East Rainton - Fatal Collision, Mrs Hubbert

The following is my response to your Regulation 28 Report of 14th November 2014 regarding the unfortunate death of Mrs Delores Hubbert, and sets out the Council's proposed course of action at the location of the recent fatal collision.

1. Safety of the Junction

Road accidents have been described as multi-factor random occurrences that can happen anywhere and at any time and often for no apparent reason. Any highway authority is unable to predict where the next accident will occur. The approach used by this and many other Councils to target interventions in respect of road safety is based on road accident data. This data, initially collected by the Police, is supplied to us via the Regional Traffic Accident Data Unit. Whilst it is accepted that not all minor accidents will be reported to the Police, this record of accidents is regarded as the best objective reference available for determining and comparing danger on the highway.

Furthermore it has been established that what may appear to be a potentially dangerous location can have fewer injury accidents than apparently 'safer' areas. Where danger appears obvious people tend to be more careful and take fewer risks. Officers have visited the site on a number of occasions at various times of the day and drivers appeared to be able to manoeuvre safely taking appropriate care.

As stated in your report, prior to the occurrence of the recent fatal collision, 1 other personal injury collision, classified as serious, had occurred at the A690/Durham Road,

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East Rainton junction, in the last 7 years. It is important to note that the circumstances of the previous accident were very different to that in which Mrs Hubbert was killed. This accident was a result of the driver attempting a U-turn manoeuvre and there was no similarity to the crossing manoeuvre that Mrs Hubbert made. In addition, the contributory factors to this previous collision, which resulted in a rear end shunt, was deemed by Northumbria Police to be a combination of factors including nervousness, uncertainty or panic, poor turn or manoeuvre and failing to look properly. In summary, this accident was caused primarily by bad driver behaviour rather than the nature of the junction itself.

The Council as Highway Authority, regularly assess the accident data throughout the city to determine where additional traffic management measures are needed and are appropriate. The safety record at this junction was regarded as good, compared to other locations in the city. Priority is given to implementing measures that help reduce the number and severity of personal injury accidents, improve child pedestrian safety at locations that show a significant accident history and which are in line with the Council's overall transport strategy. With the junction having previously had a comparatively good safety record, intervention has not been considered necessary.

As a consequence of this regular view, the Council has already identified the nearby A690/High Lane/Stoneygate junction as a site of concern as regards safety with 11 personal injury accidents in the last 3 years. We have been progressing a scheme of measures to address these concerns. Extensive public consultations are about to commence and a scheme will be presented to a Planning and Highways Committee for final approval early next year, with a view to implementing the scheme during the financial year 2015/16. As the next major at grade crossing point on the A690, a similar assessment of possible measures for the A690/Durham Road, East Rainton junction will be programmed to be undertaken in 2015. It is not possible to be specific as to what measures will be the most suitable for this location until the investigation and consultation has been completed.

We have also been undertaking a review of speed limits throughout the city with priority being given to investigating those on "principal" roads. The A690 falls under this criteria and we intend to commence the statutory process to reduce the speed limit to 50mph on this section of road in January 2015. Subject to a successful statutory consultation it is expected that the speed reduction could be introduced in summer 2015.

2. Verge Maintenance

With regards to maintenance activity on the A690, the Council's approach over the years for all principal high speed roads has been to implement a programme of Spring and Autumn closures to facilitate work such as servicing of road gullies, grass cutting, street cleansing, safety barrier and lighting repairs. This year the lane closures on this section of the A690 took place on 27th/28th March and 22nd/23rd September. This schedule was in line with the Council's intended programme set at the start of the year and is considered to be appropriate to the location in question.

I hope this addresses the issues that set out in Section 28 report. Should you however have any queries or would like to discuss the matter in more detail, then please contact my colleague on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Head of Street Scene