

Karen I Dilks LL.B
H.M. Coroner
Coroner's Court
Civic Centre
Barras Bridge
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE18PS

My Ref.
Your Ref:



03 AUG 2015

Date: 31 July 2015

Dear Ms Dilks

Senior Coroners Report into the Death of Paul Coxon

I acknowledge receipt of your Report which was sent to me with a covering letter dated 20 July 2015.

You advised therein that the evidence that you had considered revealed matters giving rise to concern. You further advised that in your opinion there was a risk that future deaths would occur unless action was taken. In the circumstances you stated that it was your statutory duty to report to me that the matters of concern were as follows:

1. Inadequate signage giving guidance to pedestrians of safe crossing points.
2. Lack of illuminated signage to assist pedestrians in the hours of darkness.
3. Appropriateness of 50mph speed limit on a complex slip road where driver visibility is limited and reaction time to any hazard significantly impaired as a result

My observations, using the same numerical reference are set down below:

1. An additional sign will be erected at the top of the steps (adjacent to the south east slip) which leads to the 'underpass'. This will indicate the presence of a pedestrian route (via steps) and identify the pedestrian destination. Investigative work will be undertaken to confirm that the pedestrian route is appropriately signed on both sides of the bridgehead. This work will be completed within three months from the date of this letter.

In respect of the 'underpass' itself the term is actually misleading. It is an open span bridge with 5/6m lighting columns on the access road below to either side providing adequate night time lighting levels.

2. Requirements and guidance for illumination of road traffic signs is contained within the Department for Transport's 'Traffic Signs, Regulations and General Directions' document. Pedestrian signage is not required to be illuminated and the document does not contain discretionary advice suggesting it may be appropriate to do so. Accordingly, whilst I note your concern, I do not intend to take action in this regard.
3. Again, your concerns are noted, however it is my belief that a 50mph speed limit is entirely appropriate for this section of road.

A member of my staff met with the Police investigating officer at the site shortly after the accident. The investigating officer considered that forward visibility was generally adequate but that the potential for a pedestrian to step out onto the carriageway did give rise to concern.

Although it was not mentioned in your report, following the investigation into the accident and the aforementioned meeting with the police I took immediate steps to minimise the hazard relating to the presence of pedestrians on the carriageway.

The guardrail currently in situ along the footway in question terminated at the commencement of the bus stop layby at the time of the accident. The associated bus stop had not been observed for a number of years and there appeared to be no likelihood of it being brought back into use in the near future.

The, quite extensive, gap in the guardrail therefore served no current useful purpose and I accepted that it could potentially encourage pedestrian activity on the carriageway at an inappropriate location. I therefore commissioned the introduction of infill panels. These were in place within three weeks of the accident.

I believe that my actions significantly reduced the risk of future occurrence of an accident of this nature.

I am content for my response to be distributed as considered appropriate by the Chief Coroner.

If you have any queries or remaining concerns about the content of this letter I would be happy to discuss further

Yours sincerely



Service Director, Transport Strategy
Communities and Environment