

Nottinghamshire County Council response to Coroner Regulation 28 Report following Inquest into the death of Harold James Davies

The fatal accident and two previous fatal accidents occurred at the junction of the Trunk Road A46 and Station Road Collingham. Since the incidents happened on the Trunk Road, which are the responsibility of Highways England, the County Council has not carried out investigations on these individual incidents, or the group of accidents.

From what we understand, two of the three accidents, including that of Mr Davies, involve drivers emerging from the side road, Station Road, onto the A46. They were in collision with vehicles on the A46.

In such cases it is important to distinguish between restart and overshoot type accidents. In a restart, drivers are aware of the junction and as a result slow or stop, but then fail to give way, or misjudge main road traffic speed. An overshoot occurs where a driver is unaware of the junction or doesn't see it in time, and then enters the main road without pausing.

It is understood that the two accidents were most likely restarts, Mr Davies was apparently indicating to turn right, suggesting he knew he was approaching the junction. It is not usually effective to try to affect this type of accident by measures on the side road approach. The measures proposed by Highways England on the main road A46 are more appropriate.

However if further investigations by Highways England and/or their agents were to conclude that enhanced advanced give way signing were appropriate, Nottinghamshire County Council would of course be happy to co-operate with Highways England in consideration of installation of such measures within its highway boundary along Station Road.

Station Road is derestricted, that is, its speed limit is 60mph which is the national speed limit for such roads in the absence of any other posted limit. The situation is very common there are many thousands of miles of these derestricted roads in rural areas. The 60mph is an absolute upper limit, and drivers have to adapt their speed to suit the road layout and conditions as they find them throughout their journey. Therefore when approaching the junction with the A46, drivers on Station Road will slow and adapt their speed to allow them to negotiate the bend on the approach, and slow appropriately for the junction. We have no evidence that excessively high speed is occurring on this approach, or that it is leading to reports of injury accidents on Station Road. We also understand that approach speed is not a significant contributory factor in the accidents at the A46 junction.

Even if it were the case that speeds approaching the junction were too high, simply lowering the speed limit would not be an effective way of addressing the problem. It is well known from research that, in the absence of the threat of Police enforcement, a driver will adopt what they deem to be a safe speed for the road, with only limited reference to the speed limit. National guidance suggests that limits should reflect the speed at which drivers are travelling, rather than the other way round, and unrealistically low limits are discouraged.

A lowered speed limit would require a legal order to be brought into force, which would involve amongst other things a lengthy consultation process. The consequent delay in progressing the proposed Highways England improvement scheme, and the costs of signing and implementation of a speed limit, are therefore not appropriate given the arguable benefits.