Chief Executive: [redacted]

Hertfordshire

HM Senior Coroner Geoffrey Sullivan
The Old Courthouse
St Albans Road East, Hatfield
AL10 0ES

Via email:
[redacted]

Hertfordshire County Council
CH 0238, County Hall
Hertford, Herts, SG13 8DE

Tel:
Contact: [redacted]

Your ref: 9903512
Date: 27 March 2023

Dear Sir

Inquest into the death of Steven Easdale
Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths Response

CORONER'S MATTERS OF CONCERN

The MATTER OF CONCERN is as follows: –

That the lack of working lights on the pedestrian refuge on the B197 Digswell Hill (near the Red Lion Public House) poses a danger to road users and pedestrians. Specifically that neither the illuminated bollard nor the streetlamp are in working order.

DETAILS OF ACTION TAKEN

The illuminated bollards and refuge beacon on the same island were confirmed to be in light on 13 January 2023. They have been checked every 20 days since then, with no faults found, and the most recent check on 3rd March 2023 confirmed that all lights were working as expected.

[Please note the reference to streetlamp in the Report is interpreted to mean the refuge beacon on the same island as the bollards. The refuge beacon is a low wattage unit with minimal light output in a downward direction to identify the island for motorists from a distance. It is not designed to provide lighting for users of the crossing]

All other signs and bollards on the B197 Digswell Hill have been checked and were confirmed to be in light on 3rd March 2023

BACKGROUND:

The island and associated assets were not logged on the Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) highways inventory at the time of the Road Traffic Collision. The content and quality of the highways inventory continually improves as assets are added to it. In the last year 2,850 assets were added to the inventory which contains a total of 1,297,947 assets.

This means inspections and maintenance of the bollards and refuge beacon would not have been carried out. It is possible other maintenance works may have been carried out at this location, bollard cleaning for example, but these occur during daylight hours and so the lack of illumination of the bollards and refuge beacon would be unnoticed.

First knowledge of the existence of the assets as a location requiring maintenance by the highways lighting team was after a fault report was raised on 13th December 2021. A highways crew visited the site on 12th January 2022 (achieving the 20 working day target response for lighting faults).

On attendance on 12th January 2022, it was found the beacon and bollards were not lit, and this was caused by a UKPN (UK Power Networks) mains fault. This was notified to UKPN on 13th January 2022.

The site was checked on 31st January 2022 and the fault had not been repaired. It was re-raised with UKPN as a high priority.

By 1st February 2022, UKPN identified that the fault was positioned on the bridge over the A1. Before any excavations are carried out on a bridge the owner must provide their approval. Initially UKPN checks were made with HCC to seek approval to excavate on the bridge. HCC confirmed that the structure was not our structure, rather it was Highways England/National Highways (NH).

The outstanding fault at this location was on the agenda at monthly meetings between UKPN and HCC and in June 2022, Ringway (the maintenance contractor working on behalf of HCC) requested that UKPN consider alternative options for electricity supply. Ringway attempted to help UKPN by logging an enquiry with National Highways in June 2022 on behalf of UKPN.

Our understanding is that on 9th January 2023 UKPN received permission to excavate from National Highways, and once that was received UKPN started work on the site, fixing the mains fault on 11th January 2023.

The HCC highways team were able to confirm all illuminations were in-light on 13th January 2023. The location has been checked every 20-days since then and has been in-light each time.

DETAILS OF FURTHER ACTION PROPOSED

The site is now included in the asset inventory and as such the bollards and beacon are inspected and maintained. They will continue to be inspected every 20 days by a

Highways team and be attended to if necessary. If at any time the lights are not working, that can also be reported by members of the public using the online Hertfordshire County Council Fault Reporting system.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

[redacted]
Chief Executive