



Department
for Transport

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From the Parliamentary
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19 September 2024

Dear Senior Coroner David Heming,

RESPONSE TO REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS

Thank you for your report of 26 July 2024 made under Regulation 28 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, following the inquest you conducted into the deaths of Jennifer and Marion Bunyan and of Jennifer's unborn daughter Erin Marion Chatten who sadly died in utero during the accident. I am replying as the Minister responsible for road safety.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to the family of Jennifer, Erin and Marion Bunyan and to acknowledge the tragic nature of this incident.

I want to assure you that I am determined that we learn from tragedies like this and that we take action to reduce those killed and injured on our roads. Delivering enduring improvements in road and vehicle safety is a key priority, which is why we have already announced the development of a new Road Safety Strategy – the first in over a decade.

The Government takes road safety with the utmost seriousness, and we are committed to maintaining our roads as some of the safest in the world. Despite that record there is always room for improvement, so I have carefully considered the factors highlighted in your report, which are listed below:

A. CLUSTER SITES

Councils have a number of roads that feature on a cluster site analysis. By their nature, these will carry an obvious and serious risk of death or significant injury. Funding pressures in recent years have delayed prompt action in risk reduction at these sites. The coroner's report raises a question over whether there should be a central government fund as a special measure to release capital for such sites as this would lead to enhanced risk reduction repairs being deployed more quickly.

B. GPS

On the facts of this investigation, this road had seen a number of fatalities which would not be known to those unfamiliar with the area (as here). It raises a question of whether there could be collaboration with software companies to flag roads on satellite navigation programming for providing verbal/visual prompts that a particular road carries high risk as an accident site.

The below response sets out DfT's current position regarding these raised concerns.

Cluster sites:

The Department allocates highways maintenance capital funding to local highways authorities so they can most effectively invest in maintaining and improving their respective network, based upon their local knowledge, circumstances, and priorities.

It is up to each highway authority to determine how best to spend this funding, in order to fulfil their statutory duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highways.

DfT strongly advocates a risk-based whole lifecycle management approach to local authority highways maintenance programmes. This approach considers all parts of the highway network, such as bridges, cycleways, and lighting columns.

DfT does not intend to take any action on enforcing the use of cluster site analysis or the establishment of a central fund, as that is a matter for the relevant local authority.

GPS:

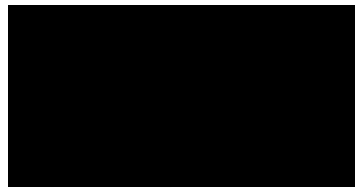
Neither the Department for Transport nor individual local authorities have any direct power over the routing guidance offered by satellite navigation devices.

It is the responsibility of satellite navigation operators to ensure the information they provide on their platforms is accurate and up to date. Drivers, should they choose to, can usually provide feedback and suggested corrections via satellite navigation operators' websites.

Road signage should always take precedence, and drivers should regard information provided by satellite navigation as only being advisory. Drivers should be familiar with the rules of the Highway Code in order to keep their journeys as safe as possible for the route they choose.

Thank you again for taking the time to raise these important points of concern with me and I hope that you find our explanations helpful.

Best wishes,



MINISTER FOR THE FUTURE OF ROADS