



Our ref:
Your ref:

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05 November 2024

Dear Mr Pemberton

Reg 28 Report – After Inquest HARPER EV 04052024

Thank you for your correspondence dated 11 September 2024.

National Highways is committed to maintaining the safe use of the Strategic Road Network and we appreciate the issues surrounding suicide incidents and the impact these can have. We continually assess incidents that occur on our network to identify locations where action may be required.

Due to the nature of the Strategic Road Network, particularly in urban areas such as Greater Manchester, there are a large number of bridges over the motorway and a limited amount of funding to progress improvements. We use available historical information to identify frequently used locations and then prioritise sites to maximise the benefits that can be achieved coupled with our duty to manage public funds.

In relation to the M602 a study of suicide related issues along the route was undertaken in 2022, specifically in relation to the number of incidents occurring at bridges and structures spanning the route. The [REDACTED] footbridge that you have raised as a concern was one of eight structures included in this assessment. It was identified that an increase in parapet fence height from the standard 1 metre to 1.8 metres was a potential intervention but noted that the boundary is difficult to effectively secure around the bridge itself. The footpaths along [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] which run for several hundred metres alongside and above the M602 have concrete boundary walls of approximately the same height as the existing bridge parapet fence.

Increasing the parapet fence height from the standard 1 metre to 1.8 metres can cost up to £1m per bridge. In addressing concerns surrounding these sites we are constrained by the available funding and the benefits that can be achieved. We therefore prioritise locations with the highest number of suicide related incidents. This is the reason that some bridges have already received upgraded parapets, as historically they have exhibited a far higher level of risk. An example in this area is [REDACTED] which crosses the M602 adjacent to [REDACTED].

During the current road investment period (2020-25) in the North West region we have increased parapet fence heights to 1.8 metres at six of our bridges with the highest number of suicide related incidents. These are [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] over the M60 in [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] at Junction [REDACTED] of the M60, and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] over the M56 in Wythenshawe.

When assessing the available information relating to suicide related incidents along the M602, there were three recorded at the [REDACTED] footbridge during the five-year study assessment period from 2017 to 2021, none of which had resulted in an injury or fatality. We therefore currently have no proposals to increase the parapet fence height at [REDACTED] footbridge.

In comparison the nearby bridges at [REDACTED] recorded 68 incidents during the same period. Several other bridges spanning the M602 have also recorded significant numbers of incidents and schemes for these are currently being developed for potential implementation during the next road investment period from 2025-30.

We will continue to monitor and assess all locations in the North West in the future where these types of incidents are recorded, and take the appropriate actions where necessary.

I hope that you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Operations Regional Director

Email: [REDACTED]