

Mr Robert Cohen
HM Assistant Coroner- Cumbria
HM Coroner's Courts
Allerdale House
Workington
Cumbria
CA14 3JY

09 April 2026

Dear HM Assistant Coroner,

Westmorland and Furness Council and the Cumbria Road Safety Partnership, acknowledge receipt of the Regulation 28 Prevention of Future Death Report issued following the inquest into the tragic deaths of Rita Margaret Thomas and Christine Dale at Junction 37 of the M6 and the A684 on 19th September 2024.

We recognise the seriousness of this incident and wish to extend our deepest sympathies to the families and all those affected.

Westmorland and Furness Council (WAF) submit this response to set out the actions we have taken, together with our partners; Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and National Highways (Cumbria Road Safety Partnership, 'the Partnership'), and outline the further work currently underway following this tragic road traffic collision

1. Identification of Junction 37 as a High-Harm Location

The classification of junction 27 as a high harm location initiated multi-agency reviews involving Westmorland and Furness Council, Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, and National Highways. These discussions led to a coordinated package of safety improvements implemented in December 2024.

2. Measures Implemented by National Highways (Slip Roads)

As highlighted in the Prevention of Future Death Report, National Highways have undertaken significant upgrades to both the northbound and southbound exit slip roads since the fatal collision.

3. Measures Implemented by Westmorland and Furness Council (A684)

In parallel, the Council conducted a full speed review of the A684 in partnership with the Cumbria Constabulary Safety Camera Unit in November 2024.

Traffic data was collected by Cumbria Constabulary Safety Camera Unit across several months;

- A684 both direction; 29th May – 4th June 2024
- J37 Entry slip roads; 30th May – 4th June 2024
- J37 Exit slip roads; 16th – 23rd October 2024

A comprehensive series of improvements along approximately 500 metres of carriageway and implemented between November and December 2024. These were designed to highlight the presence of the approaching junction to improve driver awareness and reduce approaching speeds.

These improvements and upgrades, included:

- Installation of double-white centre lines to restrict overtaking – *to improve safety by preventing overtaking*
- Upgraded road studs – *to improve visibility especially at night and in poor weather conditions*
- Yellow rumble strips – *to highlight and reduce approach speed*
- Red high-friction surfacing- *reduce perception of lane width to reduce approach speed*
- Additional “SLOW” markings – *highlight an approaching hazard and reduce speed*

Below are images showing the significant improvements on the A684

Prior to improvements A684 (Sept 2024)



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Image of A684

After works

February 2025



4. Speed-Limit Concern

We recognise the specific concern contained within the Regulation 28 report in respect of permitted speed on the A684 as below:

*The **MATTERS OF CONCERN** are as follows. –*

.. “; the A684 remains the subject of the National Speed Limit. I was informed that no speed limit was imposed because previous investigation 'did not highlight a speeding problem'. The evidence I heard included an observation by the driver of the bus that: "At the point where I first saw the car, I was only a few metres away from the top of the slip road. The dark car was travelling up the slip road from my left-hand side. I must have only been aware of its presence for a matter of one or two seconds...I did not have any time to react or take any evasive action. As far as I recall I did not have time to brake or steer to try and avoid the collision."

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For the avoidance of doubt, the evidence indicates that the bus was being driven at less than the national speed limit.

I am concerned that this indicates that the speed at which vehicles are permitted to drive on the A684, taken with the design of the junction, gives drivers insufficient time to react in the event that a vehicle crosses into their path. “

Prior monitoring by Cumbria Constabulary Safety Camera Group as part of the partnership in May/June 2024 and October 2024, recorded average speeds on the A684 to be below the permitted speed (on average 40-50mph).

Nonetheless, the question of a reduced speed limit is still being considered by the Partnership and has been incorporated into an independent Engineering Safety Study which is being commissioned by Westmorland and Furness Council.

5. Ongoing Statutory Duties and Further Investigation

An independent consultancy has been commissioned to undertake the full Engineering Safety Study, which will fully review:

- Existing conditions along the route
- Evaluate the impact of works completed to date
- Assess whether additional engineering, enforcement, or educational measures are required
- Examine specifically whether a change to the current speed limit would be appropriate, practicable, and effective

We therefore hope to offer assurance that the concern raised is being addressed through the study commissioned. Of note national guidance Setting Local Speed Limits 2024 from the Department for Transport (DfT) requires a full analytical process when proposing a reduced limit.

Additional Review and Emerging Issues since December 2024

In addition to the commissioning of the engineering safety study, a follow-up multi-agency through the Cumbria Road Safety Partnership of Westmorland and Furness Council, National Highways, Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Fire held on 2 May 2025 examined the impact of the December 2024 improvements.

Video evidence reviewed during the meeting highlighted ongoing issues with driver non-compliance at the STOP signs.

The Partnership therefore agreed to some ongoing actions which are reviewed at monthly operational Cumbria Road Safety Partnership meetings with no end date currently set. A further review will now be set after National Highways most recent completed works in February/March 2026 to resurface and increase skid resistance of the exit slip roads has been completed and given time to be monitored. The current ongoing actions are as follows:

- Undertake targeted police engagement and enforcement
- Explore options for remote digital enforcement
- Increase public communication to reinforce awareness of the new measures

7. Expected Timescales

The Engineering Safety Study is now underway. We expect its findings later this year and will be able to provide a further update upon completion and review by the Council and the Cumbria Road Safety Partnership.

We reiterate that the tragic deaths of Rita Margaret Thomas and Christine Dale at Junction 37 of the M6 and the A684 on 19th September 2024 has been taken extremely seriously by Westmorland and Furness council and our partners.

In accordance with our statutory obligations under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, the Council will continue to review road traffic collisions and assess the need for further safety measures We hope to offer assurance that the A684 from Kendal through to (and including) Junction 37 has been prioritised for further detailed assessment.

***Assistant Director Sustainable Transport and Highways
Westmorland and Furness Council***

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