

[REDACTED]
Date: 01st June 2026
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Suffolk Coroners Court
FAO Coroner Parsley
Beacon House
IP1 5PB

[REDACTED]

Dear Coroner Parsley,

Investigation into the death of Allan Stevenson

Suffolk County Council (“SCC”) writes in response to your Regulation 28 Report dated 06 April 2026.

SCC acknowledges it is a recipient organisation of the Report, however, wishes to clarify its statutory and operational remit in relation to the specific issues raised.

Concerns raised:

- 1. Concern 1: ‘I am concerned that what was agreed by witnesses to be a complex temporary road traffic plan, can be ‘flipped’ on the ground on the day it is installed without any identifiable process being in place to ensure the scheme is subsequently safe. The court heard that some schemes (such as a single carriage way scheme controlled by only two sets of traffic lights) were straight forward to flip if required, but that no additional or enhanced review system was in place when a complex scheme needed to be flipped at short notice’.***

Concern 1 appears to relate to the installation of temporary traffic management and the processes followed by Core Highways Group Ltd and Anglian Water where arrangements were altered on the day of installation. These matters principally concern the internal operational arrangements of the Statutory Undertaker and its specialist traffic management contractor, rather than matters within SCC’s direct control. SCC is therefore not able to speak for those organisations but sets out below its own role and the relevant statutory framework.

For the purposes of this response, the terms “street authority” and “highway authority” are used interchangeably, reflecting the terminology used within the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (“NRSWA”) and the Traffic Management Act 2004.

As outlined in the Witness Statement of [REDACTED] dated 15 January 2026, Suffolk County Council’s role is to:

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1. Coordinate works on the network, primarily through its Permit Scheme; and
2. Undertake compliance checks, where appropriate, against the *Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice* (“the Red Book”) through network inspections once works are in place.

Statutory framework and undertaker responsibility

Under Section 48 of NRSWA, “street works” include not only the placement and maintenance of apparatus but also works required for or incidental to those activities, which includes the provision and management of temporary traffic management necessary to undertake the works safely.

The Act identifies the undertaker (in this case, Anglian Water) as the party authorised to carry out those works. Responsibility for the planning, design, implementation, and ongoing operation of temporary traffic management therefore rests with the Statutory Undertaker and any specialist contractor it appoints.

This is reinforced by Section 65 NRSWA, which places a duty on undertakers to ensure that works are adequately guarded, lit, and signed, and that appropriate traffic signs are provided for the safe guidance of road users.

Temporary traffic management is inherently dynamic. The Red Book permits adjustments to be made on site to reflect prevailing conditions (for example, site constraints, parked vehicles, or other operational factors), with responsibility for ensuring that those arrangements remain safe and compliant resting with the undertaker at all times.

Role of the highway authority

The role of the highway authority is distinct from that of the undertaker. Suffolk County Council is responsible for coordinating works and managing the network, but it is not responsible for the detailed design or approval of traffic management layouts, nor does it provide a safety “sign-off” of those arrangements.

Highway authorities must take care not to become involved in the design or specification of traffic management measures. The design and delivery of compliant traffic management therefore remain the responsibility of the undertaker and its appointed, competent contractors.

Permit scheme

Suffolk County Council operates a Permit Scheme under the Traffic Management Act 2004 and the Traffic Management Permit Scheme (England) Regulations 2007.

The purpose of the Permit Scheme is to enable the highway authority to:

- Coordinate works across the network, and
- Manage the impact of those works, particularly in relation to congestion and disruption.

The Scheme does not provide for the approval of detailed traffic management design.

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Undertakers are required to submit information about their works, including duration and general method. The authority may apply conditions where appropriate, and undertakers may submit variations where there are material changes affecting duration, traffic management type (for example, signals or road closure), or network impact.

However, on-site operational adjustments, including changes to the positioning or orientation of traffic management (such as the “flipping” of a layout), would not necessarily require a formal permit variation where:

- the nature of the works remains the same; and
- the impact on the network and road users, particularly in terms of congestion, is not materially altered.

Such operational decisions sit within the undertaker’s responsibility for delivering the works safely.

Inspections

The Code of Practice for Street Works Inspections provides statutory guidance on how highway authorities may undertake inspections. These inspections are typically risk-based and sample-based, and authorities are not required to inspect every site.

██████████ undertook a Category A (live site) sample inspection. Network Inspectors are responsible for selecting sites as part of this inspection regime.

During an inspection, the Network Inspector assesses the traffic management arrangements as implemented on site at the time of inspection, measuring compliance against the Red Book. Where non-compliance is identified, defects may be raised against the undertaker.

Inspections represent a snapshot in time. Site conditions may change after an inspection due to ongoing activity or operational adjustments.

Application to this concern

The concern raised suggests that the absence of a process to notify the highway authority of changes to a complex scheme (including the “flipping” of the layout) compromised the safety assessment. However:

- Responsibility for ensuring that traffic management remains safe and compliant at all times rests with the Statutory Undertaker.
- The inspection regime is designed to assess what is physically present on site, rather than to verify compliance against an original or proposed plan.
- Whilst advance notification (of a layout change) may assist contextual understanding, the Network Inspector’s task remains to assess the arrangements actually in place set against the requirements of the Red Book.

As set out in the evidence of ██████████, incorrect signage was observed on site during the inspection and was raised with the undertaker in accordance with established procedures.

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- 2. Concern 2: *'I am concerned that there is no apparent safety escalation process, when as in this case a relatively junior Traffic Management Operative identifies a safety issue with a scheme once it has begun operations'***

Concern 2 principally relates to the internal escalation arrangements of Anglian Water and Core Highways Group Ltd. SCC has reinforced its procedures for identifying relevant issues to those responsible for the temporary traffic management.

- 3. Concern 3: *'I am concerned that the correct 'special signage' that would have undoubtedly made this scheme safer, was not even considered in this case (as a direct result of the flipping of the original plan). I am further concerned that Network Inspectors have no power to declare a special sign (or the lack of a special sign) as a defect, as these signs fall outside the mandatory signage shown in the Red Book. As such, even if a Network Inspector identified what they believed to be a dangerous temporary traffic management scheme, any danger being caused by the lack of special signage (or caused by special signage on site that is incorrect), there is no mechanism available for a Network Inspector to issue a defect notice to raise their concern'***

This concern appears to arise from the present scope of the statutory inspection framework and the guidance currently available to highway authorities and inspectors.

As highlighted in the concern, 'special signage' is not considered mandatory signage as per the Red Book and other advisory material and is therefore not something which a Network Inspector could raise a defect for in the same way as mandatory signage. However, SCC recognises the importance of ensuring that wider safety concerns can still be escalated promptly to the undertaker where identified.

- 4. Concern 4: *'I am concerned of that the only recourse for a Network Inspector to get temporary traffic management signage replaced, is an apparently protracted procedural route involving multiple individuals remote from the site, with the Network Inspector having limited or no contact with the Traffic Management Operatives at the site itself. I am further concerned that there is no requirement for spare signage to be carried on vehicles used for setting up the schemes, for obvious or frequently occurring errors identified on temporary road traffic schemes (such as in this case the road narrow signs being the wrong way around)'***

Concern 4 primarily concerns the operational arrangements and equipment practices of Core Highways Group Ltd and Anglian Water, rather than matters determined by SCC.

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Local Authorities are required to report any identified defects to the statutory undertaker as the holder of the street works licence.

As covered in the evidence, [REDACTED] verbally reported the defect to the traffic management operative on site following completion of his inspection on 24 October 2022. He also reported the defect to Anglian Water via the English national online system (Street Manager) and via telephone, as the Code of Practice of Inspections requests. The Network Inspector can take the steps available to him/ her within the limits of the statutory inspection role.

- 5. Concern 5: *'I am concerned that there is no apparent system in place to inform Network Inspectors that a traffic scheme has been laid out, contrary to the original plan that was in place (as in this case when a plan has been flipped). As a result of the Network Inspector having no access to, or sight of the original plan, he was unaware that the original plan had been flipped, unaware of the suspension of the cycle lanes approaching the roundabout and unaware that the special signage deemed necessary in the original plan, was completely absent in the flipped scheme that was put in place. As such the Network Inspector's ability to check the safety of the flipped scheme was seriously compromised'.***

As set out under Concern 1 above, highway authorities have powers to investigate and monitor street works activity, including through the use of network inspections where appropriate. These inspections can be undertaken on a random sample basis and are focused on assessing compliance with relevant safety requirements.

The role of the Network Inspector is to assess whether the traffic management arrangements as implemented on site at the time of inspection comply with the requirements of the Red Book. Inspections are not intended to verify detailed design intent or confirm whether a scheme has been implemented in accordance with a previously submitted plan.

Statutory Undertakers may appoint specialist traffic management contractors to design and implement appropriate measures. Responsibility for ensuring that traffic management is safe, compliant, and responsive to changing circumstances rests with the statutory undertaker and its appointed contractors. Temporary traffic management is inherently dynamic, and the Red Book allows for adjustments to be made on site to reflect conditions such as parked vehicles, site constraints, or nearby activity.

The statutory framework draws a clear distinction between the undertaker's responsibility to design and implement safe traffic management, and the highway authority's role in coordination and inspection. SCC must therefore avoid stepping into the undertaker's operational function.

The duty to design and deliver compliant traffic management remains with the organisation undertaking the works, supported by appropriately qualified and competent personnel.

Non-compliance was identified by [REDACTED] during his inspection and raised with both the on-site operative and Anglian Water in accordance with the established inspection and enforcement process. The absence of advance notice of the change did not prevent the identification of this defect or appropriate action being taken.

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It should also be noted that, under the present framework, the presence or absence of non-prescribed or advisory signage is not necessarily in itself, a matter that can give rise to a defect under the Red Book where such signage is not a mandatory requirement.

In addition, the presence of advisory cycle lanes at this location does not create a statutory restriction, as these are not supported by a Traffic Regulation Order. Their temporary obstruction or absence during works is therefore not subject to a formal suspension process.

While permit applications submitted via the DfT's Street Manager system require undertakers to describe their works and associated traffic management, there is currently no specific mandatory field to explicitly identify impacts on cycle routes (advisory or not), in contrast to provisions such as footway closures. Any such impacts are typically conveyed through supporting information, drawings, or permit conditions.

A Network Inspector, in their role, is to assess compliance based on the arrangements in place on site at the time of inspection.

- 6. Concern 6: *'I am concerned that the 'defect line' operated by Anglian Water was not answered or responded to on the day of this incident, adding unnecessary delay to the changes required to the scheme signage. It is acknowledged that the signage defect identified on the 24 October 2022 would not have affected the tragic outcome of this case, however that may not be the case in future incidents'***

Concern 6 relates primarily to the responsiveness of Anglian Water's own defect reporting arrangements. SCC cannot comment on the internal operation of those systems.

Conclusion

SCC has carefully considered the Coroner's concerns. For the reasons set out above, and following specific review, it does not consider that the statutory role of the highway authority should extend to approving or redesigning temporary traffic management laid out by undertakers. Responsibility for the safe design, implementation and operation of such arrangements rests with the undertakers and their appointed contractors.

However, SCC has reviewed its own procedures and has taken active steps to reinforce the inspection and escalation processes applicable to Network Inspectors. In particular, SCC has delivered a toolbox talk to Network Inspectors to reaffirm the correct application of established inspection and escalation processes and will continue to do so as appropriate. SCC has also provided, and will continue to provide, refresher learning to both Network Inspectors and Network Coordinators.

In addition, SCC has been in contact with the Department for Transport with a view to discussion as to the findings of the inquest and the extent to which any aspect of national guidance or the wider regulatory framework may merit further consideration. Whilst SCC can contribute its views and respond to any such consultation or discussion, responsibility for

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changes to national guidance or the regulatory framework rests with the relevant national bodies.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

Suffolk County Council Legal Services (on behalf of SCC)

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