REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS

Response of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council - 16 October 2026.

To: Mrs Joanne Lees
Area Coroner for the Black Country

Deceased: Jody Brown

Date of Report: 21 August 2026

Dear Coroner,

Response of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Walsall Council acknowledges receipt of the Prevention of Future Deaths Report dated 21 August 2026 following the inquest into the death of Ms Jody Brown and has carefully considered the concerns identified within the Report.

Following receipt of the Report, enquiries were undertaken with relevant Council service areas including Highway Network Management and Public Lighting. The Council has also continued to engage with the Canal & River Trust and other stakeholders in relation to the issues raised by the Coroner.

Council Responsibilities and Land Ownership

The Council has reviewed its highway records and land ownership information in relation to the location.

The Council confirms that it does not have responsibility for the maintenance or management of the canal basin itself, which is managed by the Canal & River Trust. The Council does, however, have responsibilities as local highway authority in respect of adopted highway land adjoining parts of the basin.

The Council has verified the extent of adopted highway land in the vicinity together with those adjoining areas which are privately owned. The Council has therefore focused its review and actions on matters falling within its own statutory responsibilities whilst also engaging with other parties in relation to the wider concerns identified by the Coroner. A copy of the Highway Extents and Land Ownership Plan is attached for ease of reference.

Lighting

The Council notes the concern raised regarding the adequacy of lighting around the canal basin and adjacent footpaths.

Lighting serving the adopted public highway in the vicinity is maintained under the Council's Public Finance Initiative street lighting contract.

The Council's Public Lighting Manager has reviewed the lighting provision at the location and confirmed that the adopted highway areas are illuminated in accordance with the current requirements of British Standard BS5489. The relevant lighting assets were upgraded during 2024 and remain subject to ongoing maintenance and inspection arrangements. A copy of the Public Lighting Manager's report is attached.

The Council is therefore satisfied that lighting serving the adopted highway is provided and maintained in accordance with the relevant standards.

Liaison and Joint Working

Representatives of Walsall Council and the Canal & River Trust met on site on 1 June 2026 following the incident to review the location and consider measures aimed at reducing future risks.

The Council acknowledges the wider concerns identified by the Coroner regarding matters including warning signage, physical barriers, rescue equipment, means of self-rescue, vegetation management and visibility of the water's edge.

Whilst responsibility for many of these matters rests primarily with the Canal & River Trust, the Council has actively engaged with the Trust and other interested parties in considering how the concerns identified by the Coroner may be addressed. The Council notes that the Canal & River Trust, as a co-recipient of the Prevention of Future Deaths Report, will be providing its own response to the Coroner in respect of the report. The Council will nevertheless continue to support partnership working and work collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders to improve public safety at the location and facilitate the implementation of appropriate safety measures.

Action Taken by Walsall Council

Having reviewed those parts of the location which adjoin adopted public highway, the Council arranged for yellow edge warning markings to be painted along the perimeter of the canal basin where it adjoins adopted public highway land. The markings are intended to improve the visibility of the canal edge and provide a clearer visual distinction between pedestrian areas and the adjacent waterway.

The canal edge markings were painted on 25 September 2026 and comprise a continuous 200mm yellow line located adjacent to the canal edge where it adjoins adopted public highway land. The works were developed in response to concerns

raised following the incident and are restricted to those areas falling within the Council's responsibilities as highway authority. Copies of the approved Canal Basin Edge Markings drawing and photographs of the completed markings are attached.

Ongoing Development of Additional Safety Measures

The Council is aware that concerns regarding the safety of the basin have also been the subject of ongoing discussions between stakeholders, including the Canal & River Trust, following previous incidents at the location.

In response to the concerns raised through the Coroner's investigation, and more recent incidents reported at the basin, active discussions are taking place between the Council, the Canal & River Trust and relevant private landowners regarding the introduction of additional physical safety measures, including barriers in appropriate locations around the basin.

The Council is actively engaging with the Canal & River Trust and all relevant private landowners to facilitate the progression of those proposals and to identify practical measures that may further reduce the risk of persons inadvertently entering the water.

The Council recognises that ownership and management responsibilities for the area are shared between a number of parties. Nevertheless, there is a collective commitment amongst those parties to work collaboratively and progress appropriate safety measures in response to the concerns identified by the Coroner.

An operational meeting involving representatives of Walsall Council and the Canal & River Trust has been scheduled for **Monday**,**19 October 2026** to consider the next steps required to facilitate the installation of permanent barriers and other safety measures. The meeting will consider, amongst other matters, anticipated delivery timeframes and the engagement and consents required from relevant third-party landowners.

The meeting will also consider the installation of temporary measures around the canal basin in anticipation of increased footfall during the forthcoming Christmas period, whilst longer-term permanent barrier proposals are progressed and finalised.

Future Action

The Council will continue to liaise and cooperate with the Canal & River Trust, private landowners and other relevant stakeholders regarding matters affecting public safety in and around the canal basin.

The Council remains willing to contribute technical expertise and officer support, where appropriate, in relation to matters falling within its responsibilities and to participate in partnership discussions aimed at reducing future risks.

The Council will continue to monitor the effectiveness of measures implemented within its area of responsibility and will consider any further action that may be appropriate should additional concerns be identified.

Conclusion

The Council has carefully considered the concerns raised within the Prevention of Future Deaths Report and has reviewed its responsibilities, land ownership records and lighting provision at the location.

The Council has already implemented measures within its control, including the installation of canal edge markings adjacent to adopted highway land on 25 September 2026, and is actively participating in ongoing discussions with the Canal & River Trust and relevant private landowners regarding the implementation of further safety measures, including barriers and other measures aimed at improving public safety.

The Council supports the collaborative approach that has developed between stakeholders and will continue to engage constructively with relevant partners in seeking to reduce risks and improve public safety at the location.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]
Interim Principal Solicitor
For and on behalf of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Enclosures

1. Highway Extents and Land Ownership Plan.
2. Canal Basin Edge Markings Drawing and photographs of the completed markings.
3. Public Lighting Manager Report dated 24 September 2026.