

Director of Highways and Transport

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11th May 2015

Private and Confidential

Penelope A Schofield
Coroner's Office
West Sussex Record Office
Orchard Street
Chichester
West Sussex. PO19 1DD



Dear Madam

Response of West Sussex County Council to the regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths issued by M J C Burgess, Assistant Coroner dated 17 March 2015 following an inquest into the death of Alasdair Neal Penny.

I am writing with regard to the actions we propose to take following receipt of your report into the death of Mr Alasdair Neil Penny as a result of a fall from the College Lane Bridge, East Grinstead. I was very sorry to read of the events that led to the death of Mr Penny and wish to extend my sympathies to his family.

I understand Mr Penny was suffering from Paranoid Schizophrenia, but was refusing to take his medication. In the days leading up to his death he had been seen at the bridge on a number of occasions, where his odd behaviour led members of the public to report him to the police. On the day before his death he was picked up by the police from the bridge and returned to his parents' home address, though checks made then did not reveal his mental health problems.

You raise the following two matters of concern.

- The bridge has been the site of a previous suicide in 2011
- The height of the railings at the back edge of the footways that bound the bridge is such that they can be quite easily mounted and would not deter a spontaneous jumper.

The bridge was the location of a previous suicide in 2011. It is very likely Mr Penny knew Mr Raynor. They had both attended the same secondary school, possibly in the same year group. We are not aware of any other similar events prior to Mr Raynor's death in 2011

The College Lane road bridge was constructed to modern design standards, with 1m high parapets conforming to BS6779 part 1 Highway Parapets for Bridges and other Structures. This is the national standard and is applied across the whole of West Sussex for road bridges carrying a carriageway and adjacent footways. However, we understand your concerns that this standard height is

unlikely to inhibit a deliberate action to climb over the parapet and jump from the bridge.

While we would caution that it is unlikely that any engineering solution would be 100% effective we will be investigating whether it is technically feasible to increase the height of the current parapet to deter as far as practicable similar events occurring in the future. If an appropriate solution can be determined we intended to undertake the alterations within this financial year, subject to any design and programming constraints. If an appropriate technical solution cannot be realised I will write to you again explaining the reasons why.

We will also be raising the issue with other partners through the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Joint Action Group (NJAG) to see if there is any further appropriate preventative work that can be initiated from a community perspective including the potential of additional work with vulnerable young people through our Health Services. Previously the East Grinstead NJAG was responsible for arranging the current Samaritans signs and for organising for the local Street Pastors to make the bridge part of their regular patrols.

Yours sincerely



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