

Response of West Sussex County Council to the Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths issued by Karen Harrold, Assistant Coroner dated 5th July 2019 following the inquest into the death of Keith Winston Battman.

Keith Winston Battman died on the 28th October 2018 as a result of a road traffic collision that occurred on the 10th October 2018 at the Seaford College bend on the A285, Duncton, West Sussex.

Following the letter received from Karen Harrold, Assistant Coroner to the coroner area of West Sussex, dated 5th July 2019 (ref 02751-2018) enclosing the Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths, the County Council responds with the comments and actions detailed below.

Firstly I should clarify that the chevron was removed around the time the 2010/11 road safety scheme was installed, this scheme lowered the speed limit to 30mph and removed many of the warning signs through the village - a concept known as self-explaining roads.

With regard to the Matters of Concern raised:

1. Following the police notification of Mr Battman's collision the authority began its own now well established investigation procedure and acting on additional information from the police that Mr Battman may have mistook the school drive for the main road it was decided that further signage should be added. Two small stock chevrons were temporarily erected while a larger yellow bordered chevron was being manufactured; the new larger chevron was erected on the 2nd May 2019. We consider that this new signage, which reinforces the existing bend warning and map type direction sign, along with the measures detailed in paragraphs 2 and 3 below will overcome the topography issues and provide additional warning of the nature of the bend to southbound motorists.

In addition the authority is in discussion with local landowners and the Duncton Parish Council with regard to removing some of the hedge on the inside of the bend to improve sight lines. While the removal of the hedge is not within the authority's control, all of the parties involved have responded positively to the proposal.

We are also in dialogue with Seaford College regarding the potential to interrupt the "straight on" view for southbound drivers by installing a banner type sign over their gateway. Again this measure is not within our control, but again I can advise that Seaford College have responded positively to the proposal.

2. There is a double side 30mph repeater sign 210m to the north of the bend, this upright sign is supplemented and reinforced with two 30mph road marking roundels (one in each lane). Drivers travelling south through the village of Duncton will have been travelling in a posted 30mph speed limit for over half a mile and will have passed four 30 mph repeater signs with associated 30mph roundels and a vehicle activated flashing 30mph speed limit reminder sign before reaching the bend. It is considered that these signs and road markings are sufficient to alert drivers to the 30mph speed limit.

Analysis of the recorded injury collision history, as part of our investigation, has identified an emerging trend of southbound motorcyclists failing to negotiate the bend. It is anticipated that the installation of the larger chevron warning sign will, in combination with the other warning signs, help address this issue, however, we are cognisant that some drivers and riders who use a route on a regular basis do not notice standard warning signs and road markings as they may believe they are familiar with the conditions they are likely to encounter. To mitigate this risk it is our intention to install a vehicle activated flashing bend warning sign for southbound traffic at an appropriate distance to the north of the bend. A technical appraisal is currently being undertaken to ensure that this device can be installed at a safe location and to determine the appropriate trigger speed at which it activates.

3. One of the recommendations arising from our investigation following the collision was to refresh the give way lining at the Seaford College junction. Following receipt of your report the two painted SLOWs have been added to this programme of works. We anticipate that this work will be completed by the end of this August.

In your report you suggested that consideration should be given to whether this stretch of road needs further improvement and I wanted to assure you that this section of road and the A285 as a whole have been the subject of a significant amount of study in recent years and have received many road safety intervention treatments. Previous works for this bend include an additional bend warning sign with a "Reduce speed now" sub plate; resurfacing with a high quality high skid resistant road surface; a reduction of the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph including Vehicle Activated Sign installed close to the village school to warn drivers and riders if they exceed the speed limit.

To summarise, the two small chevrons highlighting the bend for southbound traffic have already been replaced with a larger more prominent yellow bordered two bar chevron. A vehicle activated bend warning sign for southbound traffic will be installed this financial year. The two SLOW markings to the north of the bend along with the junction markings at the college entrance will be remarked this August.

[REDACTED]

County Road Safety Group Manager
26 July 2019