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Date: 26th July 2013



**Chairman of Transport and
Highways Committee**
County Hall
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7QP

Dear Councillor Sue Saddington,

Question to the Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee
North Muskham HGV traffic due to A1 incident

On 19 June 2013 the A1 was closed due to an incident in the vicinity of Claypole in which, sadly, there were fatalities. A vehicle fire involving gas cylinders, initiated the Fire Service standard precaution of a 200m exclusion zone resulting in a closure of both carriageways.

The closure was implemented around 5am with southbound traffic diverted at the A46/A17 junction via A46 and A52 to Grantham. The A17 junction has limited capacity and traffic would have rapidly backed up towards North Muskham.

Due to nature of the incident the closure was for the majority of the day.

There was no direction of traffic at North Muskham but HGVs presumably took the decision to leave the A1 at the first opportunity rather than queue.

North Muskham was included in an Environmental Weight limit in 2012 and it is understood that this is effective under normal circumstances, although there are very few destinations for lorries via that route.

Police Enforcement

Nottinghamshire Police have commented that resources are already stretched on a daily basis and an incident like this puts their organisation under extreme pressure. It is unrealistic to expect that whilst dealing with an incident such as this as well as the normal days Policing they can deploy staff to enforce an Environmental Weight Restriction. Drivers when faced with a closure will always try to find alternative routes through. However, the diversion route was clearly signed and the majority of drivers did follow the correct diversion route. Whilst drivers and local residents are inconvenienced when these type of incidents occur, thank fully these occurrences are rare and our main priority must be the victims of the collision itself.

Summary Law Clerks advice is that there is not enough evidence to prosecute any driver at this stage as there is insufficient evidence of a contravention. Furthermore, it is not in the public interest to prosecute these drivers as a court would take into account the circumstances of the events.

Recognising that lorries were in the village the pragmatic response was to direct them out of it.

Trading Standard Enforcement

The Trading Standards position is similar to that of the Police in that they cannot enforce retrospectively on the back of third party evidence. Trading Standards understandably advise that they are not able to undertake enforcement on a reactive basis when the A1 closes at 5am for an unknown duration. Even if they could respond the incident may clear before enforcement could commence or soon afterwards.

Prevention of intrusion

The key to this issue has to rest with a review of the closure arrangements and adequacy of the signage. It has been recognised that there is no advance warning of the weight limit and once a lorry has left the A1 there is no opportunity to change that decision when faced with the weight limit signs immediately on the exit. In addition, it may be feasible to introduce additional signage or close the exit when incidents occur.

To that end officers have obtained a commitment from the Highways Agency to review the arrangements and implement what might be reasonably feasible

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Greaves', written in a cursive style.

**COUNCILLOR KEVIN GREAVES
CHAIRMAN OF THE TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE**