

CHEPSTOW

Town Council

Historic Chepstow: *The Way to Wales and the Wye Valley*
See The Chepstow Web Site at www.chepstow.co.uk
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My Ref: SB/29012014
Your Ref:

William Powell AM
Chair of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 INA

29 January 2014

Dear Mr Powell

Safety on the A48 Bridge at Chepstow – Petition from Wyedean school children
Minister's response of 1st November 2013 to the Petitions Committee

Thank you for your letter of December 2013 giving Chepstow Town Council the opportunity to comment on the Transport Minister's letter of 1st November 2013 regarding the dangerous pavement on the A48 Bridge at Chepstow which was the subject of a petition to you.

Chepstow Town Council met on the 22 January 2014 and was disappointed and surprised by the response from the Minister.

1. The Minister offers a 'feasibility study' to look at pedestrian guard railings and traffic signs sometime in the 2014-15 financial year. This could mean at least a year of waiting for essential safety work and that is assuming that in the coming financial year the Department concludes that there is a case for railings. The Town Council and pupils of Wyedean School are very concerned and feel that this is too long a timetable for such a dangerous situation on this road. Locally it is felt that at school arrival and departure times the speed limit should be 20 mph with railings. Railings are needed now, within a few months, not 2015 or 2016.
2. The Council was disappointed and surprised that the Minister's response did not consider any reduction in the speed limit from 50mph to 30mph. It is a fundamental principle of traffic law in Wales and England (and this short bridge is in both) that any urban road with street lights is a restricted 30mph zone in order to protect pedestrians from the very situation which exists on the A48 bridge at Chepstow.
3. For exceptional reasons it is possible for the Government to 'de-restrict' an urban road with street lights from 30mph- such as for large urban motorways or dual carriageways where there is segregation of traffic from pedestrians but the A48 Bridge has none of the characteristics of 'de-restricted' roads described in Appendix C of the Welsh Government Guidelines of 2009 - it is an ordinary urban

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road with pedestrians and school children inches away from fast moving traffic, but in 1987 it was 'de-restricted'.

4. It is difficult to understand why Chepstow school children cannot be protected now by this fundamental principle of traffic law (30mph in urban areas) when it applies everywhere else in Wales and UK, and everywhere else in Chepstow. School children shouldn't have to petition for 30mph in urban areas.
5. It is also difficult to understand why the Transport Department appear to be insistent on holding on to a 50 mph speed limit for this clearly very dangerous stretch of road as there is no benefit to the economy or to motorists in being allowed to reach 50mph on this stretch of road but there are great dangers to pedestrians and school children in allowing them to do so.
6. The stretch of road in question is only 420 metres long. It is a bridge over a river. It has narrow carriageways which encourage heavy goods vehicles to drive very close to the pavement with their wing mirror structures often over- hanging the narrow pavement full of school children walking 3 or 4 abreast. The children can't move away from the traffic because there is a concrete wall and an 80 feet drop into the river. There is no way off the bridge except at either end. No sideways escape for some distance if there was an incident on the bridge. What could be more demanding of protection by the nationally accepted 30 mph restriction on urban roads throughout the UK?
7. Drivers do not expect go more than 30 mph on this bridge as they know from the Highway Code and their driving tests that any road in an urban area with street lights at regular intervals is automatically at 30mph limit. It does not make sense to invite drivers to accelerate from 30 mph to 50 mph on this very short stretch of clearly dangerous road? Vehicles can go 50 mph just 420 metres later so why endanger hundreds of school children for that 420 metres? If there was no 50 mph sign on the bridge it would automatically be a 30 mph zone and every driver would know that from their Highway Code.
8. The Minister's letter was misleading in the third paragraph. The letter gives the impression that the 50 mph speed limit was recently put into place following consultation and agreement with the Police. The Order referred to in 2011 was not an Order to raise the speed limit from 30 mph to 50 mph but an Order to 'reduce' the speed limit from 60 mph (which the bridge automatically became after it had been 'derestricted') to 50 mph bringing it into line with the Gloucestershire section of the A48 . The Police and those consulted all agreed with 'reducing' the speed limit. This was not an endorsement of 50 mph being the right speed but acceptance that 50 mph was better than 60 mph. There was a consultation exercise in 2010 on this Order. No-one objected to the Order because it was a reduction of speed and heading in the right direction.
9. No-one knew then what our school children were experiencing on the bridge. The school children themselves have told us through their petition in 2013 how dangerous the situation is and this was checked and photographed at those

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