

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL COMMITTEE IN EPSOM & EWELL
10 December 2012**

MEMBER QUESTIONS

**Question 1 Cllr Jean Smith
Re: J621 crossing Epsom Downs**

As a member of the Training Grounds Management Board I would draw your attention to the danger being experienced by the Epsom Trainers at the J621 crossing from the Derby Stables to the Queen's Stand.

There are instances of vehicles jumping the red light just as a string of racehorses is about to cross. Racehorses are highly sensitive and this has resulted in the horses being spooked, falling over and suffering injuries. Photographs of some of the injuries will be available at the meeting. The following is a description of such instances from Trainer, Simon Dow:

- 29th October at 7.15 am. 2 horses were returning from exercise. The rider of the lead horse pressed the button and as he arrived at the crossing a motor cyclist flashed through on a red light. This caused the horse to jump suddenly and lose his footing. He took a fall into the carriageway sustaining superficial injuries and bruising.
- Earlier in October a similar incident occurred. This time a 3 year old filly had a severely bruised hip and a large haematoma which required lancing. The filly is still not fully recovered.
- 12th November at 7.30 am. 2 separate instances. In each case drivers coming from the racecourse roundabout direction to Langley Vale/Epsom drove across the lights well after they had turned red.
- Other trainers have experienced and reported similar instances, supporting Simon Dow's comments.

These incidents have been reported to Highway Officers who have responded by changing the timing of the lights. However, the view of the trainers is that these changes have not prevented the continued red light violations.

Simon Dow has real anxieties that a serious accident is imminent and as a responsible employer it makes his daily risk assessments with regard to the welfare of his riders very difficult.

He feels that the process of reducing the speed limit on this stretch of highway must begin. Otherwise ultimately it will be too dangerous to access the Downs this way and this will affect the numbers of racehorses trained on the Downs which would hugely impact on the welfare, aesthetic appearance and openness of this site. There is no dispute over how the Downs are protected by the presence of the training gallops and the racehorses that use them. They also bring in revenue to the Borough both directly through the gallops fees and generally by the accepted annual figure of £6 million income to the Borough's economy

My question, therefore is – what can be done to address this problem and how soon can the remedy be carried out?

Suggestions put forward are:

- Traffic calming such as a raised table at the crossing
- A red light violation camera with appropriate warning sign

Officer Response:

A new red light violation safety camera would cost in the order of £50,000. Two cameras would be required at this site to cover both directions of travel. Any new camera would then require ongoing maintenance and commitment of police staff to process offences detected by the camera.

Due to the initial cost and then ongoing running costs, safety cameras are reserved for the very worst collision hotspots where there has been a continuing history of collisions associated with red light jumping or speeding. The county council's database of personal injury collisions recorded by Surrey police shows that there hasn't been any traffic collisions at this site in the last three years. Therefore, while we sympathise with the problems being experienced by the equestrians at this location, we would not recommend investing in red light violation cameras at this location. Members of the public can report instances of anti-social driving to the police via the Drive SMART website www.drivesmartsurrey.org.uk.

An officer from SCC's Traffic Systems, has also met with the trainer and adjusted the delay time for the equestrian demand. This is to recognise the lower number of horses on each run and the reduction in time to get from the high level push button to the crossing. Initially a trial was conducted and the trainer has since confirmed this has met his requirements.

It remains a temporary change, however a complete refurbishment is planned in the next financial year (2013/2014), when all timing changes could be made permanent. The signals currently have automatic extension of the intergreen time should vehicles be detected on approach to the crossing above 35mph. Extending the intergreen further is likely to exacerbate rather than resolve the problem.

The complaint clearly identifies that drivers and motorcycle riders are ignoring the red signals. Showing the vehicle red signals for longer without there being any evidence of the crossing being used is likely to increase the risk of red light violation - and at higher speeds. The new signals after refurbishment will be brighter and therefore more visible, although visibility does not appear to be an issue. It is simply down to driver behaviour which must be addressed either by Police enforcement, or by introducing traffic calming measures. An individual road table at the crossing point will not address the issue of vehicles going through red lights and introducing traffic calming over a wider area is likely to be expensive and not appropriate given the transportation of horses in vehicles to and from the racecourse during the year.