

CABINET – 20 SEPTEMBER 2016**PROCEDURAL MATTERS****Public Question****Question (1): James Mendelsohn, Chairman of Thursley Parish Council**

Thursley Parish Council have been trying to work with Highways England, Surrey County Council and the Police to ensure effective traffic management whenever the Hindhead Tunnel has to be closed, either as a planned closure or as the result of an emergency, so as to avoid large vehicles coming through the narrow lanes of Thursley, becoming stuck in certain places, and thereby causing damage to both public and residents' property, and further traffic chaos as the highways become impassable.

However, this is not proving to be successful, with numerous traffic incidents being reported whenever the tunnel is closed. This culminated on the night of 31 August when one articulated lorry became stranded in Bowlhead Green at 2.30am, and a second became stranded outside the Church in Thursley at 12.30 am. Both incidents resulted in the roads becoming completely blocked, preventing access for all vehicles, and serious damage to both private and public property.

With the problems associated with the tunnel closures spilling onto SCC highways and causing significant distress and inconvenience to both residents and other drivers, and also damage to both public and private property, how can Thursley Parish Council and SCC work together to escalate the situation so as to prevent further problems occurring during subsequent tunnel closures?

Reply:

Surrey County Council Highways officers have worked closely with Surrey Police, Highways England and Thursley Parish Council over the last year to try and prevent errant heavy goods vehicles entering Thursley and Bowlhead Green villages during planned and unplanned Hindhead Tunnel closures.

The local highways team have installed 'Unsuitable for HGV' signs at the entry points to both villages at the A3 flyover bridge and the signs are clearly visible on both approaches. Thursley village is also protected by a 6'6" weight restriction that prevents any large vehicle entering unless access is required. The restriction is signed in advance and at both entry points to the village. In addition to this, 'Risk of grounding' signs have also been installed to further highlight the problems large vehicles may encounter if they enter the village. Any heavy goods vehicle that exceeds 6'6" can be prosecuted should they enter Thursley as a result of a tunnel closure if they do not require access. Surrey Police are responsible for enforcing the restriction.

Highway officers have also worked closely with Surrey Police Road Safety Officers and Highways England to look at the strategy used when an unplanned tunnel closure occurs, as well as advanced warning signs, diversion signs and vehicle activated signs on the A3 and all of the diversion routes. As a result of this work, Highways England is hoping to implement

various upgrades to signs etc over a phased approach. Surrey County Council will consider engaging with the local MP Jeremy Hunt in order to expedite these measures.

Surrey County Council will continue to work with Thursley Parish Council, Surrey Police and Highways England to try and prevent heavy goods vehicles from entering Thursley and Bowlhead Green during planned and unplanned tunnel closures.

Mr John Furey
Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding
20 September 2016