

# Whittlesey Traffic Update No.2 – Cllr Boden

This is the second of what will be a series of updates about Whittlesey's traffic chaos. It's not meant to be a 24/7 live commentary about which roads are open or closed - I'm seeking to summarise the bigger picture as to what Cambridgeshire County Council Highways are doing or plan to do.

Sue, please forward to all Town Councillors and, Sue/Dee, please forward or copy this information to whomsoever you see fit.

## **WHITTLESEY TRAFFIC UPDATE No. 2: 8am SATURDAY 12th OCTOBER**

**B1040:** We've been through a terrible week on Whittlesey's roads. The re-opening of the B1040 on Thursday evening after the flooding had subsided had at least some positive impact on the overall situation on Friday. The trouble is, there are still temporary traffic lights by the Dog-in-a Doublet, significantly reducing the capacity of the road particularly at peak hours. And, on top of that, we all know that there will be further flood events over the Winter which will close North Bank and/or the B1040 itself, in which case we'll be back again and again to last week's traffic chaos across Whittlesey. **This is simply unacceptable.** On Thursday, the Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council (Lucy Nethsingha, Liberal Democrat, the Councillor for Newnham Division in Cambridge City) finally, after a week, responded to Steve Barclay MP's call for urgent action to tackle Whittlesey's traffic chaos. Part of her reply was so unbelievably out of touch that I've included it at the end of this update as the "**Quote of the Week**". But on the subject of the B1040 works she specifically said "We have a planned solution for repairing this road, however, we are unable to undertake this work until the weather conditions allow access to the site".

The flood damage to the B1040 banking south of the Dog-in-a Doublet occurred over **eight months ago**. The recent flood closure there started **last Monday**. It defies belief that the failure to take action to repair this part of the B1040 over the whole of the last eight months has been because "weather conditions" haven't allowed "access to the site". I have my suspicions that the real reason the repair work wasn't even started over the last eight months is because of the political transfer of County Council highways repair monies from Fenland to Cambridge City in the last three years. I could be wrong, of course - but in my traffic update tomorrow I'll give you all of the official figures (obtained recently from a Freedom of Information request) to support my statement that road repair funding has been substantially switched from Fenland to Cambridge City.

Meanwhile we urgently need to get County Council Highways to concentrate on getting these banking repairs done on the A605. The latest response I had from the County Council Service director concerned (who emailed me late yesterday evening with updates to the Whittlesey traffic situation) stated that "Officers are working with Milestone [the County Council's contractors] to ensure works are programmed for asap". I welcome this, so far as it goes. I'll be writing to the Service Director today to push for a specific date to be set for the repair works to be started. **We all know that if this had happened in Cambridge City, the County Council political leadership from Cambridge would have had the works completed in less than eight weeks, not left unstarted after eight months.**

Until they do complete the B1040 repair works, we'll have those temporary traffic lights in place. I'm pleased to report, further to my comments in yesterday's update, that County Council's Highways contractor Milestone have (I am told) extended the 'green time' setting to provide longer for moving traffic to navigate past the traffic management south of the Dog-in-a-Doublet, as I had requested. If you are driving on the B1040 and you don't see that queueing is being reduced by having the lights longer on green for peak hour traffic going out of Whittlesey in the morning and longer on green for traffic coming back towards Whittlesey in the late afternoon/evening peaks, then please email me with what you observed and the time and day you experienced any avoidable problems, and I'll take it up straight away. The precise number of seconds that the lights are remaining on green (or on red) during peak hours would be very helpful information. My email address is [cboden@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:cboden@fenland.gov.uk)

King's Dyke Repairs: As I said in yesterday's update, I was disappointed that more information wasn't included in Thursday's County Council statement about the Whittlesey traffic situation generally, and the Ralph Butcher Causeway King's Dyke Bridge problems in particular. Without in any way compromising any commercially sensitive contractual issues there may be between the County Council and their contractor Jones Brothers, I am asking for more information to be authorised for release, whether by County Council directly or through me as the local County Councillor. It is only this week that I have been given sufficient (non-technical) detail about the problems to understand and fully appreciate why the traffic restrictions on the bridge are really necessary for reasons of safety, and I'm pushing to be allowed to get that information out to the public, as you deserve to know. If I don't get permission I'll try to get the information published anyway, by a back-door route. If I publish information without permission, I'll simply be taken out of the information loop and will be restricted in being able to influence what is happening, and I won't be able at all to keep people informed about what is going on. Suffice it to say, from my updates and from the County Council official statement last week, you'll probably have been able to read between the lines that the bridge problems are not likely to be resolved in just a matter of weeks. The sooner more information can be shared with local residents the better. I'll keep you informed on this.

King's Dyke Traffic Lights: Further to the information I gave in yesterday's update, I've had further feedback from County Council Highways about the 'temporary' traffic lights on King's Dyke Bridge. I had asked for the timing of the lights to be skewed, especially at peak hours, in favour of the main weekday traffic flows out of Whittlesey in the mornings and back into Whittlesey in the late afternoon/evening peaks. In the mornings, Jones Brothers report that leaving the lights on green for seven minutes going towards Peterborough, then for two minutes on green going towards Whittlesey (and vice versa in the afternoons) has partially rebalanced the length of the traffic queues both ways, but at the expense of driver frustration for traffic going against the peak flow having to wait over seven minutes on a red signal. I hope that those drivers' frustration is somewhat assuaged when they see the length of the queueing traffic going in the opposite direction. There clearly has to be a reasonable balance on the signal timing. The previous 'equal time both ways' approach was obviously inappropriate and led to far longer peak hour queues than there should have been. I'd welcome weekday peak hour drivers' views as to whether or not the new system of giving priority to peak hour traffic is working as effectively as possible on the

ground. Again, if things aren't improving as they should, emailing me with precise traffic light timings, the precise time of day and how bad the queueing has been would be really helpful as I can provide feedback to the County Council Service Director so that we can get the balance right on the timing of the lights.

Updated Information from CCC Highways: Please follow @Cambs\_Traffic for their latest updates. County Council continues to post on X about the issues on the A605 and the B1040.

A 'Congestion Incident' has been placed on the national 'Causeway One Network' for the King's Dyke Bridge **for the duration of the temporary traffic lights**. This feeds that information directly into Sat-Nav systems and Apps to help divert traffic away from this section of the A605, where possible. Electronic VMS (Vehicle Management Signs) away from Whittlesey (as well as the three in the Town) are being used to communicate with drivers. Remote VMSs seek to divert motorists away from the A605, if alternative routes are available.

A47 Closures: This week we've seen night-time closures of the A47 for resurfacing work at Guyhirn, The A47 isn't controlled by County Council Highways - it's the only road in Fenland which is controlled by National Highways (because it's officially designated as a Trunk Road). The closures have been from 8pm to 5am with the A605 through Whittlesey and across the King's Dyke Bridge being designated as the official diversion route (although I've seen the XL bus service diverting up to an hour earlier in the evening). This was spotted last week by Steve Count, a councillor colleague from March whose County Council Division includes that part of the A47. I'm pleased, knowing our problems at the King's Dyke Bridge, that he immediately contacted the Chief Executive of Cambridgeshire County Council following which immediate action was taken to ensure that duty officers at CCC and National Highways were regularly monitoring traffic flows through the evenings and nights to ensure no problems occurred, especially making sure that there was no over-running of the works at Guyhirn each morning.

That potential issue, however, begs the question of what will happen if there's a daytime accident on the A47, especially if that involves a peak hour closure on the A47? It would be chaos beyond belief, in those circumstances, if National Highways unilaterally decided to divert the A47 traffic onto the A605 through Whittlesey and over King's Dyke Bridge, as they usually have done in the past in such circumstances. I'm contacting the County Council Highways Service Director today asking him to raise this issue with National Highways as a matter of urgency with a view to agreeing a contingency plan with National Highways to prevent the A605 being used as an emergency diversion route whilst we have the 'temporary' traffic lights on Ralph Butcher Causeway (the King's Dyke Bridge). I'll let you know the result of that in a future edition of the Whittlesey Traffic Updates.

Quote of the Week: The Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council, in her reply to Steve Barclay on Thursday (see the first item above), showed an astonishing lack of understanding of our traffic problems last week when she wrote: **"We are carefully monitoring the situation and appreciate that these works are causing some disruption during peak hours for road users"**. If she'd really been "carefully monitoring the situation" she'd have seen that there's far more than merely "some disruption" and that it's certainly not just being experienced "at peak hours" - and that was especially true on the very day (Thursday) when she sent our MP that message.

CLlr Chris Boden 08:00 12/10/24