

PETITION FOR TRAFFIC CALMING ON ST HELENS ROAD, SHEERNESS

I write in response to your petition that was passed to Kent County Council via the Joint Transportation Board regarding implementation of traffic calming on St Helens Road.

In accordance with our 'Petition Service' as your letter contains less than 1,000 signatures I have investigated & reviewed your concerns in my role as the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport.

In responding to your petition, can I firstly clarify the different roles that local authorities and other agencies have as you appear to have been passed around between different contacts on this matter. Responsibility for enforcement of moving traffic offences, such as speeding, dangerous driving and driving on the footway, lies with Kent Police and the County Council has no enforcement powers in this respect.

Kent County Council is the local highway authority for most of the roads around Sheerness, including St Helens and Coronation Roads. From your letter, I think that you may have been passed at some point to Highways England (HE) or one of its agents, which would not be correct. Highways England is a highway authority but only for motorways and trunk roads and the only road on the Isle of Sheppey that it manages is the A249 Brielle Way.

Along with duties to inspect and maintain the highway, the County Council also has a duty to investigate collisions on the highway that result in personal injuries and to take actions that it considers appropriate to reduce the likelihood and severity of future injuries. Swale Borough Council has some duties in relation to the highway, including parking management as well as other general duties such as community safety. However, the County Council is primarily responsible for road safety.

All collisions that occur on the highway that result in injury to another person or damage to property must be reported to the police – this is a legal requirement under Section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. It is this data, once it has been fully investigated, that is shared with the local highway authority which, for these roads, is Kent County Council. The County Council then has a duty to investigate these collisions and make changes to the highway that it thinks are necessary to reduce the likelihood of future injuries.

As you can no doubt appreciate, the County Council receives many requests for the implementation of improvement and safety measures on the highway and, as such, all requests are reviewed and prioritised. We use an evidence-based approach to prioritise investment in Casualty Reduction Schemes as we seek to ascertain if there is any pattern of personal injury crash records for the past three years that could be addressed by engineering methods.

I am sorry to hear of the damage that has been caused to your property and the distress caused by previous collisions. Many of the collisions that you and others have listed would be considered 'damage only' and would not be routinely recorded by the Police and would be down to the vehicle owners and possibly their insurers to resolve. I am concerned though that there might be collisions that are not being

reported to the police. I would encourage people to do so. Not only is this a legal requirement, it also gives us the evidence that we require to make safety improvements on the highway. To date, we only have collision data up to the end of December 2018. For the three years previously, the only two collisions that have been reported for St Helens Road happened in February and July 2016.

The collision record for St Helen's Road for the last three years has been checked and there have been few collisions with no pattern to these in terms of location or contributory factors; it is therefore difficult to prioritise this site against a number of areas across the County, where a pattern of incidents is occurring and our engineering intervention could help reduce crashes. Therefore, at this stage we have no programmed works on these roads, although we will of course continue to monitor the sites, and should viable engineering solutions be identified that would reduce the number and the severity of crashes then we will seek to implement them. For your reference, the data we consider can be viewed for free on Crash Map at www.crashmap.co.uk

I would like to reassure you that Kent County Council takes road safety very seriously and reducing the number of people injured on our roads is one of our top priorities. Full details of the work we do to prevent and reduce road crashes can be found in our Casualty Reduction Strategy for Kent which can be viewed at: www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/14520/Road-Casualty-Reduction-Strategy-for-Kent.pdf

For future reference full details of how to request highway improvements can be found at:

www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/roads/changing-roads-in-your-area

Thank you for taking the time to raise a petition and bringing your concerns to my attention. I really value a community voice to flag up local concerns based on your knowledge and experience of the roads and footways in your area.

I hope that my review has clarified our position on this matter. If however, you feel we have not dealt with your petition properly, please do contact me again.