

Frustration mounts over Dundry lights

Frustration is reaching fever pitch in the Chew Valley with the news that works to repair Dundry's Broadoak Hill will be delayed yet again.

North Somerset Council have announced that further surveys and tree clearing are needed before they can undertake work, meaning the temporary traffic lights which have been in situ since 2013 will remain in place throughout 2015 and possibly into 2016.

The news, coming in the same week that the lights on the hill repeatedly failed, has prompted public outcry from commuters and residents.

Reflecting this outcry is the decision by the Dundry Parish Council to lodge a complaint to the Ombudsman.

At their latest parish council meeting Dundry Parish Council said they will be writing to the leader of North Somerset Council, Nigel Ashton, as well as to their local MP Dr Liam Fox regarding the situation.

They went on to ascertain that they will take the matter to the Ombudsman if a 'satis-

factory response' was not received from the country council.

The parish council stated the delays are "not acceptable particularly since the traffic lights regularly failed causing a serious hazard to traffic."

The issue of safety is a considerable one. North Somerset Council's Highway Policy claims the purpose of Highways Service is to "facilitate the safe and expedient movement of people and goods."

Yet with the lights repeatedly failing, forcing commuters and school traffic to run a dangerous gauntlet of potholes and oncoming vehicles as they attempt to make it around the blind corner, the situation on Dundry appears to represent neither a safe nor expedient movement of people.

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"Personally I'm not sure how the prolonged nature of these 'roadworks' meets any of the stated aims and objectives of the council's policy," writes the Director of the West of England Rural Network, Chris Head, in his column for this month's Gazette (see left)

When the Chew Valley & Wrington Vale Gazette asked the county council if they were concerned about the risks to drivers and passengers, including school children, North Somerset Council placed the onus firmly on the motorists, stating they "expect motorists to respect the law and the meaning of a red signal- these lights are in place for their safety."

Though, motorists are left to question that safety when they repeatedly find themselves facing a light that is permanently red - for periods over 40 minutes - and having to decide whether to brave the blind corner or continue to sit on the hill, which offers no chance of turning around.

On one occasion the Gazette witnessed an elderly man who had found himself stuck, for a considerable period of time, at an unchanging red light, get out of his car and attempt to flag down oncoming cars to find out whether the lights were working.

"It is a miracle no-one has had a serious crash, or been killed on that road," said one commuter. "It is, quite literally, an accident waiting to happen."

The council state that the lights are equipped with detectors to adjust signal timings to allow for a better movement of traffic but say that "If a vehicle 'jumps' a red, it isn't helpful and will cause a further delay."

Commuters who have jumped a red say they only went through the red light after waiting - stationary - for over 30 minutes whilst the lights flashed red and green like the proverbial Christmas tree.

Further frustration has been added by the fact that whilst the council state that the lights are regularly monitored, with no workmen present to notice light failures, no visible number to report a fault, and with an incorrect number listed on the council's own website it proves difficult for the problem to be rectified swiftly.

This leaves commuters to take matters into their own hands and brave the gauntlet.

North Somerset Council state repairs are planned for the summer months, and the lights will soon be permanently wired to remove one of the causes of the malfunctions, and that the incorrect number on website will be changed.

Road users and residents wait with bated breath to see if the work comes to pass and whether it will be completed before the temporary lights celebrate their second birthday.

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