



Chideock Parish Council

E s t . 1 9 8 8

Edward Morello MP  
11 Alfred Road  
Dorchester  
DT1 2DW

8<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Dear Edward Morello MP

RE: CONCERNS ON THE IMPACT OF NO<sub>2</sub> AND PARTICULATE MATTER (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>)  
ON HEALTH OF VILLAGERS

Chideock Parish Council would first of all, wish to extend our warm congratulations to you in the recent election. Although you may consider that this is an early approach, we felt that it was important to raise directly with you as our new MP, the extremely serious concerns that this village has about the impact of NO<sub>2</sub> and particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>), on the public health of the villagers due to being located on a strategic highway run by National Highways.

You will no doubt be aware that this village was named by Friends of the Earth in 2020, as the most polluted village in England. In 2007, Chideock's Main Street was given AQMA status, and in 2011 an environmental risk assessment was completed. This assessment was updated in 2021. However, it remains the case that although the Parish Council raised a number of issues over the past 25 years with all authorities, very little has changed other than the levels of congestion and vehicle use has increased. In reality this means that villagers have been breathing increasing levels of air pollution for 17 years from 2007 up to 2024.

A number of studies regarding safety and severance with Highways England and subsequently the renamed National Highways, have been completed from 2016, with very little change to the actual village environment other than the introduction this year of a 30 mile an hour on Chideock hill. To date, the evidence which led to this decision has not been shared with Chideock parish council. Furthermore, there appears to be an erroneous belief that electric vehicles will lead to a decrease in pollution. However, the evidence is that particulate pollution from brakes and tyres from heavy vehicles (which includes electric vehicles due to their heavy batteries) increases this type of pollution.

Following years of being ignored, in 2021, Chideock Parish Council invited universities within the UK to consider taking on a project to research and evidence the types of air pollution in Chideock and their source. The village was extremely fortunate to have the offer taken up by Professor Dudley Shallcross (of atmospheric chemistry) from Bristol University and his team within the School of Chemistry. The team are internationally renowned and have worked in a number of countries and within cities including London, to research and evaluate the impact of types of air pollution. The team's initial findings have now been published and were the subject of a recent public meeting in the village in May 2024.

The current evidence provided by Bristol university reflects the impact of a strategic road running through a steep valley (which could be considered unique), where there is a high level of congestion comprised of HGVs, caravans, and other local and holiday traffic, which is often left standing due to the fact that the village has in total 69 different severance points, bus stops and occasionally collisions. Chideock hill is very steep, and villagers can regularly smell burning brakes from HGVs as they seek to reduce their speed coming into the village. The evidence of particulates being present is especially true during the holiday period, which contradicts the Dorset council perspective of the impact of wood burners. In addition, the research has highlighted the impact of the prevailing winds, as they sweep the air pollutants into a wider area around the village and not just on Main Street.

Some key additional points which were made at the public meeting, were that the levels of pollution found during the current study indicate that Chideock has a serious and significant problem regarding air pollution, with particulates recorded being higher than Marylebone in London and Bangkok. In addition, villagers were very keen to raise their concerns about the impact of the current air pollution on their health.

Bristol university will now continue with a further study in the village, where they will record 24 hours a day over 365 days of the year, all particulates and NO2 through monitors placed across the village. This further study should provide the definitive evidence to all organizations and professionals of the high concentrations of pollutants within the village. In addition, they will be engaging with the department within Bristol university that deals with public health, to request a study take place regarding public health issues within the village and to consider whether there are any health clusters concerned in relation to the pollution that villagers are breathing in.

Chideock Parish Council sought to be proactive in meeting with your predecessor, who basically told us not to be strategic (as we understood very clearly that this was an issue that could only be dealt with by both the Environment department and the Department for Transport); who disbanded the previous A35 action group meeting which had been hosted by Sir Oliver Letwin and only came to meet with the village on one occasion. Following years of seeking to get the Environmental risk assessment completed by Dorset Council updated from 2011, the Parish council were then able to contribute to a new risk assessment in 2022. However unfortunately this was not a document that was unique to Chideock, and was used as a county wide document. Since this time, the parish council air quality group have met with Dorset council's environment officers on three occasions. Sadly, they chose not to meet with the Bristol university team. It should be noted that villagers are concerned about what is perceived as a lack of urgency from Dorset officers to engage in what could potentially be a significant evidence-based research project into the impact of air pollution in a rural community.

Hopefully, this letter gives you an overview of what has been a long-standing issue in this village which appears to have been offered no solution by any professional or government body. Under each National Highways RIS consultation, the Parish council have consistently raised that the A35 is not fit for purpose. Yet Dorset council have offered no support in seeking to recognise that the lack of any alternative strategic route (both road and rail freight) through the County damages both the health of those who live here but must impact the free flow of economic activity both for freight and for tourists due to the congestion from the high number of vehicles and collisions. The fact that people in this village cannot cross the road safely has been consistently ignored even when identified as an issue by independent consultants in the National Highways safety and severance reports. Furthermore, the complete lack of the

proposed implementation of average speed cameras throughout the village means that a 30 mile an hour speed limit is meaningless.

Chideock Parish Council recognise that you are going to need time to settle into your new role, but we would request that from within your busy diary, that you make time to come and meet with us about this issue. In just over a years' time, there will be sufficient evidence based on the qualitative data processed and evaluated by Bristol, for a serious conversation to take place about what can practically be done to reduce the current levels of pollution in Chideock and improve the public health outcomes for the residents of this village. By raising this matter directly with you as the new MP we are seeking your support to recognize that Chideock has a serious problem regarding air pollution and that once the final evidence has been provided, that you will be able to raise and negotiate with the new Government what measures could be taken to in providing a solution alongside all relevant partners.

We look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

*Caroline Parkins*

Cllr Caroline Parkins  
Chairman - Chideock Parish Council