



To:  
Cllr Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Highways

Copies to:  
Sam Guiver, Network Assurance  
Tim Passmore, PCC  
Chief Constable Steve Jupp, Suffolk Constabulary  
Dhires Bhatt, Network Operations Manager, National Highways  
Cllr Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Protection  
Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader Suffolk County Council  
Nicola Beach, CEO Suffolk County Council  
Dr. Thérèse Coffey MP

6 October 2021

Dear Cllr West,

We are writing on behalf of Felixstowe's residents, workers and visitors, to seek your support following the gridlock incident on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021.

Felixstowe Town Councillors understand that the traffic chaos was the unfortunate result of a conflation of unique circumstances. However, whilst this was hopefully a one-off occurrence, there is an opportunity to review and consider any 'lessons learned'.

Firstly, we are concerned that the reaction to the incident, which occurred early in the afternoon, was far too slow. A quicker response from the responsible authorities may have reduced the impact and preserved the mobility of police, fire and ambulance services, all of which were compromised by the time after-work traffic was on the roads. Congestion which lasted past 9pm.

Liaison with the Port of Felixstowe at the earliest opportunity could have raised awareness sooner through their Vehicle Booking System (VBS), giving HGV drivers a chance to do something different. The Port have commented that the quality of information received from highways agencies and Suffolk Police was contradictory and ever changing. *"This limited our ability to support effectively, as the quality of information and advice that we could provide to our Haulage community (to minimise the impact) was based on consistently moving targets in relation to the opening time."*

The Port also commented that they used to receive emails from National Highways' Emergency Planning Manager whenever there were disruptions but have had nothing from them for some time and wonder whether their procedures for dealing with major disruptions have changed. We are sure that this is a matter on which the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU) would wish to engage, and on that basis, we also include Cllr Andrew Reid in this letter.

We wonder, therefore, whether a diversion route, supported by the police could have been established before the traffic had built up to the extent that caused the gridlock. As a minimum we would expect police resources to have been made immediately available to assist traffic flow and are seeking reassurance that emergency support will be on hand in future. Furthermore, rapid appropriate communications and visible signage would have advised people to consider delaying or avoiding using their car and reassured drivers already on the road. We are including Network Assurance, National Highways and the Police and Crime Commissioner in this correspondence and ask that this be reviewed. National Highways are also asked to resolve the long-term issue whereby a significant number of lighting columns (at least 20 counted on 16<sup>th</sup> September) on the Dock Spur roundabout and all three exits remain out of order.

Whilst the Town Council understands that emergency repairs can sometimes cause unavoidable congestion if they interact with planned works, it believes that the sheer volume of current highways works in the area increases the risk of a reoccurrence of the significant scenes witnessed on Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September.

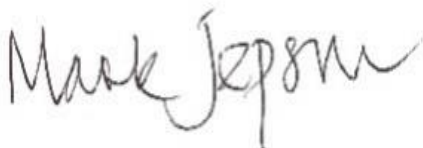
With traffic flow already affected by ongoing works along some of Felixstowe's main roads – including those on Candlet Road which are set to continue for several months – Town Councillors are concerned that the town remains vulnerable to severe congestion.

Therefore, with awareness of the impact of emergency situations such as this, we urge SCC Highways to carefully manage the programme of current, ongoing, and impending works to minimise the risk of disruption in future.

We have copied Dr. Thérèse Coffey MP on this correspondence as a courtesy, following the recent relevant correspondence from National Highways dated 23 September 2021.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Mark Jepson  
Mayor of Felixstowe