

Mrs S J Weedall
Chairman IOW Local Access Forum
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Bembridge
Isle of Wight
PO35 5RG

Councillor Edward Giles
**Cabinet Member for Procurement, Fire,
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Dear Mrs Weedall,

Thank you for your letter of 8th October 2012 explaining your concern for safety at a number of bridleway crossings. I understand that you have raised similar concerns with officers previously although given the safety record of the crossing points they have not felt able to justify prioritising resources to make improvements of the type which you would like.

It may be helpful if I put this in context. Whilst I do understand local concerns for safety we determine our investment in safety improvements on an annual basis and prioritise the resolution of difficulties where we can achieve the best rate of return on our investments. The road casualty records are such that we do not practically have capacity to investigate safety concerns in locations where we have a history of less than 4 incidents involving personal injury casualties over the previous 3 years.

You will appreciate that we must prioritise the resolution of safety issues at locations where we have a demonstrable record of accidents resulting in serious injury ahead of those locations where, despite there being safety concerns, there are actually a lesser number of accidents which result in casualties.

Fortunately the crossing points mentioned in your letter do not have this scale of accident record and therefore the Council cannot justify deploying resources to investigate this matter further in priority to those locations on the Island with a more worrying accident rate. I regret I cannot give you any comfort that we will be able to resolve your concerns for safety at these sites in the foreseeable future.

Having said that the Council does require landowners maintain their hedges back so that they are not obstructing the highway. Farmers generally programme hedge cutting operations in the autumn after the harvest and outside the bird nesting season and I expect to see hedges being cut back significantly in the coming weeks. This should improve visibility in a number of locations which I hope will improve the position for equestrians.

I realise that this will not be the response which you were hoping for but as I have explained I am afraid that we are not going to be able to improve these crossing points in the short term

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Edward Giles
Councillor for Whippingham & Osborne
Cabinet Member for Procurement, Fire, Highways & Transport.