

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Monday, 24 July 2023

23.4 Answers to supplementary questions

Charlotte Smith

Staying with the theme of the prom at Hoylake Beach, it has come to light that a section of the beach very close to the prom has been closed off with netting. This is the area where it is understood where poisonous hemlock was growing way out of control and impeded onto the prom. Passers by are in danger of being brushed against this poisonous plant. Indeed, a local volunteer with Hoylake Beach community was stung by this hideous dangerous plant when replacing the recently criminally vandalised netting and came out in a rash.

Who authorised the erection of the netting around this dangerous plant? And would the Environmental Chair and Committee now agree with me that in the light of this unfortunate event and other documented cases of dogs and other people being poisoned and stung by dangerous plants on the beach and near the prom, that it is time to stop playing politics with Hoylake beach and that serious consideration be given to the welfare of humans and animals, and the Equality Act 2010, by mechanically raking all of Hoylake amenity beach from King's Gap slipway to the new lifeboat station, and making it accessible for everyone to use again?

Answer Wirral Council can confirm that it received a report on Monday 10th July from a resident who had been involved in doing some repair/replacement work to the netting on Hoylake Promenade. The volunteer reported suffered a skin reaction which they identified as being caused by brushing against Hemlock Water-Dropwort that was very close to the railings on the Promenade. While the Council would not in any way downplay this, from research it is not entirely certain that this rash was caused by this one particular plant. All the information available to Council Officers suggests that Hemlock Water Dropwort is not a touch-sensitive plant. Council Officers have spoken to Natural England for their view on how to manage this plant, including possible removal. Natural England's preferred option was that signage should be put in place and that the plant should not be removed. Given the proximity of this particular plant to the railings, that signage would take time to develop, as well as being conscious that the Open Golf Championship would start imminently (16 July) Officers from the Councils

Parks & Countryside Service did take the decision to temporarily put orange netting around this plant. This was to prevent golf visitors and residents from picking the flowers from this plant, as it was in full flower at that time. Now these plants have finished flowering they are naturally starting the dying back process. Having reflected on this, Officers are unlikely to use temporary fencing in subsequent management of the Hemlock Water Dropwort. Moving forward our preferred option is to look at the possible use of signage, with one option being that this would be used seasonally and only in place when the risk was considered to be at its greatest. Hemlock Water Dropwort is a very common native plant that can be found through out the country and while dangerous if ingested it is not normally harmful in any other way.

Elaine Revans

Can the Chair please comment on the fact that whilst trying to drive 20mph I found that both in my car and on my motorbike that I'm being tailgated and that it is putting me at increased risk?

Answer Rule 126 of The Highway Code states that 'tailgaiting is dangerous, intimidating and can cause collisions, especially when driving at speed. Keeping a safe distance from the vehicle in front gives you time to react and stop if necessary. Dangerous and careless driving offences, such as tailgaiting, are enforced by the police. We work with Merseyside police on the roll out of 20mph.

Cllr Graham Davies (Member Question)

Was anything done by this committee after Hannah read her question out to you in March, and will the committee act on my suggestions for Heswall Primary [for traffic calming measures] before a child gets hurt or worse?

Answer When the question was read at the 14 March 2023 meeting, reference was made to a petition but this has not yet been submitted. A petition was submitted for Heswall Primary School during the 14 March 2023 meeting, by the then Councillor Collins. This is a live petition and work is being undertaken by officers.

The Network Operations Manager and Road Safety Strategy Manager met with yourself, Councillor Sullivan and residents outside Heswall Primary School on 11 July 2023. Where an update was provided on the actions taken to date:

Improvements to signage including roundels painted on the carriageway, additional signage including 20mph signs and school crossing patrol flashing warning light. An additional Vehicle Activated Sign has been arranged by officers. Pavements in the locality have been improved and footprints to direct the school community to cross with the School Crossing Patrol are being refreshed ready for the new school term. In addition to this, officers coordinated education campaigns with Merseyside Police (Kids Court) and continue to work with the school to offer support. These measures are being monitored

and reviewed and the work continues and a full response will be provided for the live petition.
Officers will be assigned the petition when it is submitted.

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