

Buckden Parish Council 8 September 2020

District Councillors Report

Highways England Buckden North and South Underpasses.

I met with a team from the Structures Division to discuss the current state of decoration, recent flooding and the wall cracks on the southern underpass.

Highways England undertake an annual review of both underpasses, the Northern was inspected in May and the formal inspection of the Southern takes place later this year. The Northern had no issues found, except for the access to the pump control valving and power supply where the security padlock had been removed. This could have been taken by contractors or possibly cut off.

In HE's opinion the state of decoration was seen as adequate, but decoration is not the responsibility of HE, as this is always delegated to a local Council which can be the County Council, District or Parish Council or all three acting in co-ordination. As these arrangements date back to the original road construction, now in the 1960's it would require legal research to establish possible responsibilities.

That said, current practice is for local volunteers to undertake any redecoration that is seen to be required by local residents and this principle is widely used in various locations in the UK. Lighting uses heavy duty lamp units with double bulbs and is seen as robust and capable of lasting between annual inspections.

On the Southern underpass the cracks in the two walls were photographed by HE in 2018 and new photos taken on this visit did not appear to show any movement. It was not possible to take photos from the adjacent residential properties to check movement, because HE staff are not allowed onto privately owned land without the express written permission of the owners, so was out of scope for the two HE engineers.

In conclusion, the structures are seen as secure and current UK practice is for re-decoration or cleaning to be undertaken by local volunteer groups. In future any further issues should be addressed to the Structures division and not to other local contacts at HE. Alternatively the HE National Traffic Operations Centre, 3 Ridgeway, Quinton Business Park, Birmingham B321AF, 0300 123 5000 can route issues to Structures.

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