

A29 at Pulborough to partially re-open

West Sussex County Council will re-open the A29 at Church Hill, Pulborough, following prolonged closure due to landslips.

The council will start work on opening one lane of the road to traffic, utilising concrete blocks to create a protected, single lane carriageway down the centre of the road. A contractor has been mobilised to start the work shortly with work taking approximately two weeks.

A landslide occurred on 28 December 2022 at the narrowest part of the A29, where both sides are flanked by steep embankments, causing the road to be closed for safety reasons. The land either side of the carriageway, which is where engineering works must take place to allow the safe re-opening of the road to two-way traffic, is not adopted highway land but owned by private landowners.

WSCC has been engaged in lengthy and detailed negotiations with the two landowners to try and reach a mutual agreement to carry out survey and other works on the land. Regrettably, these negotiations have not been successful and, following careful consideration, WSCC has issued a notice pursuant to Section 151 of the Highways Act 1980 to the landowners, requiring them to remove the debris that has fallen from their property, and which is blocking the road and to carry out works required on their land to prevent a future reoccurrence of the slippage.

The Council understands the frustration of residents, businesses and those using this route during this prolonged period of closure and thanks them for their patience. WSCC has done all it can to try and resolve the issue by agreement and WSCC remains hopeful that a negotiated solution may yet be found with the two landowners, but in the current absence of an agreement, has found it necessary to serve a notice to facilitate the re-opening of this vital artery. The Council has engaged and communicated with residents, businesses and Pulborough Parish Council throughout the closure.

It was hoped that an agreement could be reached with the landowners that would allow works to be undertaken to open the highway fully, without the use of 'diversions', but as this is not currently available for safety reasons, an interim solution which would retain some diversionary measures, is the preferred option. The one-lane solution proposed is a temporary measure, pending a permanent solution.

Matt Davey, WSCC Director of Highways, said: "The Council has offered to undertake the works on the private land to reopen the road to one lane of traffic. We have been optimistic about reaching an agreement with the landowners. Unfortunately, we have been unable to reach an agreement with the two landowners and are left with no choice but to utilise our statutory powers to require the landowners to do the works at their expense so that we can open the road."

"As such, Tuesday 28th March, West Sussex County Council served a notice pursuant to Section 151 of the Highways Act 1980 to the private landowners.

"The Section 151 notice requires the landowners, within 28 days of receipt of the notice, to execute such works as will prevent soil or refuse from their land from falling, or being washed or carried, on to the street in such quantities as to obstruct the highway.

"We are continuing our dialogue with the landowners in the hope that an agreement can be reached and would urge the landowners to be pragmatic in their approach to those discussions"

WSCC has previously resisted calls to re-open the road with a single lane, as it was hoped that an agreement with the landowners could be reached quickly, avoiding the need to reclose the road at some point and reinstate the diversion route to carry out the works. However, given the time that has already elapsed, the certainty of further delay and after listening to residents and other interested parties, it was decided to implement a one lane system as an improvement on the current complete closure.