

(1) Question to Councillor B C Lucas asked by Ms Isabella Stone

“In light of the submission to the county council of the petition, signed by over 900 people, calling for a re-think of the footbridge to Sainsbury’s store at Matlock station, does Derbyshire County Council have any concerns about taking over the ownership and maintenance of the footbridge in due course, and if so, what are these concerns?”

Response by Councillor Lucas

“I think we need to establish firstly the responsibility of the bridge. As it stands at the moment it is the responsibility of Derbyshire Dales and the developers who have carried out this work. An agreement was reached with the developers, along with the District Council, that we would be taking ownership of that bridge at a suitable time. We do feel that the bridge is of a suitable structure. When I say a “suitable structure” I am not talking about the design or how it looks aesthetically because as you say there is a petition or a copy of a petition which I have received of some 906 names, but when we examine the bridge and look at it the aesthetics of it is not particularly a point that we would take into account, that would be something to be taken up I would say with the developer and the District Council.

The bridge itself, the structure itself does conform to the Disability Discrimination Act for disabilities. We know there are problems with Snitterton Road, the incline there and the difficulties that would present, as mentioned in the copy of the question that has been forward, so really as far as we are concerned we do not have ownership of it as of yet, that may take a couple of years. I have to say that even on ownership of it I would say we would not be giving it consideration for change if the bridge was suitable for pedestrian use and people with disabilities, it was of a safe structure and compliant to the regulations, which it already is.”

Supplementary question asked by Ms Stone

“I would just like to ask what was the exact role of the County Council in relation to the design of the footbridge? I mean by that were you simply advising somebody else who was designing it? Did you actually carry out drawings yourselves? That is a little bit unclear to the people who are involved in this campaign.”

Response by Councillor Lucas

“Once the application had been made the District Council – we are a consultee – we looked at it purely on highway issues. It was looked at

purely as a highway issue for suitability for the span it was stretching and the usage that it would have. As I say the design of it as such we would not really enter into other than would it be safe? Is it suitable? Is it compliant? Does it meet the Act?"

(2) Question to Councillor B C Lucas asked by Tony Symes

"Dominating the entrance to Matlock Station an ugly, black, metallic bridge has been built in a conservation area surrounded by listed buildings. The opening statement of the environmental section of the DCC website states `We aim to benefit those who live, work and relax here by looking after our natural and built environment`. Firstly please explain the above, and secondly (if a pedestrian level crossing alternative continues to be rejected by Network Rail) why cannot Snitterton Road, which crosses the railway very close by and is a no through road, be used as an alternative to the bridge if suitably amended?"

Response by Councillor Lucas

"It is important what you say about conservation area but I can only really reiterate what has been said in the discussions between the two authorities and the contractors as to the use and the need of that bridge. Snitterton Road has been looked at and because of its design and its incline it did not meet, or was not compliant as a route for addressing those with disabilities. I can understand the frustration by you and many others who have written in with this petition that you feel the design is ugly, non-compliant or you feel is out of kilter with the remainder of the area. I do not know whether that has been taken up with the District Authority and what answer you have received as the Planning Authority, because I can only mention earlier we looked at it as a highway provision. If discussions took place regarding the design and whether the design of that was suitable in the area I have received no information that that took place between our officers and Derbyshire Dales."

Supplementary question asked on behalf of Mr Symes

"Why if it was built properly, as you state it is, and planned properly in the first place, are we now having all these subsequent safety issues? This to me is indicative of a fundamentally flawed and poorly designed bridge. Surely, before the Council adopts this (and it makes good financial sense to the ratepayers who will ultimately be funding the ongoing maintenance costs) to ensure that the bridge is rebuilt and correctly located, the design safety and usability issue is discussed so that the ongoing costs are minimal to ratepayers. Will the Council

commit to look again and openly discuss with all the parties these issues in order to satisfactorily resolve them with the community who have to live with this day by day?”

Response by Councillor Lucas

“I am not going over old ground. I think if you wish discussions to take place again between the two respective authorities you need to get back to the Planning Authority, which is Derbyshire Dales. On the ownership of the bridge, as I have stated we have taken that undertaking. Yes, we will be responsible for the bridge at the appropriate time when we are satisfied with all the aspects that needed to be covered, and I have to say again once it is deemed as satisfactory, it is used as a highway, it can be used by pedestrians, it can be used by other groups we will be happy. The design and the relocation we would not go to that expenditure.”