



Community Alert

Loose Parish Council (LPC) – Keeping you updated

Issue No. 42

23 April 2025

The Emergency Closure of Loose Road

We have been asked to email a summary of the information we know regarding the emergency works and the Loose Road closure for any residents who have not been able to get updates by social media or friends and neighbours.

Unfortunately, the Parish Council does not get direct notifications regarding issues like this so the following information comes from:

- Our regular conversations with Linton & Loose Ward Councillor Brian Clark following his interactions with Southern Gas Network (SGN), Kent County Council (KCC) Highways and Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) on all or our behalves.
- Our staff's conversations with SGN on site.
- Social media updates from Councillor Brian Clark and other members of the community.
- SGN and One Network websites and alerts

The situation is of course ever-changing and these are emergency, not routine works, that are essential for the safety of everyone in the community.

What is the problem? Gas leaking from the very aged pipe network, it seems in numerous places.

Progress (as at lunchtime Weds 23 April): Small gas leaks have been found and fixed. However, the amount of gas still being discovered proves there are more, or larger leaks (on Loose Road in the vicinity of Sainsburys).

What next? It is hoped that now some of the smaller leaks are fixed, the backfill can happen and the road be reinstated so Cripple Street and Boughton Lane can open before the end of the week. Cripple Street is seen as the priority as it currently only has the one access route through the narrow lanes off Teasaucer Hill, then either Bockingford Lane or Hayle Mill Road and Cave Hill.

However, as the other leakage issue is unresolved, the A229 will remain shut and access to Maidstone will be remain via the diversion routes. The works permit has been extended to 6 May to avoid further delay having to get an extension if work was not complete when the first permit expires (28 April). Everyone is of course willing this to be resolved well in advance of 6 May.

The Impact? Obviously, the first 5 days of the work overlapped the Easter bank holiday weekend so the impact was far less. This week everyone is suffering extreme delays on all diversion routes, now people need to get to work and school.

What can anyone do to ease the situation?

There really is no easy solution but from people's experiences so far the following has been suggested:

If travelling by vehicle – it seems the wider the diversion route you take, the more chance you have of keeping moving or getting through.

COMPLETELY AVOID diverting down Old Loose Hill, through Loose village, along Busbridge Road, Well Street and/or Stockett Lane. Most local people are aware that these roads are narrow, difficult, and impassible in places for two-way traffic. A common problem has been people from out of the area e.g. delivery drivers in vans, following Sat Navs, getting stuck and blocking everyone from progressing. In response to residents' concerns about the gridlock all day yesterday, Brian Clark has escalated this issue and is trying to put pressure on KCC Highways to supply further signage that advises that these routes are not suitable for diversions.

At rush hour/school run time there are similar problems following the Heath Road diversions into Brishing Lane or Dean Street. If you do not need to travel at these times, then avoid doing so. If you have to, can you car share e.g. with friends heading to the same school?

If you can walk, or cycle, or walk to a point where the buses are picking up (e.g. at the Wheatsheaf), it seems these are the most effective means for shorter journeys.

If walking near the road closure please take care and stay alert. There have been incidents reported of motorbikes mounting the pavement to get through, seemingly oblivious of the pedestrians using the footway.

If parking close to the road closure, ensure you do not block junctions. At The Farrow's this has caused issues with Sainsburys deliveries and refuse collection vehicles unable to get through. Consider parking elsewhere and walking along one of the many safer, off-road footpaths.

This is an emergency situation affecting us all. Thank you to the SGN team who are working in challenging circumstances. Thank you to everyone showing patience and tolerance. To those actually able to benefit from the bizarrely quiet roads around where you live – make the most of it! A very rare roadworks positive!

If anyone has further queries or needs support during this challenging time, please contact office@loose-pc.gov.uk and our team will do their best to help.

Email: office@loose-pc.gov.uk Website: www.loose-pc.gov.uk