

Fears of fatality as B-road bridge becomes busier

Villagers living next to an accident blackspot in West Lothian have said they feel like 'first responders' and demanded something be done after a spate of accidents in recent weeks.

The road over the railway bridge in Harburn saw four serious accidents earlier this year – and there have been another four in the past few weeks.

A fifth, on Friday night, saw two people were taken to hospital after locals helped out the victims as they waited for emergency services to arrive.

And while improvement work has started on the road, villagers now fear there may be a fatality on the bridge blackspot before more strategic warning signs are installed.





They have called for better signage to warn drivers to slow down as they approach the hump backed bridge which has a near 90 degree bend.

All accidents saw safety barriers damaged, and people taken to hospital.

The safety barrier on the south side of the bridge was demolished two weeks ago after a motorcycle hit it. Police tape litters the site and West Lothian Council has already carried out emergency repairs- including a temporary barrier when the latest accident happened on Friday night at 9.45pm.

The man living next to the railway bridge, Ross Stewart, works for the RAC and is frequently the first on the scene when accidents occur.

One villager Alistair Hutson told the Local Democracy

Reporting Service: "On Friday Harburn residents attended another serious accident on the East Torphin Bridge involving a Motability Scheme car.

"The car was travelling from the west and failed to turn the sharp left bend and hit the railway bridge wall before careering over the other side of the road into the embankment and hitting a tree.

"Local residents including Ross – our own first responder – supported the incident. The emergency services were called, and traffic control was established.

"As we awaited the ambulance the passenger, who has disabilities, lost consciousness and suffered seizures. They were put into the recovery position until ambulance paramedics took over. Police arrived plus a further ambulance to support the driver who was also injured.

"Network Rail was also alerted due to the bridge receiving another heavy impact. They closed the railway line for inspection as there was a concern that wall debris may have fallen onto the track.

"The driver and passenger were taken to the Royal Infirmary and the road was reopened around 11.30pm. Network Rail completed their checks around midnight and re-opened the line."

Another villager, Allan McLaughlan, who first raised the plea for extra safety measures at a meeting of the Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Local Area Committee in June, said the ideal solution was to put in warning lights such as those installed at similar bridges near Linlithgow.

He told the LDRS: "At the very least we need some illuminated signs. The road has become very much busier, and people tramp up the hill before they see the 30mph signs. They don't realise it's a hump backed bridge or a near 90 degree bend."

Allan and other villagers have also called for the 30mph zone to be extended on both sides of the bridge. That would slow traffic down well before encountering the bridge.

The bridge has high parapets on both sides to ensure safety from the electrical gear running along the railway line. In addition, foliage has grown up around the bridge. All of these things add to the lack of visibility on either side of the approach.

West Lothian Council agreed in June to new road lining and signs for the length of the B7008 which acts as a direct route to Livingston from the main A70 Lang Whang road which skirts the Pentland Hills.

A West Lothian council spokesperson said: "Work is commencing this week to repair the barrier at the railway bridge. This reactive maintenance is required following a road traffic accident, which damaged the steel barrier.

"We are aware that there has been a number of accidents at this location and the B7008 has been identified as a casualty reduction scheme by our annual Accident Investigation and Prevention process. As agreed by Council Executive, there will be further planned works on the route and detailed design of these measures is now underway."

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter