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25 years on: Is it still ‘Traffic before People’ on the A540 in Neston?



Road safety campaigners have vowed to work collaboratively to prevent more deaths and serious injuries on the A540 in Neston. They met at Neston High School on June 22nd to remember Andrew Fielding, who was a pupil at the school who died in a crash at the junction of the A540 and Raby Park Road 25 years ago. The commemoration event was opened by the Mayor of Neston Cllr Dominic Roberts, who pledged continued support for the campaign and extended sympathy to the Fielding family on behalf of the town's residents. He said that all interested parties needed to "redouble their efforts, remember Andrew Fielding, and prevent any further tragedies on this stretch of road".

This lengthy campaign has been led by Andrew's mother, Pauline Fielding, who spoke movingly about her 'smiling and loving' son who was 18 when he was killed driving to a football tournament. The driver who caused the crash left the scene and was never traced. Mrs Fielding, a trustee and North West local group coordinator for Road Peace, the national charity for road crash victims, has campaigned tirelessly since Andrew's death to reduce dangers on the road and, in particular, make changes to the junction where he died. She outlined the slow progress so far, especially the refusal of government to include the A540 in the Major Road Network and warned of the dangers of continued delay. She saw some light at

the end of the tunnel after a meeting with Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) in January 2019 when they committed the Council to getting a major scheme for the A540 prepared, pending funding. But she said "much, much more" was needed, and stated that "we need to work with the council now to turn plans into concrete actions that will save lives".

Mrs Fielding was followed by Justin Madders, MP for Ellesmere Port and Neston, who pledged to bring up the issue of road safety at the junction in Parliament at every opportunity. The current and former head teachers of the school underlined the importance of improvements to the A540 for the safety of pupils. Current head Keith Simpson said that staff and parents will not use the junction, and young people will not cross the road, and he urged action "before anyone else gets a phone call that changes lives forever" as the Fielding family had in 1994.

His points were reinforced by parents, who told the meeting that they cannot allow their children to walk to school because of the absence of a safe crossing of the highway. They also wanted the environmental aspect of the road to be tested through a new vehicle emission survey.

The event was essentially commemorative, but participants were keen to share their knowledge and information and coordinate their actions through the formation of a group that combines the efforts of the Fielding family, campaigners for safer routes to school, the Quarry Road residents, and Neston Town Council. This group will convene shortly, energised by this event and the expressions of support from politicians; the local politicians having included the A540 improvements in their successful manifestos at the recent elections. All those involved are determined to bring the campaign to a successful conclusion, however long it takes.

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment, Highways and Strategic Transport Councillor Karen Shore said: "The Council is committed to maintaining and improving highway safety for all roads users and has met with Mr and Mrs Fielding and agreed to explore potential options at the junction. A planned junction improvement scheme that will improve existing signage and road markings is currently being designed and anticipated to be complete by the end of the year. We are also looking into more options going forward. Once we have completed this work, we will be in a position to identify a preferred solution and the Council, working with its partners, will explore funding opportunities to make our shared goal possible."