

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11TH OCTOBER 2018

**Question to Helen Fisher
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

By Charlotte Atkins

Question

What is the obligation of the County Council to ensure street signs are not obscured by street trees and what discussions has the County Council had with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council in respect of the trees in Leek town centre?

Reply

The County Council has a responsibility to ensure that street signs are not obscured by trees in order to protect the safety of highway users. This often includes ensuring that third-party owners, such as District Councils or adjacent land-owners, carry out their legal duty to maintain trees so as not to cause a hazard to highway users.

Obscured road signs are identified as part of routine highway safety inspections. They are risk-assessed and prioritised for action alongside all other highway defects. Determining the level of risk includes consideration of things like:

- The nature of the sign – for example is it mandatory or advisory; and
- Are there other signs, road markings or features that communicate the same message?

With regards to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Cllr. Atkins will be aware that many discussions have taken place over the management of the District Council's trees since the Public Realm Improvement scheme was implemented in 2014. Cllr Atkins has herself very helpfully facilitated many of these in her role as local Member.

These discussions relate to one particular problem at the junction of Bath Street and Derby Street, where a small District Council owned tree is obscuring a 'one-way' direction sign. There are a number of easy solutions, including relocation of the tree to an alternative planter box and replacing it with low-height plants, but unfortunately this action has not yet taken place.

I would request that Cllr. Atkins helps to rekindle these discussions and help to implement a solution as soon as possible.

In the meantime, a number of other signs and road markings clearly communicate the message that Derby Street is 'one-way', meaning that the risk to road users is quite minimal.