

'Someone has to be held accountable - lives have been changed' Mother blames temporary lights for horror A2 crash

by Sam Lennon
slennon@thekmgroupp.co.uk
@SamLennonKM

A woman says she and her family were injured in a horrific car smash because of faulty traffic lights.

The temporary signals at Lydden Hill on the A2, in place because of a previous accident, were faulty and not repaired for six weeks.

Green lights signalled Charlotte Byrom to go ahead, but she crashed with an oncoming car.

She and her partner Luke Edmonds had spinal fractures; her daughter Amelia, 11, was knocked out; and her son Luke, eight, was bruised.

It happened as Ms Byrom was driving a Chevrolet Spark and trying to cross the A2 towards Lydden at the notoriously hazardous junction.

She said: "I had no reason not to take my cue from the lights and make my right turn. I never for a moment could imagine the horror that happened."

"We felt unbelievably lucky to be alive."



Charlotte Byrom with her family, and her wrecked car after her crash



Pictures: Charlotte Byrom C/o Charlie Elphicke

The accident happened at 7pm on Friday, December 23, as Ms Byrom was driving coastbound along the A2 from Whitstable.

She pulled into the central lane at the Lydden lights.

They signalled for her to turn right and cross over, but as she moved forward her car was struck at high speed from the left by a London-bound car.

Amelia was on the left side of the family car and knocked unconscious; she suffered concussion for a week afterwards.

Mr Edmonds, 44, of Herne Bay,

also on the passenger side, suffered four spinal fractures, extensive bruising, head injuries, severe chest problems and cuts and bruises.

Ms Byrom, 42, of Temple Ewell, suffered a fractured spine, a severely bruised chest and hip and leg problems. Oscar escaped with one bruise but was traumatised.

The driver of the other car was also taken to hospital.

Ms Byrom said: "One has a responsibility to be alert and watchful when driving."

'We felt unbelievably lucky to be alive'

"But we must be able to trust and have faith in traffic lights, especially at a difficult junction or when visibility is poor."

"Five weeks later the lights have been corrected, but it has affected our lives immeasurably."

Ms Byrom is a yoga teacher and still cannot return to work or even drive with ease.

Mr Edmonds, an interior designer, has to work from home as he still not well enough to go on site.

Ms Byrom said: "Our spinal injuries can take 18 months to two years to get better, if at all. I now stand in a position that I can be made liable by the other driver."

"Someone has to be held accountable for the accident."

"Because of this four people's lives have been changed. I refuse to be held responsible for any part of this."

MP: 'The community feels let down'

Charlotte Byrom told her story to her MP when he met villagers from Lydden and Shepherdswell about the lights.

Temporary signals were placed at the top of Lydden Hill during repairs, but motorists say sequencing problems have caused chaos in recent weeks.

Other drivers said they were left queuing for hours when all the lights went red.

Highways England sent workers to the site and finally fixed the lights after MP Charlie Elphicke contacted the roads authority at the end of January.

Mr Elphicke said: "It's no surprise the community feels let down. The road hasn't been fit for purpose for a long time and the latest problems only add to the frustration."

"If we are going to realise a better future for Dover and Deal, we need to see growth without gridlock."

"Just like with the A20 speed limit, highways chiefs have got to get on top of these things sooner - and make sure the road is safe."

The MP heard how the traffic lights needed replacing because a lorry struck the poles in early December.

Repairs were not completed at the busy junction until January 31 - six weeks after the accident.

Residents also spoke of problems caused by speeding along the road, which turns into a single carriageway at Lydden.



Dover and Deal MP Charlie Elphicke meets nearby residents at Lydden Hill

Mr Elphicke added: "The upgrading of the A2 is long overdue. I've been working tirelessly to make this happen."

"Plans were scrapped by Labour in the 1990s, but I've been making the case to get the scheme back in the programme"

"I raised the issue in a meeting with the Chancellor this week."

Tony Blair's government had dropped the scheme to dual the A2 after it came into power in 1997.

A Highways England spokesman said: "Safety remains Highways England's top priority."

"We worked hard to reinstate the permanent lights at the Lydden junction, which required the damaged traffic light controller, a specialist part bespoke to this junction, to be manufactured and replaced."

"We installed temporary traffic lights while the repairs were carried out and would like to thank drivers for their patience while we did this."

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