

## A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling scheme

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### Community Liaison Forum: Meeting 1

**THIS IS A SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS RAISED AND NOT A FORMAL MINUTE**

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**Date:** Tuesday 26 February 2019

**Time:** 19:15 -20:45

**Location:** Somerset County Cricket Club

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#### Host attendees:

David Stock (Highways England)

Kat Draper (MMSJV)

Siân Hopkins (Highways England)

Hannah Burgess (MMSJV)

Becky Callaghan (Highways England)

Drew Aspinwall (MMSJV)

Andrew Alcorn (Highways England)

Paul Kelly (MMSJV)

Mike O'Dowd Jones  
(Somerset County Council)

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#### Attendees:

**Representatives from the following groups and organisations were present:**

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- Somerset (Taunton South) & Taunton Dean (Blackbrook & Holway)
  - South Somerset District Council
  - Taunton Deane Borough Council
  - Creech St Michael Parish Council
  - Hatch Beauchamp Parish Council
  - Neroche Parish Council
  - North Curry Parish Council
  - Pitminster Parish Council
  - Ruishton Parish Council
  - Stoke St Mary Parish Council
  - West Hatch Parish Council
  - Trull Parish Council
  - Taunton Deane and West Somerset
  - Killams and Mountfield
  - Holway and Blackbrook Residents Association
  - Blackdown Scouts
  - The Heart of the South West LEP
  - Holway Local Action Team
  - Somerset Ramblers
  - South Somerset Bridleways
  - Taunton Area Cycling Campaign
  - Taunton Deane Bridleways Association
  - Taunton Taxi Association
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### Key Points

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Welcome from Chair and introductions, followed by the purpose of the forum and agenda for the meeting.
- 1.2 Housekeeping notices and evacuation procedures were presented to the room ahead of the presentation formally commencing.
- 1.3 **Safety Moment:** Two safety moments were shared at the meeting:

## Key Points

- David Stock shared a video of Highways England's Space Invader campaign.
- An incident involving a pheasant strike, experienced on the A303 by members of the project team travelling to the forum, was shared.

1.4 The opportunity was provided to the room to discuss the video or the safety moment philosophy.

- A member voiced that the message should also include what the minimum space should be as part of the campaign. David Stock confirmed there is further information as part of the campaign available on the Highways England website.
- A member raised that tailgating is a big problem, especially on the motorways where there is lack of enforcement. David Stock responded that statistics show that 1 in 8 accidents are caused by cars being driven too close to each other.

## 2 Presentation

2.1 Two presentations were given, one from Mike O'Dowd Jones (Somerset County Council) and one from David Stock (Highways England). Slides for both presentations are attached to the email circulated on Tuesday 12 March 2019.

2.2 Mike O'Dowd Jones' presentation outlined the need for the scheme, explained how the scheme was identified and the benefits that would be obtained by improving connectivity to the south west, local reliability and improved journey times. Mike's presentation also talked about the economic benefits and explained that an increase in new businesses could be expected in the area which would generate more tax income for the Government and more jobs for local people.

2.3 David Stock confirmed that individuals and key stakeholders will be able to comment on the statutory consultation. It was noted that the next forum would take place after the PRA. The Community Liaison Forum is not part of statutory consultation but is intended as ongoing engagement.

## 3 Key points / Questions raised

3.1 A question was raised as to whether the new road will include chevrons to indicate the distance that should be provided between the cars on the network. It was confirmed that this level of detail would emerge at a later stage.

3.2 It was asked if SCC is providing any funding for the scheme. It was confirmed that the scheme is being fully funded by Highways England.

3.3 A member asked who is going to be responsible for the funding of the improvement of the local roads impacted by the scheme. David Stock responded that where mitigation is required, it would be provided as part of the scheme. This forum provides the opportunity to raise these concerns so that the designers can develop the scheme and discuss suitable mitigation measures.

3.4 A question was raised as to whether Highways England would commit to replacing any Public Open Space that is used for the scheme. David Stock confirmed that the mitigation must be looked at, and the design development would confirm the

## Key Points

- approach and solution; but it will be funded by Highways England if it is as a consequence of the scheme.
- 3.5 The room was reminded by a member that the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester scheme is currently at the DCO hearing stage, so some members may wish to attend the hearings.
- 3.6 A member asked if there was enough money for the scheme and if there were any constraints. David Stock confirmed that any scheme to be developed must consider affordability and the cost to the taxpayer.
- 3.7 A member stated that at the 2018 consultation, they felt it was emphasised that the scheme purpose is all about linking the south west to London, and therefore asked what the scheme would offer to the local communities. David Stock explained that it is important to consider the local community and the provision of support to local businesses through the provision of a more resilient A358. As a result this scheme does offer improvements at local level.
- 3.8 It was asked how future proof the scheme was with respect to the traffic capacity for future years. David Stock confirmed that the traffic model looked to a 15 year horizon.
- 3.9 It was asked if there was an order or priority for the scheme challenges presented, and whether Highways England would be able to provide justification of how the PRA had been arrived at if there was no ranking of criteria. The example was given by the member about whether money or impact to community would have a higher priority than the other challenges. It was confirmed by David Stock that the process explaining how the Preferred Route is chosen will be available in the Scheme Assessment Report.
- A member raised that having no hierarchy to the challenges sounded like an Orwellian situation where all animals are equal but some may be more equal than others. David Stock confirmed that there is no specific order to those but that they must all be balanced. The scheme has to be affordable and fulfil the scheme objectives.
- 3.10 A member asked whether consideration would be made for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs) in the design. It was explained that there are a lot of lanes in the area and there may be conflict between vehicles and NMUs if there is an increase in road users using the local roads. David Stock responded that additional traffic counts had been collected and the purpose of these forums are to enable local knowledge to provide further information about the problem areas and key routes. This would provide valuable information to inform further design development.
- 3.11 Concern was raised by a member that the extent of land to be purchased for the scheme will not cover the lanes in the surrounding villages. The lanes will be heavily travelled, especially in the mornings and as the land purchase does not include these lanes, no improvements are offered as part of the scheme.
- 3.12 It was raised by a member that PRA was due in autumn 2018, therefore the scheme design must have progressed over time. A member asked whether Highways England has looked into what the effects there may be on local communities and

## Key Points

when these locals would be engaged with. The project team confirmed that the statutory consultation will allow for people to comment on the Preferred Route.

3.13 A question was raised whether any upgrades would be made on the M5 to address the increase of traffic onto the M5, as the section between Wellington and Exeter is heavily congested. David Stock responded that Highways England are looking to identify what could be done on the M5, but this will not be delivered through this scheme.

3.14 A member asked whether RIS2 would offer further improvements in the south west region as there are further single carriageway sections on the existing A303. The member felt that the A358 scheme is a sticking plaster until further schemes come along to provide the full complete improvement to the roads in the south west. The Government has published a draft of RIS2 going forward. This commits to further improving the A303.

3.15 The length of the DCO process was questioned. It was confirmed that the DCO process is likely to last around 18 months.

3.16 A member asked for examples that could be raised during the DCO process that could provide adequate challenge to the scheme and make the examiner consider the scheme to be unsuitable. Another member confirmed that they had attended the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester scheme hearing, which took place earlier that day, and at the hearing the Parish Council had presented alternative routes to the Inspectorate. Additionally, the Bridleway Association had raised concerns with the NMU strategy developed for the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester scheme.

The project team confirmed that the DCO process provides a chance for stakeholders to state where they felt the design could be improved and to test the logic for the approach taken.

3.17 A member said that they are hoping that through this forum they will have access to some further design details which would help attendees to provide comments on the design. Paul Kelly confirmed that the forum would discuss the details; however, the public statutory consultation is the formal vehicle that really matters for stakeholders (individuals and groups) to state their opinions.

David Stock outlined that the forum will sit alongside the design process and opportunity for comment on the design was a purpose of the forum, but it will not provide large quantities of detailed design drawings.

3.18 The level of detail expected for the PRA was questioned.

Mike O'Dowd-Jones referred to previous announcements (e.g. the A303 Sparkford and Stonehenge projects) to understand the level of detail to be expected at that the PRA.

David Stock added that the PRA will present the selected route and further design development would happen afterwards in readiness for the statutory consultation.

3.19 The comments and responses from the statutory consultation from stakeholders will be provided to PINS so they will be able to view how the project has responded to that information. The statutory consultation will provide some more detail than the PRA and can be shown on Ordnance Survey mapping.

## Key Points

- 3.20 A member from the floor stated that approximately 50% of the scheme has been identified already (the online widening); however, no specific development been considered for aspects such as the NMU routes. David Stock confirmed that the detailed design for all proposed options cannot be progressed, therefore that level of detail would follow once the preferred route is identified.
- 3.21 A member asked what Highways England considered is the last day of Spring. David Stock responded that it is 21 June.
- 3.22 The length of time for detailed design was asked by a member. David Stock confirmed that detailed design does vary by scheme due to the differences in complexity but it may be around 16 – 18 months.
- 3.23 A member asked how long the statutory consultation would last. The project team responded that it is likely to be 6 weeks, and following this, there will be a submission for the DCO and that usually takes about 18 months.
- 3.24 A member asked whether the A358 would be Highways England's responsibility once the scheme is completed. David Stock responded that that the intention is for the A358 to be owned by Highways England, as the scheme will become part of the Strategic Road Network.
- 3.25 A member asked which organisation was responsible for ensuring that any consent conditions required through the DCO process are actually undertaken. The project team stated that the planning application will be signed off by the Secretary of State. Mike O'Dowd-Jones confirmed that there are specific processes for changes and deviations. The basic principle is that Highways England would confirm that the scheme has been built in accordance to the design standards.

**3.26 meeting was closed at 20:45.**