



## **A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling scheme**

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### **Community Liaison Forum: Meeting 2**

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

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**Date: Tuesday 24 September 2019**

**Time: 19:30 – 21:20**

**Location: Holiday Inn, Blackbrook, Taunton**

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#### **Host Attendees:**

David Stock (Highway England)

Hannah Burgess (MMSJV)

Siân Hopkins (Highways England)

Drew Aspinwall (MMSJV)

Elise Walliker (Highways England)

Paul Kelly (MMSJV) – Chair

Ian Harrison (Heart of the South West  
Local Enterprise Partnership)

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#### **Attendees:**

##### **Representative from the following groups and organisations were present:**

- Ashill Parish Council
- Beercrocombe Parish Council
- Blackdown Hills AONB
- Broadway Parish Council
- Creech St Michael Parish Council
- Hatch Beauchamp Parish Council
- Heart of the South West LEP
- Holway & Blackbrook Residents Association
- Ilminster Chamber of Commerce
- Ilminster Town Council
- Killams & Mountfield (now part of Vivary Ward)
- National Farmers Union
- Neroche Parish Council
- North Curry Parish Council
- Pitminster Parish Council
- Ruishton Parish Council
- Scouting Somerset County
- Somerset County Council
- Somerset Ramblers
- Somerset West & Taunton Council
- South Somerset Bridleways Association
- South Somerset District Council
- Stoke St Mary Parish Council
- Taunton Area Cycling Campaign
- Taunton Chamber of Commerce
- Taunton Deane Bridleways Association
- Trull Parish Council
- West Hatch Parish Council

## Key Points

- 1 Welcome from the Chair and round room introductions from attendees.
- 2 Safety Moment – What3Words film shared with the forum.
- 3 Previous meeting: Comment was invited on the note from the previous meeting – no comments received.
- 4 Presentation: The Preferred Route given by David Stock outlining the key elements of the route.
- 5 Presentation: Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership given by Ian Harrison
- 6 Initial feedback on preferred route.

Following the presentations, forum members shared their initial feedback on the preferred route in a workshop format.

The purpose of the workshop was to gather extra feedback from forum members to help inform the design of the proposed route. The workshop lasted for longer than an hour and was conducted in a manner that enabled every representative who wanted to make a contribution to do so. It was agreed that the main points made during the session would be recorded in the meeting notes.

Four main themes emerged from the questions and comments made by the forum and the various contributions have been themed under these headings where possible:

- Local links and community severance
- Process, timeline and scope of works
- Rationale and impact of the route regarding housing development and economic growth with a focus on job creation
- Focus on the location and performance of proposed and existing junctions and access points

### **Local links and community severance:**

Forum members wanted to see more detail as to how and where local communities would access the new road if not travelling the full length of the route. This was a major concern to many members of the forum.

There was a concern that the new road would sever connections between the communities and that the location of any new junction is a critical factor to best avoid longer and costlier journey times for local people compared to the status quo.

There was a concern as to how agricultural traffic would be impacted, with particular regard to seasonal peaks (such as harvest time). The knock-on effect of this for machinery being relocated to unsuitable local roads and going through villages was also a concern.

Questions were raised regarding the upkeep of local roads once the new road is operational.

Other questions focused on the need for mitigation measures to limit or prevent the isolation of some village and communities that were reliant on easy access to the A358 for connection and cohesion.

One member asked if a dualling the road was the right solution, if there was not going to be significant work conducted on remodelling the Southfields Roundabout and M5 junction 25, as these would act as bottlenecks as they do now.

### **The process, timeline and scope of works:**

A request was made for more information as to the parameters and restrictions within which Highways England operates. This is with particular regard to design standards, safety considerations and financial constraints.

Many members of the forum wanted to know when the next level of design detail would be made available. Would this have to wait until the next round of public consultation? If this is the case what is the role of the CLF going forward?

Members wanted greater clarity on how they would be formally consulted and informally engaged with going forward including a likely timeline asked what the timeline and rounds of consultations to expect in the future.

Highways England offered to provide a speaker to provide a detailed explanation of the DCO process at the next CLF. This would focus on what local communities could expect during the process, with particular regard to further public consultation and how they could interact with the organisation. This suggestion was welcomed by the CLF.

### **The impact of the route regarding housing development and new jobs:**

#### *Post meeting note - Jobs*

In response to a question regarding numbers of jobs forecast in the Scheme Assessment Report (SAR), Somerset County Council provided the following afternote and weblinks for the meeting note.

The job figures in the SAR come from the Economic Impact Study prepared by Parsons Brinckerhoff (February 2013) for Somerset County Council. This is available from the Planning Inspectorate website:

[https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/TR010025/TR010025-000699-Devon%20County%20Council%20-%20A303%20A358%20A30%20Corridor%20Improvement%20Programme-Economic%20Impact%20Study%20\(February%202013\).pdf](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/TR010025/TR010025-000699-Devon%20County%20Council%20-%20A303%20A358%20A30%20Corridor%20Improvement%20Programme-Economic%20Impact%20Study%20(February%202013).pdf)

Page 103 of the 2013 document summarises the economic benefits including jobs. The calculation is based on a large business and tourism survey which asked about the likely impact on productivity of existing businesses from an end-to-end dual carriageway improvement. The likely increased productivity was then modelled and the number of jobs arising from the productivity improvement was derived.

The data in the 2013 report is also used in the A303/A358/A30 Corridor Improvement Programme Economic Impact Study January 2019.  
Also available from the Planning Inspectorate website:

[https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/TR010025/TR010025-000700-Devon%20County%20Council%20-%20A303%20A358%20A30%20Corridor%20Improvement%20Programme-Economic%20Impact%20Study%20\(January%202013\).pdf](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/TR010025/TR010025-000700-Devon%20County%20Council%20-%20A303%20A358%20A30%20Corridor%20Improvement%20Programme-Economic%20Impact%20Study%20(January%202013).pdf)

Members asked what the plans were for Lower Henlade.

There was a concern that Taylor Wimpey, which is looking to develop land in the area, had sight of information that was not available to the public regarding the route. David Stock confirmed that this was not the case.

**How the new proposals would work with particular focus on junctions:**

Concern was raised that the A358 dualling scheme was being adversely impacted by the cost overruns arising from the A303 Stonehenge project. Clarity was sought as to how the scheme continued to fit in with the corridor strategy more generally?

Questions were asked as to how M5 junction 25 would cope with the traffic now there was no proposed junction A or F. Highways England said that further research and modelling conducted since the last round of statutory consultation had shown that M5 junction 25 could be amended to deliver on the benefits described in the Preferred Route Announcement.

At least one parish council expressed their belief that M5 junction 25 could not be made more effective to meet the scheme objectives and therefore that the original orange option should be revived. However, Highways England underlined that there were a number of selection criteria for the new route and that the balance of these had come out in favour of 'Pink Modified' and therefore this was the preferred route.

Further clarification was sought on the plans to improve the Southfields Roundabout so that this was going to be more efficient and effective in enabling drivers to access and leave the A358.

More detail was requested on the design of the A378 junction. It was explained that in common with much of the scheme the detail would form part of the work required of the new designer.

One representative wanted to know whether there would be any corresponding improvements planned for the M5. Highways England responded that these matters were always under review but there were no current plans.

A member of the CLF sought reassurance that there was joined up thinking between Highways England and Somerset County Council, as the highways authority, regarding current and proposed work on the junctions. The aim being to avoid unnecessary work and further delays.

An overview was given as to the process and next stage of the scheme.

A film created by Highways England called, "How do we develop a new road scheme and how can you get involved?", is available online on YouTube. This can be found using the film title in the search box of a search engine or by following this link:

[https://youtu.be/xIH64JG\\_KqA](https://youtu.be/xIH64JG_KqA)

## 8 Ongoing activities

David Stock listed the work that was ongoing, these included:

- Topographical surveys
- Ecology surveys
- Access for surveys
- Meetings with affected landowners
- Regional Delivery Partner tenders
- Working with the Department for Transport

David Stock expressed the appreciation and thanks of the project team for access granted by a number of land and property owners to allow ecological surveys. Surveys form an important part of the design and planning process which is recognised by the ability to use legal powers to access land if required. Access by agreement is always the preferred approach.

The next meeting of the forum will be scheduled for early 2020 when it is anticipated that the design and build contract will have been let to a new supplier.