

# Minutes of Berwick St. James A303 Village Meeting Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2017.

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Total attendance: 60  
Guests: John Glen MP  
Cllr Ian West

## **Welcome by Chairman**

## **Action**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 10 am and welcomed everyone. He then handed over to Henry Colthurst, the leader of the project group looking at aspects of the Stonehenge tunnel and bypass proposals who gave a presentation.

Henry began by quoting from Henry V to highlight the attractions of anger at the Southern bypass route option that would probably destroy the Southern Till valley. He commented however that responses to stop the construction of a Southern route should be logical and constructive if they were to have maximum impact. He felt it was important to underline the need to create a legacy for the living not just the dead, and that answers should make it clear as to where the writer actually lived.

He detailed a number of what seemed to be clear advantages of the Northern route:

*Preservation of a community of villages together since Norman times, particularly Winterbourne Stoke which would find itself isolated.*

*Avoidance of noise and air pollution driven by southwesterly winds.*

*Preservation of the Till Valley, its unique ecology, wet meadows, rural paths and wildlife – all of which would be irreversibly destroyed by a major road.*

*Aside from the pub and garage in Winterbourne Stoke, which would be affected equally by both options, protection of local businesses reliant on the habitat based in the Southern Till valley.*

He also cited possible areas of improvement to the Northern route which should help to allay concerns of those in Winterbourne Stoke:

*Location of the main junction further East to sit directly on the existing A360 – to reduce rat run and also cope better with Stonehenge visitors*

*Reduction in height of the viaduct*

*Better landscaping of the uphill run towards Parsonage Down*

*Maximum tree planting to provide cover, absorb carbon dioxide and reduce visual impact*

*No road lighting.*

He highlighted major areas of concern about proposals for the Southern route which appeared to be imbalanced and/or poorly researched including:

*Irreversible destruction of unique ecology and wildlife*

*Damage to local businesses*

*Visual and landscaping outcomes*

*Pollution – air, light and noise*

*Loss of rural paths and bridleways*

With these points in mind he explained the proposed plan of action to address these matters both as part of individual submissions and also by ensuring that leverage was applied at the right time and place.

Neil underlined the critical importance of submitting questionnaires and encouraging others to do the same – preferably by electronic return. A team of volunteers would visit all houses armed with a list of helpful pointers from James Hardy as set out in the presentation. It was confirmed that questionnaires should provide for individual post codes.

Questionnaire  
Volunteers

Notwithstanding the lack of additional technical analysis which is not expected until end February it was emphasised that responses should be submitted by end of February before the deadline of 5 March. He advised that Winterbourne Stoke was still divided.

Everyone

The people attending the meeting were asked for a show of hands for the benefit of John Glen, which indicated unanimous opposition to any Southern route. He added that the weight of local opinion would determine the decisions, rather than people living in London. Notwithstanding that assurance, strong concerns were raised as to how weighting would properly be given to local views.

Greville Bibby asked about the approach to the media. Facebook, Twitter etc. are liable to go public and suggested that guidance would be helpful as how best to approach the media. Henry said that his instinct was to hold fire until more and better evidence was provided. John Glen encouraged the village to try and get more supporting argument on data-driven matters such as pollution and noise assumptions.

Julian G-O explained the thinking behind the survey. He had instructed Mabbett who have estimated their costs at £6,000 for what should be a professionally presented report.

Julian G-O

With regard to costs, Henry felt that the village should look to raise £13,000 in order to fund the initial survey, provide for a follow up and then allow for some contingency. The project group had discussed a fundraising allocation which it felt was not unreasonable and was recommending for consideration. In response to a comment that the proposals were unfair he advised that contributions could only be voluntary not compulsory but hoped that people could give what they felt that they could afford in order to preserve a way of life.

## Action

Details for giving would be circulated after the meeting, payable to “Berwick St James Community Fund” which was the only bank account immediately available for use. Any appeal monies would be separately identified and ring-fenced from the Community Fund itself.

Bill Hiscocks  
Mike Riding

In response to comments from Gill Brasher and James Whatley about a secret agenda and disruption during construction, John Glen reiterated that the Secretary of State for Transport had no secret agenda but wanted to ensure that the final decision was irreversible by 2020. He said that the village plan of action appeared to have emerged with impressive speed and needed to focus on its intended outcome. He had been to the Winterbourne Stoke meeting which showed a complete split.

Jonathan Dutton (W-S) thought the Northern route was less of an eyesore and offered far less risk of noise and air pollution for Winterbourne Stoke.

Ian West confirmed that the Northern route had originally been approved at public enquiry with no objections. Both new routes had been designed to get rid of the spoil. He recommended that thought be given to consider alternative sites for spoil rather than the embankments. He was objecting to both routes in which he thought English Heritage had been given a heavy input.

John Glenn commented again that the Secretary of State had no preference and would give weight to local views to determine the outcome. He was told that Druids' Lodge would also oppose the Southern route and have offered support for the village. He pointed out that both villages would be hugely affected and reinforced his earlier point about need for better data to support views and ideally consensus to achieve the right outcome.

Henry concluded by saying the group had a clear agenda to kick the Southern route into touch and leave it there. In order so to do, the aim must be to give the Secretary of State the answer on a plate.

Henry

The Project Group will be reporting every week.

*The meeting was adjourned at 11.22 am*