

## Wiltshire Council

### Points for discussion with Parish Councils November

1. **Wiltshire Local Plan.** Consultation on the review of the Wiltshire Local Plan continues until Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November.
2. **Grants** The South West Area Board has funds still available for this year: £12k (capital); £20k (youth); £4.7k (older/vulnerable adults). There are conditions attached to all of these, but the SWAB would welcome applications from local societies and groups. **See attached flyer.**
3. **The Council meeting on October 17<sup>th</sup>** considered a report on responses to the Climate Emergency. The full text of the report is available in the agenda papers for the meeting, and there are a number of excellent initiatives. In my remarks on the report I tried to call out two issues that I think are of significance and were not properly addressed.
  - a. In paragraph 68 - picking up on the benefits of modular homes, the claim is made that

*“Where the council is building on council land, the council is more able to influence that the buildings are designed to be net zero carbon in operation.”*

These words amount to little more than transparent greenwash and have no force. In this area of the county the council does not itself carry out building work. The only building work in the pipeline is the project at the former sports centre site in Tisbury, to be carried out by the council's wholly owned subsidiary, Stone Circle. And, as Richard Clewer the council leader told the Stone Circle shareholder's meeting the previous week, the council exercises no control (other than through the planning process) over the energy efficiency aspirations of its own development company.

- b. The proportion of household waste being recycled went down over the last year to 40%, whereas, by contrast, the volume going to “energy from waste” has risen to more than 92.5 thousand tonnes, up from 39% of the total to over 44% of the total. This is incineration or burning, either directly or indirectly.

The Council contracts for material to be burned directly at a plant near Slough and for material that needs processing first to be turned into fuel for others to burn at the site in Westbury that Hills built in 2012 on a 25 year Wiltshire council contract. Neither of these processes can conceivably be considered to be recycling for which there is an explicit government target of 65% for all municipal waste to be achieved by 2035.

At 40%, our recycling rate is well behind much of the rest of the country. Local Government Association data for last year shows that out of 149 single tier and county councils Wiltshire was in 63<sup>rd</sup> place. Two councils were already recycling over 60%; another 10 were recycling more than 55%, 18 more were over 50% and 20 well ahead of us at over 45%.

Councils like Dorset, Devon, Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset, Cheshire West and Cheshire East, the East Riding of Yorkshire, Calderdale, all have one thing in common that differentiate them from Wiltshire: they collect food waste separately, and compost it. So long as Wiltshire stays tied to burning and fuel processing the 43% of residual household waste that is food, we shall struggle to match them and DEFRA have made it clear that separate processing of food waste will be come mandatory and that it is a matter of when, rather than if.

4. **River Nadder, water quality etc.** In early October Dave Rumble, CEO of Wessex Rivers Trust (WRT) gave a talk to the Tisbury & District Natural History Society on the topic of water quality and pollution in the Avon catchment, and specifically in the Nadder above Tisbury - and how to address the issue. The quality of water in the headwaters of the Nadder (above Wardour Lake) is deemed poor by the Environment Agency, although it improves further downstream.

In his presentation Dave gave examples of work they carry out to improve ecology and the environmental context for wildlife throughout the Avon basin. In passing he made the point that much of this work that involves re-grading river banks, de-canalising stretches etc., also has the effect of providing flood risk relief as it includes the creation of wetlands and effectively holds water back.

A couple of weeks later DEFRA announced a £25 million fund for Natural Flood Management (NFM) that is open for expressions of interest until early November. At the request of Tisbury Parish Council I convened a meeting with representatives of Tisbury and West Tisbury PCs, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT), WRT, and Peter Shallcross (the local farmer who chairs the Nadder Valley farmers' cluster group) as a representative of landowners.

WWT & WRT agreed to carry out the necessary scoping work and prepare an application for funds. The following day Peter Shallcross obtained unanimous agreement from his farmer group to willingly participate in preparation of a scheme.

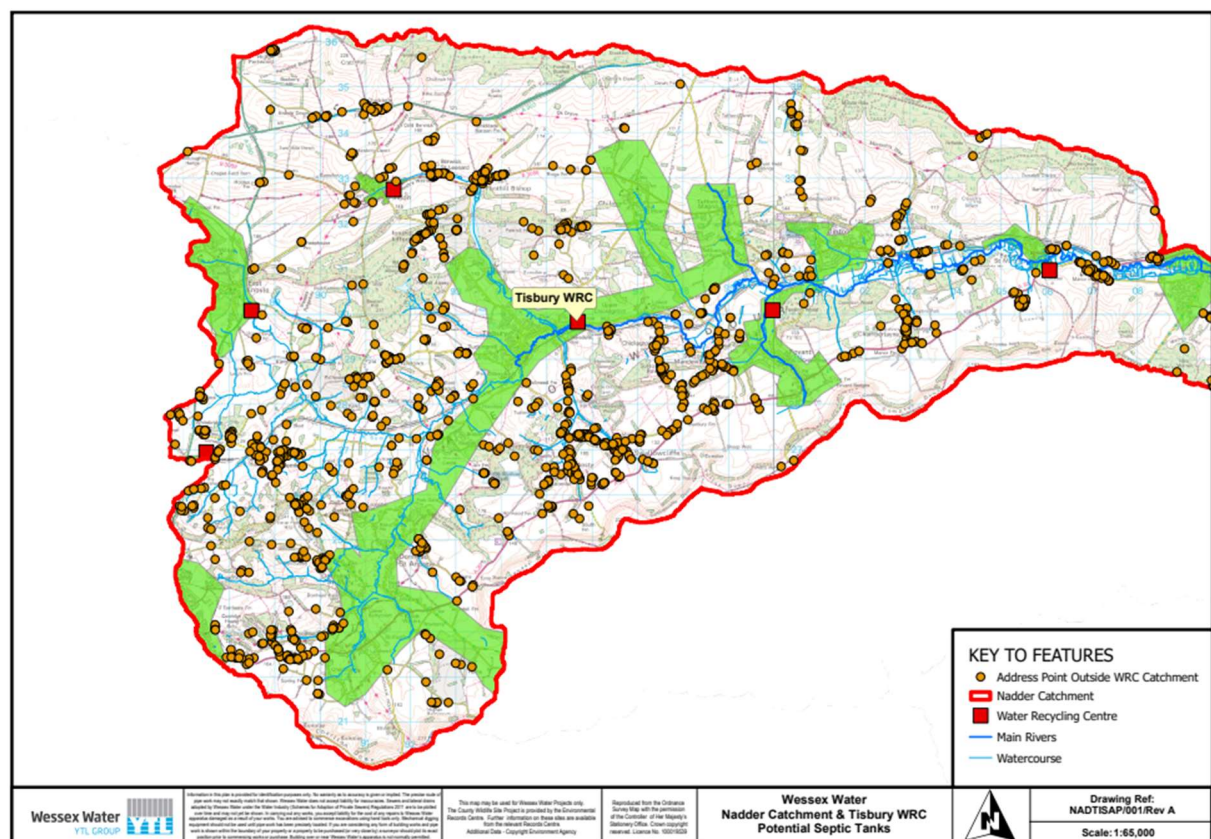
It became clear during discussion that to be successful any scheme we proposed would need to address the issue along all the tributaries of the Nadder upstream from Tisbury, hence extending into the parishes of the Donheads, Semley, Swallowcliffe and Ansty. Alex Deacon, Catchment Programme Manager for WRT told me any local backing we can reference in the application will help our cause, and I have consequently sought expressions of support from the Chairs of all the PCs in the area. There are no cost implications for Parish Councils as the work being done by WWT/WRT in drafting a submission will be paid for from the funds received, if successful.

Since the initial conversations, Declan Morrison (Lord Margadale's son) has asked if the Fonthill Estate may join in also, expressing the view that what we should be working on is an ambitious, landscape scale, project to include a larger area encompassing both Hindon, Tisbury and the Nadder headwaters to address amenity value and water quality as well as some degree of natural flood management.

The DEFRA funding opportunity is acting as a prod to pull our thinking together. Whether we shall succeed in the application will be apparent only over time. Nonetheless, in the event that we are unsuccessful we shall have pulled together a plan to improve water quality and the habitat for wildlife in the Nadder, and the view of both WWT and WRT is that other sources of funding may well exist for such work.

5. **Septic Tanks.** Another aspect of the water quality discussion concerning the headwaters of the Nadder, in and around Donhead St Mary in particular, concerns septic tanks. It is premature to make a public announcement, but I understand work is well advanced on a Wiltshire Council programme to be carried out by Wiltshire Rivers Trust that is aimed at identifying septic tanks that are faulty or for any reason in need of replacement, with some degree of assistance to carry out the work. I gather an announcement could be made some time around the year end.

Below, for information, is a map I obtained from Wessex Water that shows properties that are their customers for fresh water but not for sewerage i.e. properties that are likely to have septic tanks. You can see from the density of distribution why this is considered to be the most likely cause of poor water quality in the Nadder headwaters.



6. **Highways, Transport and road maintenance.** At a Cabinet meeting in September it was announced that £10 million will be spent on preventative maintenance to upgrade and renew the worst roads. A programme is being prepared that will be discussed with Area Boards in the new year, to run from April 2024 through to 2025.

**The next meeting of the South West Area Board**, (at East Knoyle Village Hall, Hindon Rd, East Knoyle, Salisbury SP3 6AE on Wednesday 29 November 2023 @ 6.30 pm) **will be largely devoted to presentation on Highways and Transport** topics from **Caroline Thomas**, the member of the Wiltshire Cabinet responsible for these matters, and **Samantha Howell**, Director of Highways and Transport.

A poster titled 'Highways Matters' hosted by the South West Wiltshire Area Board. It features a blue background with a road graphic and several icons in speech bubbles: a question mark, a bicycle, a bus, and a building. The text provides details about the meeting, including the topics to be discussed, the attendees, and the submission deadline for questions.

**Highways Matters**  
hosted by the South West Wiltshire  
Area Board

**An opportunity for updates and questions so come and have your say**

**Discussing:** speeding, traffic, maintenance, community transport and congestion in South West Wiltshire

**With:**

- Wiltshire Council Director of Highways and Transport
- Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
- Senior Wiltshire Council officers
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Local Wiltshire Councillors

Please submit your questions by 17 November with the subject line 'South West Wiltshire Highways Matters' to [areaboardsw@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:areaboardsw@wiltshire.gov.uk)

6.30pm: Networking opportunity  
7.00pm: Meeting starts  
8.30pm: Area Board funding decisions

**Wednesday 29 November 2023**

**East Knoyle Village Hall, Hindon Rd, East Knoyle, SP3 6AE**

**Wiltshire Council**

I have submitted a note of my own questions, below, in the hope we will get some clarity as to how the South West Area compares with other parts of Wiltshire in road maintenance priorities. **Any comments on this, or the list of priority roads for consideration will be most welcome, and you will be very welcome at the Area Board meeting to hear the response.**

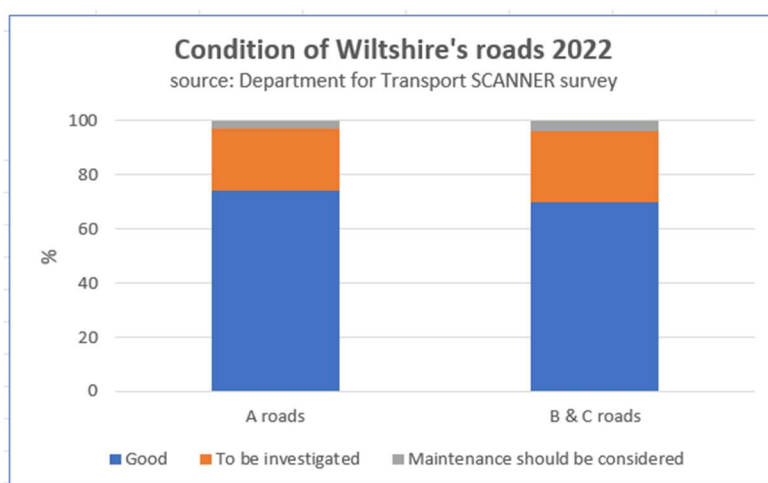
## November meeting of the South West Area Board.

### Questions for Caroline Thomas and Samantha Howell regarding road maintenance

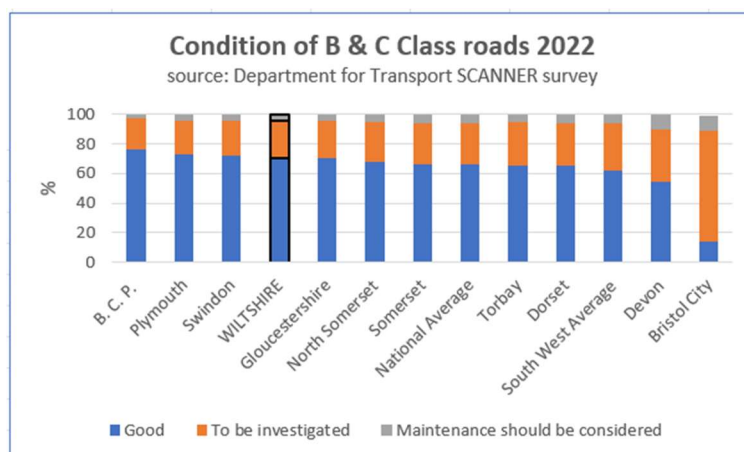
Dave Thomas, Wiltshire's head of Highways Asset Management and Commissioning provided me with the attached paper on road maintenance standards based on data from the Department of Transport SCANNER survey<sup>1</sup>. It compares the condition of Wiltshire's road network with neighbouring counties and the rest of the country.

The picture it paints is this:

- The condition of our A roads and B & C roads are very similar. 74% of A roads are considered to be in good condition, vs 70% of B & C roads.

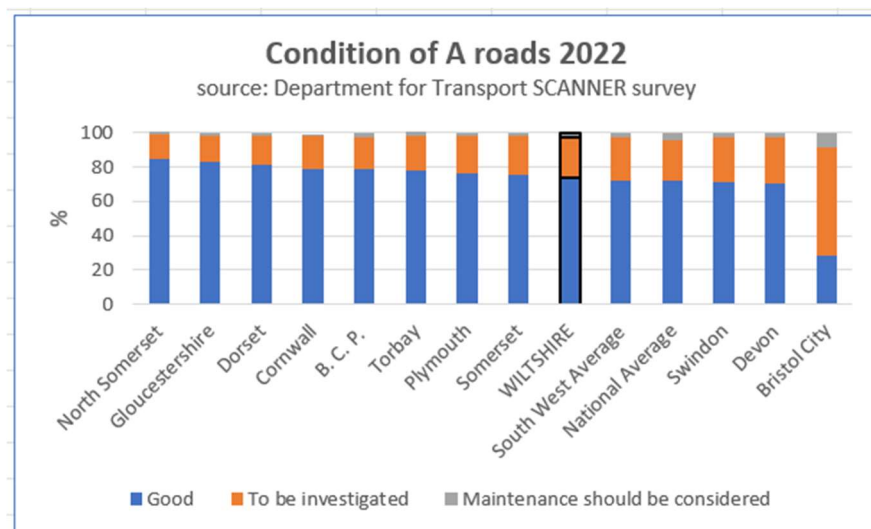


- The national comparison makes our B & C roads look rather good on a comparative basis: better than the national average, and 4<sup>th</sup> in a selection of counties in the South West of England.



<sup>1</sup> I understand the SCANNER survey is carried out by sub-contractors working to a common standard throughout the country using lorry-mounted mobile 'Deflectograph' devices to measure road strength, a 'Scrim' device to measure skid resistance and a high speed road monitoring device to measure texture and deflection, supplemented by information from the routine 28-day inspection reports from the counties' highways technicians and public input via, for example, MyWilts.

- Although, on a similar comparison, our A class roads do rather less well and are in only ninth place:



**From my own observation and from comments I receive from local residents and Parish Councils, this picture is difficult to credit. The condition of many of our B class roads is poor, the condition of many of our C class roads is very poor and the condition of many of our unclassified roads is even worse.**

Residents can reasonably expect that the roads in our area of the county are maintained to the same standard as roads in the rest of the county. To achieve this, the county's budget for road maintenance needs to be allocated on a basis of proportionality but needs also to take account of a number of other factors.

It is my understanding that roads in the South West area may deteriorate more rapidly than in other areas of the county due to the underlying ground conditions. The topography together with the nature of the bed rock, the level of the water table, etc. combine to make road maintenance in our area more challenging than elsewhere.

Hence it is relevant to ask the following questions:

- I understand there are 2,829 miles of road in Wiltshire as a whole. What lengths of road are there, by class (A, B, C and UC), in each of the areas of Wiltshire?
- What evidence does the SCANNER survey provide regarding the condition of roads in the South West of Wiltshire, by class, compared with the other areas of the county?
- What evidence does data from the MyWilts app and from the 28-day surveys carried out by Wiltshire's highways engineers provide regarding the condition of roads in the South West of Wiltshire compared with the other areas of the county? More specifically what evidence is there from the MyWilts app and from the 28-day surveys to compare and contrast the condition of B, C and UC roads in the South West vs other areas of the county
- In allocating road maintenance budgets, what account is taken of the different underlying ground conditions and topography

- What is the total Wiltshire budget for road maintenance, and where is that spent i.e. broken down by area? And how is that budget spent within each area by road class (A, B, C and UC)?
- What assurance can you provide that in allocating the additional £10 million for preventative road maintenance during 2024/5 and 2025/6 appropriate account will be taken of the poor condition of roads in the South West area?



# South West Wiltshire Area Board Grants



The South West Wiltshire Area Board grants are available to support capital projects, creative health and wellbeing initiatives and youth-related activities in the local community area

**Deadline:**  
**Friday 27 October 2023**

**For more information please contact:**

Cllr Nabil Najjar, Area Board Chair - [nabil.najjar@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:nabil.najjar@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Karen Linaker, Strategic Engagement and Partnerships Manager - [karen.linaker@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:karen.linaker@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Karlene Jammeh, Area Board Delivery Officer - [karlene.jammeh@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:karlene.jammeh@wiltshire.gov.uk)

**Wiltshire Council**