

Have Highways England forgotten the legacy of the living in the latest A303 proposal? Absolutely.

Questions need to be asked.

Are the rights of the local people, the inevitable damage to businesses and the disfigurement of the countryside being overridden by the desire to landscape Stonehenge and avoid burial grounds in order to deliver an “A303 Expressway” to the South West at any price?

Berwick St James, on behalf of ‘*The Campaign for the Preservation of the Southern Till Valley*’, is one of two villages directly affected by the Winterbourne Stoke Southern Bypass and needs answers. Two fully attended village meetings demonstrated total support for these concerns to be addressed.

The information so far provided by Highways England during this short consultation period appears, under closer scrutiny, to be inadequate. Little or no scientific details are available regarding the impact of pollution (air, light and noise), ecological damage to wildlife, loss of rural paths and bridleways and visual landscaping. This lack of proper analysis seems to be particularly the case for the Southern Bypass option, part of which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The concept of a Southern Bypass has emerged without prior warning unlike the Northern Bypass which was announced in the 2003 Public Enquiry and subsequently fully supported.

Highways England states that there is little difference in the cost or timing of the construction of either bypass. The Public Consultation Booklet would suggest a definite bias, yet we understand that the Secretary of State has indicated no preference for either route.

The Questionnaire produced by Highways England states that it is our opportunity to give our views, which will help the Secretary of State make a decision on the preferred route. The key issue at stake is whether the public can make a conclusive argument for or against the two proposed bypasses based on the apparent lack of data and analysis currently available.

The main question is: “How will the feedback from the two most affected villages be given the necessary weight to determine the outcome of an issue which will potentially change a way of life and determine a legacy for many living generations to follow?”

Berwick St James and Winterbourne Stoke are villages which form part of a tight community across the southern Till Valley that dates back to Norman times. This “mile a minute expressway” with its proposed viaduct will cut through the communities and not only isolate Winterbourne Stoke but destroy the local ecology.

“The Campaign for the Preservation of the Southern Till Valley” is focused on gathering irrefutable scientific data to present the arguments for an improved and more acceptable Northern Bypass, as well as highlighting the flawed proposals for the Southern Bypass.

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