

## COMMUNITY MATTERS

6 March 2017

**With the closing date for consultation on the A303 bypass of Winterbourne Stoke now passed, we thought you would appreciate an overview of what has been achieved to date.**

To begin with, none of this would have been achieved or possible without considerable input, time and effort from many residents across the communities we represent, and your generous donations. We wholeheartedly thank you.

**Our Objective.** Seven weeks ago we formed the CPSTV with the principle aim of maximising the opportunity the consultation gave us to influence Highways England (HE) in their decision-making. We wanted to pool all our efforts, experience and knowledge for the greater good of the community, with the sole purpose of persuading HE that the northern bypass should be the preferred choice of the two options presented.

**Our Approach.** We identified early on that anything we did at this stage had to be completed by the consultation end date, 5<sup>th</sup> March. It was clear to us that the language used by HE in the consultation was biased towards a southern bypass, and the data available to support this was sorely lacking, or unavailable. So our strategy was to do the work ourselves, gather the data and present a coherent, well-informed and compelling case for the northern bypass.

**How did we do this?** With the money you so generously contributed, we commissioned four professional bodies to conduct the necessary data collection and

provide us with their findings and expert analysis in the form of four reports:

1. A comprehensive assessment of the Public Consultation and the proposed bypass routes by consultants Mabbett.
2. A preliminary Ecological Appraisal by EPR Consultants.
3. A transport consultancy report by Vector Consultants.
4. An acoustics report by JSP Consultants.

These have been submitted to HE as part of the consultation process. Attached to this note is a copy of the letters used to cover these reports. If you would like a copy of any of the reports please contact Mike Riding by email [mgriding@gmail.com](mailto:mgriding@gmail.com)

**What else?** Most of you will have seen the signs encouraging people to vote 'Go North.' We estimate that approx. 400 questionnaires were submitted by the residents of the Southern Till Valley and their friends, favouring the northern option. This is a fantastic effort which will hopefully make HE sit up and listen. In addition, you will have seen the signs where the proposed southern route crosses the road linking Berwick St James to Winterbourne Stoke. More signs are due to go up. As you know we wanted to make a visual demonstration with a 'linking arms' event to attract the wider media but it proved too difficult to gather about 400 people at such short notice - perhaps this is something we keep up our sleeve (excuse the pun) for a later date. Other PR initiatives are already in the pipeline.

We are also preparing four separate letters to: **Natural England**; **Joint Nature Conservation Committee**; **Wiltshire County Council** (Biodiversity Officer); **Environment Agency**; and **Advertising Standard Agency**, raising issues and concerns specific to their areas of interest to assist us in our lobbying efforts.

**What next?** The Secretary of State is due to announce the preferred route in August; we have until then to do everything we can to help him make the right decision. With the formal consultation over, we will now employ informal discussions. We are making a plan to meet and speak to a number of influential people and organisations namely: Wiltshire County Council; John Glen MP; the Planning Inspectorate; the Heritage Monitoring and Advisory Group; the Department of Transport and finally the Secretary of State. We would welcome any other suggestions you might have.

**Your money.** To date we have raised **£18,950** – this is incredible, thank you so **so** much. These funds are being held in the Berwick St James Community Fund.

The total outlay on the professional reports has been £15,000. So we have £4,000 remaining, which we would like to keep as a contingency fund to support any additional actions to mitigate the impact, of whichever route is chosen, on the Till Valley ecology and landscape. Once we are confident that we have done all we can to mitigate the impact of the chosen route, we will return the money pro-rata.

**Community Meeting.** We aim to hold a community meeting some time after Easter when we will be able to provide a further update on any other progress made. Date to be confirmed.

Our work is far from over but we have made a very positive start and we firmly believe we could not have achieved more in the time available. **Phase 1** completed – **Phase 2** begins!

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