

## A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling scheme

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### Community Liaison Forum: Meeting 3

\*This is a summary of key points raised and not a formal minute.

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**Date:** Thursday 25 March 2021

**Time:** 19:00-20:30

**Location:** Microsoft Teams Live

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#### Host attendees (Project team):

Deborah Lawrence (Co-chair)

Catherine Edwards

Andrew Weaver (Co-chair)

(Environment Lead)

Nick Cooper (Landowner  
Engagement Manager)

Michael Kelly

(Infrastructure Lead)

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#### Attendees:

Representatives from the following groups and organisations were present:

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- Somerset County Council
  - Somerset West and Taunton Council
  - South Somerset District Council
  - Rebecca Pow MP
  - Neroche Parish Council
  - West Hatch Parish Council
  - Ruishton Parish Council
  - Stoke St Mary Parish Council
  - Horton Parish Council
  - Broadway Parish Council
  - Ashill Parish Council
  - Pitminster Parish Council
  - North Curry Parish Council
  - Creech St Michael Kelly Parish Council
  - Beercrocombe PC
  - West Monkton Parish Council
  - Beercrocombe Parish Council
  - West Monkton Parish Council
  - Trull Parish Council
  - Curry Mallet Parish Council
  - Donyatt Parish Council
  - Combe St. Nicolas Parish Council
  - Holway Local Action Team
  - Scouting Somerset County
  - Taunton Area Cycling Campaign
  - South Somerset Bridleways Association
  - Taunton Deane Bridleways Association
  - Blackdown Hills AONB
  - Woodland Trust
  - Somerset Wildlife Trusts
  - Hatch Beauchamp Parish Council
  - Gateley Hamer
  - Spark Somerset
  - Somerset Ramblers
  - Forestry Commission
  - South West Riders
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## Key Points

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 A welcome note was provided from Deborah Lawrence (co-chair) with introductions, followed by a note on the purpose and agenda of the forum.
- 1.2 The Chair then led the safety moment, which focussed on the 'Blue Light Aware Campaign', a video campaign supported by Highways England on how drivers should react to emergency vehicles whilst driving.
- 1.3 Housekeeping notices were presented ahead of the presentation formally commencing. It was highlighted that the forum was using a digital format required by government guidelines due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Attendees were notified that the event would be recorded.

### 2 Project Update

- 2.1 Andrew Weaver (co-chair) introduced himself as a member of the stakeholder engagement and communications team, observing that Highways England were aware of the amount of time that had passed since previous engagement and that project team members for the A358 had changed.  
  
He outlined that the format of the presentation was to be split according to attendees' survey feedback and from feedback from previous forums. He noted that Planning Aid England were assisting on the appointment of an Independent Chair for future forum events, with the expectation that the Chair would help create a fair platform for discussion on the project going forward.
- 2.2 Andrew gave an overview of the timeline of the scheme, including the two options consultations that led to the preferred route announcement in 2019, and government and Department for Transport (DfT) approval to progress the scheme as part of the RIS2 (Road Investment Strategy 2) programme.  
  
He provided an update on the allocation of Taylor Woodrow Plus to the scheme to work on the project through to consultation. He also mentioned that the design was being reviewed and refreshed, and that lines of communication were being set up for technical consultees to help set up a programme for delivery.
- 2.3 Andrew noted that whilst statutory consultation was expected to take place in autumn 2021 which will provide communities with a formal opportunity to have their say, several community forum events would be held in advance of this where attendees could provide further input. He discussed that after statutory consultation, Highways England would be developing their application to build the scheme which would then be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate to be examined in public – which would be another opportunity for consultees to have their say.

### 3 Your survey feedback and how we're taking that forward

- 3.1 Andrew provided an overview of inputs from the pre-forum survey. He thanked attendees for the feedback they had provided prior to the event and that it had been very useful in informing how Highways England would structure community forum events going forward. He provided an overview of the comments raised in the survey and highlighted that some would be answered later in this presentation or through future community forum events and other lines of engagement. A percentage breakdown was also provided on how attendees wanted community forum events to be run moving forward. Andrew noted that the aim would be to transition towards 'roundtable' style meetings in the upcoming community forum events and that it was useful to have it confirmed that digital

tools of engagement were viewed favourably.

3.2 He also observed that the survey results had informed future agendas for upcoming community forum events and then provided a breakdown of these agendas in detail. These would include one event in early May focussing on local access and connectivity, one in late May/early June focussed on providing an update on the scheme design and one in late June on the public consultation process. He mentioned that these were subject to change depending on feedback from attendees and other consultees, and that further informal consultation events were likely in future both before and after statutory consultation.

3.3 Deborah Lawrence notified attendees that the questions that had been sent through in the survey would be recirculated after the community forum event and that further contact would be made on the forum agendas previously highlighted in the meeting. She passed on to Catherine Edwards to discuss environmental aspects of the scheme.

#### **4 On the ground – surveys**

4.1 Catherine Edwards discussed how attendees could expect to see members of the team on the ground. She set out how the team were currently carrying out surveys and how these would be used to help mitigate any potential environmental impacts as part of preliminary design. She noted that the current surveys included those for breeding birds, reptiles and great crested newts and water quality sampling.

Catherine also mentioned that the engineering team were carrying out surveys which might involve traffic disruption from May to September, with the view to minimise disruption by holding the surveys at night where possible.

She also said that farm impact assessment surveys would be held to establish agricultural circumstances along the route of the proposed scheme so that the effect on individual farm holdings could be assessed. Catherine highlighted that during the third community forum event, the environmental team would have developed a more detailed understanding of the environmental characteristics of the route, and that she would provide a more detailed update on the outcomes of these surveys, and environmental mitigation. She noted that whilst carrying out all surveys, the environment team would follow Covid-19 social distancing guidelines.

4.2 Nick Cooper was introduced as the landowner engagement lead and he provided an overview of his role and the landowner engagement strategy arranged for the scheme. He announced that land interest consultation was due to start shortly, and that meetings had been set up with landowners and homeowners who had been in contact since the Preferred Route Announcement. He said that some outside site visits had taken place but that Microsoft Teams (virtual) meetings could be arranged if needed. He observed that they were working closely with all landowners to advise them throughout the consultation phase, through construction, completion and operation of the scheme. He also offered to contact all individuals who wished to speak to him on a one-to-one basis regarding land interests.

#### **5. Recap of route**

5.1 Michael Kelly led this section, providing a detailed overview of the preferred route announced in 2019. He noted that the route was subject to change during preliminary design.

5.2 Map number 1 - Junction 25 on the M5 to Mattocks Tree Hill: Michael Kelly noted that some local improvements had been proposed here to improve traffic flow to and from the north facing ramps. He discussed how the junction would be altered to include a dedicated left-turn-lane and widening of the M5 southbound slip. He highlighted that slightly farther east, a new roundabout had recently been constructed as part of the Nexus 25 strategic site. He noted that from here, the road would pass through a low embankment before entering cutting properties at Stoke Road. He also observed that a new crossing point was being proposed at this point. East of Henlade, the existing route would run parallel to the existing A358 but that a new two-level junction would be constructed at Mattocks Tree Hill to provide connections to Ash, Hatch Beauchamp, Henlade and the A378.

5.3 Map Number 2 - Mattocks Tree Hill to Hatch Beauchamp: Michael observed that from Mattocks Tree Green junction, the route would move closer to the existing A358, and that the route would join it approximately five kilometres from Junction 25 near Village Road. He raised that a new access to the Somerset Progressive School from West Hatch Lane would also be established, and that between West Hatch Lane and Griffin Lane Bridge, the road would then follow the existing alignment of the A358 carriageway. He discussed how the Griffin Lane underbridge would be modified to carry the northbound carriageway and a new bridge constructed to carry the new southbound carriageway.

5.4 Map number 3 - Hatch Beauchamp and Stewley: Michael observed that from Griffin Lane, the route would follow the existing A358 with a new southbound carriageway up to Capland. He raised the point that a new link between New Road and Staple Fitzpaine Road had also been proposed. He noted that between Capland and Stewley, the new road would be positioned entirely away from the existing A358, which would be retained for access from the local road network. He also said that a further new link would be retained which would link Kenny Road approximately 10.8 km along the route.

5.5 Map number 4 - Kenny and Southfields Roundabout: Michael discussed how from Kenny Road, the route would follow the alignment of the existing roadway and that a new carriageway would be provided southbound on the left-hand side. He noted that a new two-level junction with slip roads has been proposed at Ashill and that the road would follow the existing route southbound until reaching Southfields roundabout approximately 14.6km in. It was mentioned that the roundabout would receive minor improvements to accommodate the new carriageway.

## **6 Next Steps**

6.1 Deborah Lawrence thanked Michael Kelly and re-iterated that there would be further opportunities to review the scheme as the preliminary design was being developed. She then introduced Mike O'Dowd-Jones from Somerset County Council.

6.2 Mike O'Dowd-Jones introduced himself and provided a comment from Somerset County Council and their involvement in the scheme; he confirmed that the Council had strongly promoted the need for dual carriageway improvement as a second strategic route between London and the South West, especially considering its positive impacts to productivity and economic benefits.

He noted that Somerset County Council would also review the detailed proposals put forward by Highways England as part of the Development Consent Order application process, and that they would be making statements to the Planning Inspectorate as part of the community engagement programme. He also announced that they would be

assisting Highways England on traffic modelling assessments, help identify impacts on the local highway networks and ensuring that interfaces between the scheme and the local highways network would be carefully considered as the route moved into the next design phase. He noted that Somerset County Council had a positive relationship with the Highways England team.

6.3 Deborah Lawrence highlighted that the Districts and County Council would be invited to all future Community Forum events.

## **7 Question and answer session**

7.1 A question and answer session was led by Deborah Lawrence, Michael Kelly and Andrew Weaver. A full list of these questions with detailed responses from the project team has been circulated to all attendees alongside this meeting note.

## **8 AOBs**

8.1 Deborah Lawrence thanked all attendees and noted that the A358 project team were looking forward to speaking with people again shortly.