

Statement by Cllr Dr Andy Shuttleworth, Chairman of Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council's Response to the A303 Stonehenge Scheme Public Consultation

1. Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council was unable and unwilling to offer Highways England (HE) a route preference for the Winterbourne Stoke bypass in order to reflect the complex views of villagers volunteered to us when the Parish Council conducted a door-to-door survey. Some distrusted the whole consultation process believing it to be a charade, some wanted north, some wanted south, some wanted one of the longer surface routes rejected by HE early in the process, many didn't care whether it was north or south so long as we got a bypass, some didn't want a bypass at all and nearly all expressed the view that they wanted much more information before they felt they could make a sensible choice. Their words, not ours.
2. We had believed, from the initial responses of Highways England, that questions posed by the Parish Council and parishioners alike, would be answered quickly, expansively and informatively. Instead, we have been met with delay, denial and obfuscation. Despite a considerable amount of effort, not a single question has been answered in a way that would allow us to put more information in front of parishioners
3. Whilst as individuals we can all have a preference based on our own imperative concerns, views and opinions, no official information has been provided to answer the most basic question of: "How might each of the proposed routes affect me, my family and my village". The best Highways England have to offer is from the top level of their economic model which claims that there is little to choose between the two options. Like all models, it is a case of garbage in and garbage out and HE have used a model whose granularity is such that it conceals what are likely to prove significant differences between the northern and southern routes.
4. Make no mistake, the majority of our villagers and the Parish Council want a bypass, but not one at any cost. That is why we are pressing for an extension to the consultation period to allow Highways England to collect the data we believe essential, to allow them to present it to parishioners in a way that addresses their legitimate questions and concerns and lets them and us make an informed choice.
5. We invite Wiltshire Council to support us in our request for a delay now, when it will have minimal effect, rather than have one imposed at a later stage when it could have a rather more dramatic effect.