

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

5 January 2021

Agenda Item 10 – A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (Stonehenge) Road Improvement Scheme

Statement and Questions from Adrian Temple-Brown

To Councillor Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Housing and Communities

Statement

I'd like to follow on from the serious carbon and environmental accounting questions that I posed to Cabinet at the last Cabinet meeting, the answers to which were evasive and completely lacking in information, as usual. Today I would like Cabinet to compare the magnitude of the destruction of the countryside detailed in [HE TR010025 6.1 Environmental Statement Chapter 14: Climate](#) to their own plan to destroy the much larger area of countryside to the east of Chippenham (CEE).

Some cabinet members publically released statements of near-joy at HMG's decision to dig up and lay concrete, steel and bitumen not just over, but in this case, also *under* the Wiltshire countryside that they are responsible for. Little surprise at the public statements, as Wiltshire Cabinet members have worked hard to generate this significant spend of taxpayers money in pursuit of implementing their core policy of economic growth over many years. Being already expert on this A303 scheme, our Cabinet members will realise that the area of countryside destruction associated with it is, far, far smaller than the area they intend to destroy to the east of Chippenham ... should they chose to stop and think about it, even for just a fleeting moment.

Whilst the destruction and damage of the A303 scheme are orders of magnitude smaller, the environmental report is at least considered, well-written and well summarised. The policy, execution and methodology of the report have a depth of referencing, work and care that is wholly and completely missing from Wiltshire Council's Chippenham Urban Expansion Environmental report and I was pleased to see that it is based on the concept of carbon and environmental accounting. Setting aside the A303 report's one glaring omission, we can compare the miserable 15 word impact statement from the CEE Atkins Report and wonder how this Cabinet could possibly pay for such a poor assessment effort, let alone sign it off. Given that meeting after meeting the public you represent have been banging on about CO₂, it is near-short of incredible that no-one in this cabinet knows of any other statement on CO₂ emissions from the CEE other than this one 15 word effort.

The public could reasonably conclude that Cabinet doesn't answer climate questions because the Cabinet doesn't care about carbon emissions.

For those in cabinet who feel that they don't need to care because Climate change won't affect them in their remaining years, try having a look at Section 14.6.8. Government at all levels has got as far in "Telling the Truth" as to declare a global aim of keeping Global Average Temperature rise to below 1.5°C before 2100. The Truth, however is far from the rhetoric designed to provide cover for incessant Economic Growth. There is it in black and white: "*Climate observations for this region (Ref 14.15) identify gradual warming, with an increase of 1.37°C in annual average temperatures between **1961 and 2006.***" Take a look at the temperature trajectory to 2020 and have a think about how much it's already increased in Wiltshire between 1961 and 2020. That's where our reality really lies.

I've done my best to educate you as people, as leaders of our community about why your Declaration of a Climate Emergency means you actually have to **Act**. As a group, you've politely listened and gently used process and procedure to ignore your declaration, in order to carry on Business As Usual. For the avoidance of doubt, building over the countryside absolutely is Business As Usual – it perfectly executes your stated aim of maximising the use of Wiltshire assets for Economic Growth or put more concisely, for making money.

So what of your responsibility to Cabinet's agreed aim of making Wiltshire Carbon Neutral by 2030, or are these just words ?

Let's see. Take a look at Table 14.14: **466,900 tCO_{2e}** emitted during construction. That's ***four hundred and sixty six thousand tonnes*** of Carbon Dioxide equivalent emissions from the construction process. Bearing in mind it's orders of magnitude *smaller* than the Chippenham Eastern Expansion emissions. As leaders, Cabinet members together surely must have discussed, identified and estimated the capability of the most capable remediation techniques to mitigate these emissions, as suggested in Section 14.8.2 c) page 14-20.

Question 1 (21-05)

Which major technology has Cabinet assessed to be the most likely capable of sequestering 466,900 tonnes of CO₂ in Wiltshire between 2020 and 2026 - when and where does deployment start in Wiltshire?

Response

The A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down scheme was the subject of a Development Consent Order (DCO) application by Highways England and was the subject of a DCO examination in 2019. The Examining Authority noted that the Environmental Statement assessment addressed the effects on the climate of greenhouse gas emissions arising from the proposed development and demonstrates that the proposed development's impact as a proportion of total UK carbon emissions would be negligible.

The scheme is being promoted by Highways England and they would be responsible for carbon mitigation measures, including sequestering emissions.

Question 2 (21-06)

Let's look a little further at the balance between yet more damage to the climate and yet more economic growth. Take a look at Table 14.16. That details projected

emissions of 185,000 tonnes of CO2 to 2032. Hopefully you will all understand - scheme built or not – the magnitude of emissions from this one Wiltshire road, because you as leaders have declared that Wiltshire will be Carbon Neutral by 2030.

Given the laggardly pace of committees, reports, sub-committee meetings, delegation, budgeting and all the other processes local governments use to avoid significant Action after declaring a Climate Emergency, does this cabinet accept that

it has no chance whatsoever of sequestering the 650,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions from this single road, before all Cabinet members disappear and start drawing their pensions – leaving the hard decisions to someone else?

Response

The scheme is being promoted by Highways England and they would be responsible for carbon mitigation measures. Any questions on that aspect of the scheme should be directed to Highways England.