

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**13 October 2020**

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**Questions from Janey Wilks**

**Agenda Item 8 – A350 Melksham Bypass**

**To Cllr Bridget Wayman – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste**

**Question 1:**

Option C, though expensive, seems to fulfil the need to bypass Melksham. Please tell me why a route further South, crossing the Kennet & Avon Canal, Semington Brook and water meadows is now being considered, when the existing A350 that runs beneath the canal is already configured to be widened to dual carriageway. How can this not be a reckless misuse of taxpayers money, especially in these difficult financial times?

**Response:**

A wide variety of options are being looked at, including routes to the west and east of the town, and consultation is being undertaken on these.

A route crossing the Kennet & Avon Canal is being considered because it was suggested by members of the public at the Melksham Area Board in March.

There are many factors to consider in connection with appraisal of the options, including emerging guidance on carbon impacts, ecology, public health and road safety, landscape, archaeology, employment and the economy, flood risk and drainage, cost and economic benefit. The preferred option will need to demonstrate that the reduced vehicle operating costs, improved road safety and economic benefits justify the investment required to construct the scheme, whilst taking into account the environmental factors.

**Question 2:**

Otters have been seen along the Semington Brook, in the area which is now being considered to be crossed by a dual carriageway. Otters are a European Protected Species and it is an offence to disturb their sheltering places. How could either draining the water meadows or crossing them on concrete stilts not break the law in this respect?

**Response:**

The environmental and ecological impact of route options, and possible mitigation measures, will be considered as part of the options appraisal process. The scheme will be the subject of a planning application and environmental impact assessment in due course. At this stage we are gathering information to inform the adoption of a preferred option.