

**Item 5 – Public Participation
Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 – Car Parking Strategy (item 6)**

Statement from Mr John Todd for and on behalf of The Stonehenge Chamber of Trade

Ref: Car Parking Charges at Amesbury

I have been asked to write to you prior to the cabinet meeting on the 14th December as The Stonehenge Chamber of Trade have some background information which we wish to inform you of prior to decisions being made that affect our town and its viability.

Amesbury is currently in severe recession with no growth reported by chamber members over the past year. The general knock-on effects of recession have been felt amongst our traders for the past three years, but most noticeable over the past nine to twelve months where trading has been quite challenging for some. Two shops have ceased trading within the last week, and another to cease trading just before Christmas.

An indication of what has happened to Amesbury and its surrounding area can be summarised as being due to the following factors:

1. The general knock-on effects of recession whereby the public are very mindful of what they spend, how they spend and if spending is necessary at all. Shops that sell food items seem to fair quite well, but generalised goods outlets are not fairing very well at all.
2. The threat of redundancies locally in the public sector employers especially Quinetic, along with the general uncertainty for the future has again had a knock-on effect of spending being withdrawn locally.
3. Despite the introduction of a shop local campaign by the Chamber, this has had limited result.
4. Over the past nine months there have been road works which have jammed up the town in all directions. These schemes are a) The Bulford Bridge replacement. b) The resurfacing of Countess Road to Durrington roundabout. c) The installation of cabling on A303/A345 Countess roundabout. d) The repairs to Larkhill Road, Durrington. e) The construction of the new roundabout to Tescos, London Rd Amesbury. f) The construction of a new roundabout A345 Netheravon Rd, Durrington and finally g) The extensive works carried out to the Town Centre traffic lights area to provide better HGV access to and from London Rd Amesbury.

These road works in the above areas have caused major congestion at all times of the day and seem to be concurrent with each other and have caused much misery to those motorists who have been caught up in the traffic queues.

Our traders report back to the Chamber that local shoppers are avoiding Amesbury because of the congestion making Andover and Warminster an attractive hassle free

experience. This has been a major contribution to our trader's demise and that of the town centre.

5. The Amesbury Market has recently been returned to the town. Ideally it should have been placed in the town centre on the street which was the Chamber preferred option. The current position in the main car park is proving to be depriving shoppers of parking space as the market takes up over half the car park, and the traders vehicles take up spaces left in the remainder.

6. Out of town development will always encroach on town centre trade. This is now highlighted by the arrival of Tesco in London Road. Planners need to be balancing town centre viability in any decision taken in the future.

7. There is a proposal to bring car parking charges to Amesbury. The Chamber believe that this will further remove shoppers, especially short term who only need to go to one or two outlets, from doing business with Amesbury Traders. There is a danger that if charges are brought in it would seriously impact on the viability of traders in the town and shoppers may well be attracted to using the supermarkets where free parking is offered.

One of our members suggested a free period of 2-3hrs for short term parking. This would be of help in finding a solution to encouraging shoppers into the town if charges were to be introduced.

The Chamber understand the financial constraints and consider that if Wiltshire Council could grant a concession to Amesbury on car parking charges, similar to that given to Devizes and Westbury, shoppers may be enticed into the town centre.

The Chamber question the viability of providing chargeable parking in Amesbury with the cost of managing and running such a scheme, versus the costs taken in predicted revenue. Has the predicted revenue from such a scheme been calculated if it were to be introduced?

Very shortly a bus hopper service will be introduced in accordance with a section 106 agreement and Tesco, which will see a half hourly service which will further take vehicles out of the town centre, and reduce revenue if charges were to be introduced.

Our town is in turmoil, and with current business closure rates the Chamber look to Wiltshire Council for help and assistance.

Please see article from Salisbury Journal. The link is;
http://www.salisburyjournal.co.uk/news/8724168.Problems_for_Amesbury_town_centre/?ref=mr

The chamber request that our points in the above paragraphs are taken into account when making any decision regarding our members interests locally.