

**CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, STREETSCENE AND FLOODING –
CLLR CAROLINE THOMAS**

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICE

OFFICER CONTACT: Michael Crook: 01225 713349 email: michael.crook@wiltshire.gov.uk

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COUNTESS ROAD ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEME
RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the results of the public consultation on the proposed Countess Road Active Travel Scheme and recommend a way forward.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The [Business Plan 2022-2032](#) sets out Wiltshire Council's mission for the next ten years:
 - The people of Wiltshire are empowered to live full, healthy and enriched lives.
 - Our communities continue to be beautiful and exciting places to live.
 - Our local economy thrives and is supported by a skilled workforce.
 - We lead the way in how councils and counties mitigate the climate challenges ahead.
3. The use of consultation to help inform decision making aligns to the Strong Communities section in the Business Plan. "We want people in Wiltshire to be encouraged to take responsibility for their well-being, build positive relationships and to get involved, influence and take action on what is best for their own communities - we want residents to succeed to the best of their abilities and feel safe where they live and work".
4. The scheme itself supports the Business Plan aims in that it will:
 - help people to increase their activity levels and improve their health.
 - deliver a cycle route that will form part of an efficient and effective transport network.
 - provide a connection between communities.
 - help reduce the council's carbon footprint.

Background

5. The scheme was identified in the 2013 Local Transport Plan Cycling Strategy as part of the Town Cycle Network for Amesbury. It is also shown in the updated network published as part of the draft Wiltshire Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan (LCWIP). It forms a key route for the Amesbury area and as part of a strategic route linking Salisbury and National Cycle Network Route 45 to Stonehenge.
6. As part of the development of the Stonehenge tunnel project, National Highways undertook a "Connected Communities" study. The study proposed a cycle link from Amesbury to Larkhill and then on to Stonehenge. The proposal is supported by the Benefits Steering Group for the tunnel project, which includes Wiltshire Council.

7. The scheme aims to improve cycle accessibility for residents of Larkhill to access amenities, employment and education in Amesbury. Equally, it would improve accessibility for residents of Amesbury to access amenities or employment in Larkhill. It also forms part of a proposed circular route around the World Heritage Site that National Highways and Wiltshire Council are working together to deliver. This will help encourage tourists to explore the wider area and bring more economic benefit from Stonehenge to the Amesbury area.
8. The Council recently submitted a bid to the Active Travel Fund for a number of schemes across Wiltshire. Active Travel England, who were assessing the bids, decided that this scheme met their aims and provided the council grant funding for the scheme in the 2023/24 financial year. The funding is to undertake the detailed design of the route itself and to design and implement a toucan crossing on Countess Road. Implementation of the route would be funded by National Highways as part of the Stonehenge tunnel project.

Summary of proposed scheme

9. The works would run from The Centre, Amesbury (and National Cycle Network Route 45) to Fargo Road, which leads to Larkhill. **Appendix 1** has a map. The route would be a high quality shared-use facility used by both cyclists and walkers. Currently, cyclists have to use the A345, which has a 40-mph speed limit north of Countess Roundabout. The scheme would provide a more attractive option than sharing with vehicles. It is only just over two miles from The Centre to Larkhill, a distance considered by central government to be easily cyclable by most people.
10. At The Centre (in the middle of Amesbury), the route would run on the east side up to Countess Roundabout. At the roundabout, National Highways' tunnel scheme design includes the replacement of the current subway with at-grade crossings. The route would then continue on the east side of Countess Road to near bridleway AMES9A, an entrance into the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site. Here, there would be a toucan crossing and the route would continue up the west side of the road. It would then join Fargo Road.
11. Fargo Road and Tombs Road/Wood Road are lightly trafficked roads, and they link to Larkhill. A short stretch of this part of the route is highway but the rest is managed by the MOD. A further scheme to improve a route along The Packway and provide a crossing near Tombs Road/Wood Road is currently in the early stages of development, with strong support from the local barracks.

Consultation

12. The Council recently undertook a public consultation exercise on the principle of the route. During the consultation period a total of 115 survey responses and 9 emails were received. There appears to be some duplication of responses with email responders also filling in the online survey. Sixty-three of the responses are from residents along the road with some of these being from the same households. See **Appendix 2** for the consultation questions. A summary of the consultation responses is in **Appendix 3**.

Main considerations for the Council

13. Countess Road is a key route as identified in the Wiltshire LCWIP and the Amesbury Town Cycle Network.
14. Countess Road is a part of the proposed Salisbury-Porton-Amesbury-Stonehenge cycle route which is predominantly traffic free (most people prefer being segregated from motor vehicles). It is aimed at encouraging more long-stay tourism as well as improving

accessibility for residents. The scheme would form part of a circular route around Stonehenge as well as providing direct access to Woodhenge.

15. Countess Road is a key route for residents of Larkhill, particularly military families, to access Amesbury for work, shopping, school etc.
16. There is no alternative route for cyclists that is feasible to deliver.

Safeguarding Considerations

17. There is no safeguarding risk because of these proposals.

Public Health Implications

18. The best way to encourage people to become more active is to provide them with attractive active travel options for journeys they already make (e.g., to work, school, shopping etc.). This route will provide a high-quality walking and cycling facility, opening up options for residents and tourists. There would also be air quality improvements through reductions in vehicle emissions. Central government has set an aim that 50% of all short journeys in towns and cities should be walked and cycled. This will not be achieved without high quality measures such as the proposed route.

Corporate Procurement Implications

19. There are no procurement implications.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

20. The promotion of sustainable travel measures can lead to improvements in air quality and reductions in vehicle emissions, contributing to the Council's aim of being carbon neutral by 2030.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

21. The scheme would be designed to meet the needs of children, disabled people and those with mobility impairments, in order to meet their access and transport requirements. It would be suitable for adapted cycles, e-bikes and mobility scooters. Many people are experiencing financial difficulties and walking, cycling and wheeling are far less expensive than running a car. Providing alternatives to the car helps to reduce inequalities in travel options.

Risk Assessment

22. There is no risk to the Council arising from these proposals.

Financial Implications

23. Active Travel England has allocated design funding for the cycle scheme and design and construction funding for the crossing. This funding is to be spent in the 2023/2024 financial year. If the scheme is designed in this financial year, it will be ready for implementation if the Stonehenge scheme progresses. The National Highways Designated Funds programme would pay for the cycle scheme as part of the Stonehenge scheme. Wiltshire Council is contributing staff time to the scheme.

Legal Implications

24. A Traffic Regulation Order would be required to implement the toucan crossing.

Options Considered

25. The following options were considered:
- (i) Consider the feedback from the consultation, modify the scheme if required then continue with detailed design.
 - (ii) Find an alternative route.
 - (iii) Abandon the scheme.

Reason for Proposals

26. After consideration of the consultation responses, it is felt that many of the concerns of residents can be accommodated with minor adjustments to the scheme or clarification of the design. Option (i) is the proposed option.
27. Option (ii) will leave the residents of Larkhill without an attractive cycle route into Amesbury (and vice-versa), and not realise the benefits to public health and the economy from tourism. It would not be possible to deliver the circular cycle route around the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) proposed as part of the tunnel project.
28. Option (iii) is not desirable as it is not in line with the aims of the Business Plan.

Proposal

29. That the scheme be adjusted based on feedback to the consultation and the Council continue with the design of the cycle route and design and implementation of the toucan crossing.

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None