

**Meeting of the Valley Parishes Alliance (Highways sub-committee)
with Highways England ('HE')**

10:45, Tuesday 15th September 2015

The Inn at Freshford

Present

VPA Members/ Representatives

Hugh Delap (Freshford) (Chairman), Moira Brennan (Bathampton PC), Chris Jensen and Anna Beria (Claverton PC), Des Wighton (Monkton Combe PC), Bob Broadhead (Limpley Stoke PC), Geoff Parkes (Hinton Charterhouse PC), Susanne Hegan (Batheaston PC)

Highways England

Sean Walsh, Rachel Scott

1) Apologies

Nick Stevens (Freshford PC), Margaret Field (Limpley Stoke PC), Adrian Simon (Skanska)

2) Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March 2015 were approved.

3) Matters arising from minutes of previous meeting

a) Severance matters

- i) Sean's aspiration is that a study to look at the severance issues on the A36 can be progressed next year, subject to funding (2016/17) It could go the whole length of the A36 or could be done in smaller phases. Money has also been set aside for the study and delivery of designated cycling schemes. Implementation of what is recommended and approved will take place during the five-year period to 2021. See Item 3 d) i) below

b) Weight and Height limits – Hinton Charterhouse.

- i) The points raised by Chris Clemence (Hinton Charterhouse PC) at the last meeting, which concern traffic travelling north on the A36 and joining the B3110 without being aware of a low bridge ahead were given emphasis by the latter being very recently closed for bridge repairs at Midford. Could clear signs be displayed at the A36/B3110 junction in Woolverton? Sean said that this was 'on the radar' but making a scheme stack up without Strategic Route Network (SRN) justification for application of limited funds was difficult. B&NES could progress the scheme if they wished with HE help. Anna and Chris restated the need for similar warnings of the restrictions on traffic leading from the A36 at Claverton to Claverton Down. Sean stressed the fact that the cost of effective signs can be considerable.

c) Parish matters

- i) Claverton: Anna and Chris reported that the problems created by swimmers parking on the verge opposite Claverton were as great as ever over the summer. The nearby weir is increasingly widely known in the world of wild swimming. HE will continue to explore ways with Claverton PC and B&NES of easing if not solving the problem.

Post-meeting note from HE: B&NES have just cancelled the meeting planned for 09/10/14

- ii) Freshford & Limpley Stoke: The joint Neighbourhood Plan was approved by 75% of the more than half the electorate who voted at the referendum on 10th September.
- d) Highways Agency becomes Highways England
 - i) Sean and Rachel spoke of the change which took place smoothly and as planned. One aspect, which hasn't changed quite as radically as had been expected, is in the access to funding. Each region now has its allotted five-year sum to spend more or less as it chooses; but there is a ceiling on how much of that sum may be spent in each of the five years so the year-end shackles on spending haven't yet been completely broken.
 - ii) Sean told the meeting that responsibility for removing verge litter rests with the local council.
 - iii) Rachel said that work on the A420/A46 junction at Cold Ashton will begin imminently.

4) A36 closure – round-up and lessons learned

- a) Rachel said that the final cost of the stabilisation work will be in the region of £2.3 million. This is a little less than had been budgeted and it allowed for expenditure on replacement buses, of which the most notable as far as some of the VPA parishes were concerned was the shuttle between Limpley Stoke and Winsley that allowed connection to the diverted 267 between Trowbridge, Bradford on Avon and Bath. The communications link through the VPA to the affected communities had worked well – much better than during the closure some years ago when most communication was by public meeting or, more often, one-to-one.
- b) Rachel told the meeting that the works had uncovered the probable need for further work on the uphill, or west, side of the road to stabilise the brick and stone retaining wall. More work is being done to assess how much of the problem is due to faulty drainage and how much to inherent instability of the wall. Design will then begin with implementation planned for 2017/18. It is hoped that a full closure will not be needed.
- c) The longitudinal crack in the road several hundred metres south of the de-restriction sign at Bathampton is being carefully watched. So far there is no sign of it widening, which would indicate a potential to slip.
- d) Much minor work on the A36 beyond the limits of the closed section was done while the volume of traffic was diminished. It has been noticed that the surfacing on the stretch immediately south of the viaduct has begun to break up. This will have to be redone and may mean night closures. HE will keep the VPA informed.

5) Route Strategy

- a) There was discussion of recent reports that the new B&NES council and the MPs for North East Somerset (Rees-Mogg) and Bath (Howlett) were promoting the rejuvenation of plans and new ideas to build a link between the A36 and A46 that would bypass Bath. The MPs have written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer pleading the case. The chairman of the VPA has also written to the Chancellor giving reasons for opposing the proposal. Sean said that HE had not been approached with any new proposals. Such a link is not part of HE's current route strategy but HE is aware it is a priority of B&NES and expects it to feature in discussions emanating from the next round of Route Strategies. These are expected to commence soon
- b) There was discussion of B&NES's Park and Ride proposals for the east of Bath and the current period of consultation. The meeting agreed that for proper consultation to take place there was need for much more detail and more time to consider it. HE supports the idea of P+R but have not been involved in any of the thinking behind these particular proposals other than going

some way to work with B&NES on their last application which appears to be the most easterly of the sites perhaps three or four years ago.

6) Situation and HAIL Reports

Sean said that there was still only a small number of reports being received but that they continue to be of use and helpful to the HA and to Skanska.

7) Parish Concerns

- a) Batheaston: Susanne sought clarity on responsibility for the roads leading away from the A4/A46 roundabout. Sean said that the A46 to the north of the roundabout, a short length of the Batheaston bypass to the south of the roundabout, and the roundabout per se is HE's responsibility. The A4 leading up to and away from the roundabout belongs to B&NES.

8) Date of next meeting

Tuesday, 8th March 2016, starting at 10:45, at The Inn at Freshford