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To: [A303 Stonehenge](mailto:andy.shuttleworth@winterbournestokepc.org.uk)
Subject: Answer To Inspector's Question From Open Floor Hearing 1
Date: 24 May 2019 09:59:16
Attachments: [Far Northern Route.pdf](#)
[ADS Blog Front Page.pdf](#)

In the course of the Open Floor Hearing 1 and the questions that followed by oral statement, I was asked to provide a link to my personal website that gave details of a far, northern alternative route for the A303 scheme, that avoided the majority of the WHS and associated archaeological features, skirted the local villages, involved a minimum number of landowners and did not require the expense of the tunnel. Although the then Highways Agency were made aware of the proposal at the time, it was not included in those routes examined in the early stages of the current scheme by Highways England.

The electronic link to the blog post, originally published in November 2013, is:

<https://bypasswinterbournestoke.blogspot.com/2013/11/sh2-proposal-for-very-northerley-route.html>

For simplicity, I have copied that post into a PDF for you (attached below) and added an exploded copy of the proposed route at the end.

Given the nature of many of the other questions I was asked at the hearing, please could you draw the inspectors attention to the blog as a whole, that will give a flavour of local concerns, untainted by the existence of the current scheme.

<https://bypasswinterbournestoke.blogspot.com/>

At the very least, as well as being informative, it might offer a humorous diversion from their daily routine. The final post on the main page entitled: "Those That Walk Amongst Us", all deals with the specific issue of the far northern route, raised by the inspectors. Another post expands on some of the answers to oral questions on Phosphatic Chalk raised by the Inspectors during the hearing. Again, I have provided a PDF of the blog's first page and the posts published thereon.

Best Regards

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SH2 - A Proposal For A Very Northerly Route

It is very easy for us to sit here and complain about the problems caused by the lack of dualling of the A303, the lack of bypasses, the idiocy of various bodies - the Highways Agency, the Department for Transport and Wiltshire Council - in closing the A344 before the A303 problems were resolved, despite the excellent advice they were given, in order to pander to the demands of English Heritage and the Stonehenge World Heritage Site.



It is very easy, because they have set themselves up as such easy targets for ridicule and derision - and they will be duly ridiculed and derided.

However, whilst we must be resolute in learning the lessons of the past, we need to look to the future and ask ourselves how might the problem be solved. So what is it we want to achieve exactly? Well, here at WiSBAng, we would offer the following list of key points:

- Dual the **entire** length of the A303 (and the A358 and A30 to Penzance)
- Bypass villages such as Winterbourne Stoke
- Remove the A303 from the Stonehenge World Heritage Site sight-line
- Minimising the need to damage virgin farmland
- Minimising the cost
- In doing all of the above, eliminating rat-running through local villages.

However, we need to look at some of the limiting factors:

- The location of the World Heritage Site itself
- The location of Parsonage Down site
- The high cost of stuffing the A303 in a tunnel
- The unsuitability of the WHS geology for stuffing the A303 in a tunnel.

There are a few other factors that need to be borne in mind.

-The Armed Forces are retrenching to Wiltshire from Germany and are planning to accommodate a further 3,500-4,000 people, including families, at Larkhill, **but:**

- The Armed Forces have reduced massively in size since the heyday of activity in the Salisbury Plain training area;
- Not all of the Salisbury Plain Training Area is in use all of the time - so, very simplistically, it can't all be needed.
- The land occupied by the Salisbury Plain Training Area is already in government ownership or leasehold.
- The military population is largely transient - they come, they are posted, they go.
- Whatever route west is taken for the A303 - it is going to destroy/damage some archaeology.
- Most routes that have been proposed to date go through virgin countryside, or go so far south that they will start to have undesirable adverse impacts on the traffic flow in and around Salisbury.
- Whatever route west is taken, it will require some virgin countryside.
- Much of the virgin countryside that would need to be sacrificed to reroute the A303, especially on the routes previously proposed, is owned by rich and influential individuals who can be expected to object a wee bit.
- The Green lobby might also object a little - think 'Winchester Bypass.'

So, is there a route that could possibly deal with all, or most of the above? We think so, and here it is:



Just click on the picture to see the enlarged view. Basically, the proposed route leaves the current A303 at the Parkhouse Roundabout, cuts northwest into MoD land and then heads due west, north of Bulford and Larkhill. It then continues westwards until it reaches a point on the A360, roughly equidistant between Shrewton and Tilshead, before cutting back to the south west to rejoin the A303 at the Wylle junction. As I write, I can hear the wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth in MoD - it's going to mess up the small-arms- ranges between Bulford and Tidworth and cut the two camps apart - but there is a helluva lot of training area and rifle/grenade ranges can be resited - how hard is it to build a berm? Then think of the benefits to MoD - most civilian traffic could be removed from Larkhill - benefiting the newly returned families and making a much clearer distinction between the living area and the training area. Unexploded ordnance along the route- well, there's bound to be some, but what a wonderful training opportunity.

There is one other huge benefit in going this far north, and that is the possibility of joining into the A36 at Knook Camp, close to the Warminster bypass - and possibly providing some relief to the A36 villages - at least from traffic travelling to or from the east of England. Like this:



OK, it's far from ideal, but it is the route which requires the minimum purchase of undeveloped countryside and achieves just about everyone's desired outcomes. The A303 proposal turns a 14.4 mile section of road into one 17 miles long - adding less than 3 minutes to the journey time. Compare that with the 1-3 hours that 14 mile stretch has taken this summer.

Let the cries of outrage begin!

Posted by [General Disquiet](#) at 11:51

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Labels: [A303](#), [A344](#), [Bypass](#), [Department for Transport](#), [Dual carriageway](#), [English Heritage](#), [Highways Agency](#), [HS2](#), [SH2](#), [STAG](#), [Stonehenge Local Residents Pass](#), [Wiltshire Council](#), [Winterbourne Stoke](#), [WiSBAng](#)

12 comments:

Anonymous said...

It is certainly an idea worthy of consideration. One of the big attractions for me, as a haulier, is that virtually all of the work could be conducted with minimal disturbance to the current A303 until it was virtually complete - a major factor if businesses in the West Country are to support the plan.

[1 November 2013 at 15:48](#)



[General Disquiet](#) said...

Yes, you are quite right, it could. Just about every other plan I have ever seen would cause complete chaos along the existing route, driving even more traffic onto the northern rat runs and along the A36.

[1 November 2013 at 15:51](#)

Anonymous said...

This is a sensible plan with a logical and sweeping solution. There is not much to object to. The infringement of the MOD land is minimal and the benefits to MOD people will be worthwhile. It is inexpensive compared to other "solutions". However the recently announced plan to privatise the

Highways Agency could put the dead hand of indecision upon it. This is where John Glenn can show his leadership, or fail to do so.

[4 November 2013 at 10:26](#)



[General Disquiet](#) said...

My biggest fear is that Wiltshire Council will rush ahead in their approval of MoD Re-basing plans for the Salisbury Plain Training Area, without thinking about their inter-relationship with any plan that might emerge over the next few months to dual the A303. Like it or not, even if my proposal wasn't adopted, the MoD plans are going to have a significant impact on local roads and the A303. In my view, even though the plans for new quarters, renovation of existing quarters and other infrastructure to support the Army are essential and long overdue, it would be inappropriate for the MoD to be given the go-ahead for their £850 million spend until these impacts are assessed in conjunction with plans for the A303.

[4 November 2013 at 11:12](#)

Anonymous said...

Salisbury Plain is the only location in the UK where small to medium armoured formations can train and manoeuvre without causing too many difficulties for the civilian population.

[5 November 2013 at 19:05](#)



[General Disquiet](#) said...

That is a very good point and clearly it would be undesirable to have any real adverse impacts on the range and scope of Army training. That said, it is hard to see how the loss of a dual-carriageway wide strip of land on the very edge of the Salisbury Plain Training Area is going to have any major consequences.

[6 November 2013 at 08:49](#)



[Janice Hassett](#) said...

General Disquiet, this is the best thought out route so far but how do we get the Highways Agency to take heed when they seem to be in the pocket of English Heritage who have their heads in the proverbial sand or (chalk) in our case and have continual tunnel vision! Best wishes McFluzie

[8 November 2013 at 10:53](#)



[General Disquiet](#) said...

Well McFluzie, I guess all we can do is ensure that we put all the options forward, every time we meet with any officials who have anything to do with the A303 - from the Highways Agency/ Department for Transport, Wiltshire Council, English Heritage, English Nature, Parliament or the European Parliament.

[8 November 2013 at 19:16](#)

Anonymous said...

I'm thinking of buying a house in the area and having contacted the highways agency have been told that work on the Winterbourne Stoek bypass is due to start in Autumn 2014 but that they still haven't decided on the exact route. Does anybody have a rough idea of the route and what impact this will have on road noise in the area? Will there be a cutting to reduce noise?

[20 November 2013 at 11:38](#)



[Janice Hassett](#) said...

I've just heard on good authority that the government have given the go ahead to dual the section of A30 at Bodmin Moor - 2.8 miles. My source has gone down there today Thursday, for work in his particular field, having received a phonecall from the main contractor!

[21 November 2013 at 15:33](#)



[General Disquiet](#) said...

Now that is an interesting bit of news. It makes you wonder why we need yet another feasibility study when things are going ahead anyway.

[2 December 2013 at 15:59](#)

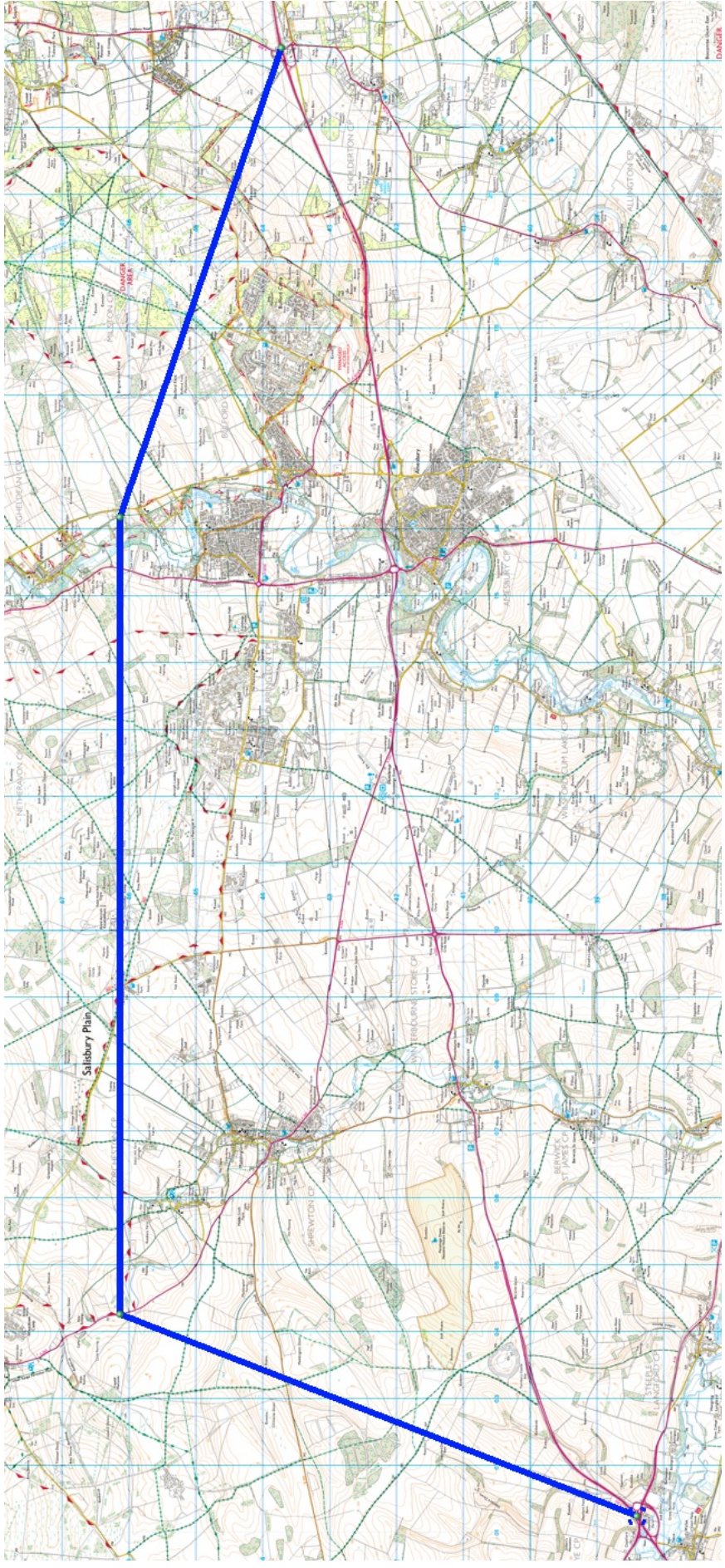


[General Disquiet](#) said...

Dear Anonymous - if only work was going to start on a Winterbourne Stoke bypass in 2014...

...although the plans have been drawn up to build a bypass to the north of the village in the past - built on a raised causeway to keep it out of the flood plain of the River Till. Whether it would be effectively sound-proofed is a moot (but not necessarily mute) point.

[2 December 2013 at 16:02](#)



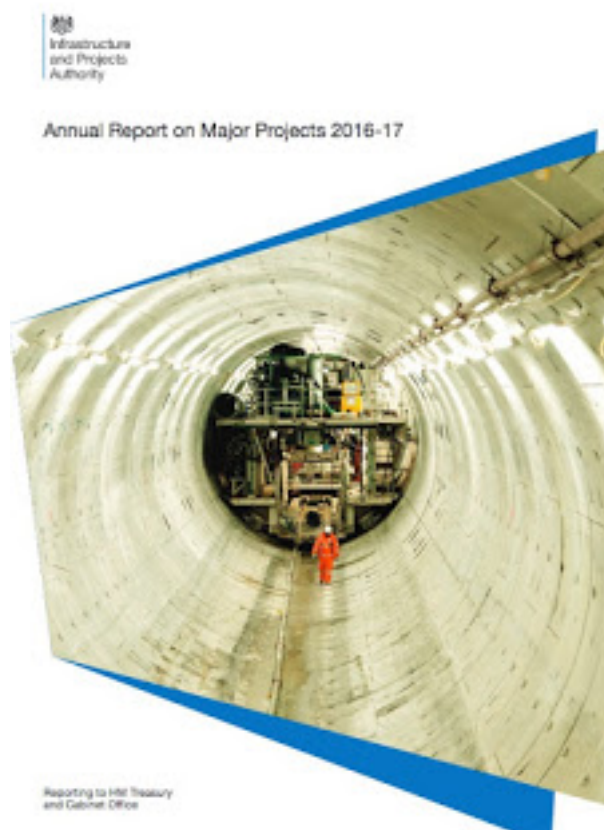
WiSBAng - Winterbourne Stoke (A303) Bypass Angst

For far too long Winterbourne Stoke and other villages in the area have been blighted by the A303 traffic problems. Now a bypass seems imminent and the emphasis has shifted to make sure we get the best route preference the village.

Wednesday, 19 July 2017

[Government Slopes Shoulders On Stonehenge Bypass](#)

We've been wondering how HMG would fund the Stonehenge to Berwick Down Scheme for the A303. The reassurances that the money "would be found and ring-fenced" have always sounded a bit hollow and very fuzzy and it seems our concerns were justified.



Take a look on the [Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council website at their latest story](#).

So, HMG are now looking to private finance to design, build fund and maintain this section of road. Given the record of PFI's in the past, this prospect fills us with a rising sense of dread.

Worse still, the projected timescales will certainly be missed - leading to many more years of rat-running and congestion.

The alternative, of course, is to go for a lower cost above ground route...

Posted by [General Disquiet](#) at 10:19 [No comments](#): [Links to this post](#)

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Labels: [A303](#), [A303 Stonehenge Scheme](#), [Bypass](#), [Stonehenge Traffic Action Group](#), [Stonehenge World Heritage Site](#), [Winterbourne Stoke](#), [WiSBAng](#), [World Heritage Site](#)

Tuesday, 6 June 2017

[It's In Your Best Interests...](#)

Whenever I hear someone tell me that: "It's in your best interests to do X, or Y," alarm bells ring very loudly indeed. In my experience, true philanthropy is a very rare quality and what these individuals really mean is: "It's in **my** best interests for **you** to do X or Y. Selfish self-interest is a powerful driver indeed.

When such a statement is made by a politician, then the alarm bells ring more loudly than ever. That's what is going on at the moment; a cacophony of alarm bells, whistles and sirens are sounding off. A great deal of effort is being made to persuade many of those with an interest in doing something about the untenable situation of the A303 to pull together to support the tunnel under Stonehenge and the northern bypass of Winterbourne Stoke and to put pressure on Highways England to adopt that solution.

Bearing in mind the opening to this post, whose best interests are served by this? It would certainly provide a solution to the traffic problems, but would it provide **the best** solution; particularly for Winterbourne Stoke? What would benefit Winterbourne Stoke the most? Forgetting for a moment the options on offer, I would suggest the denizens of Winterbourne Stoke want some or all of the following:

- a reduction in traffic volumes within the village;
- a reduction of traffic noise within the village;
- a reduction in traffic pollution across the village
- no more damage to the environment
- no more damage to the known and unknown archaeology of the area.

The best way to achieve that is to remove the A303 from the equation. Remove it entirely, absolutely and unequivocally from the equation. To do that there would seem only two alternatives. Dig a tunnel from east (NOT west) of Countess Roundabout and emerge, blinking into the daylight, having bankrupted the nation, somewhere between Yarnbury Castle and the A303 Deptford interchange, or simply re-route the A303 south of Amesbury past Boscombe Down, through the Woodford Valley on a couple of magnificent and architecturally inspiring viaducts, then rejoining the route of the current A36 towards the Deptford interchange. Whilst the super-long tunnel option is unaffordable in anyone's book, even Highways England admit the southern route would be a substantially cheaper than either of the tunnel-based proposals on the table.

Now given that many of the archaeological community, locally, nationally and internationally, are against the proposed tunnel option and bypasses for Winterbourne Stoke, would want to expand the

boundaries of the current World Heritage Site to accommodate both known and suspected archaeology and want to remove the A303 from the entirety of the area, then clearly, we have something in common. Whilst we have never been natural bed-fellows in the past, perhaps now is the time for those immediately affected to cosy-up with each other? Our selfish self-interest is best served by removing the A303 in its entirety. A tunnel with a northern bypass or a tunnel with a southern bypass are very much secondary and tertiary options which satisfy few, if any, of the desires and aspirations of Winterbourne Stoke.

Now the politicians will tell you that this isn't on the agenda. Accept what you are being offered and let us get on with it! They would, wouldn't they. Don't forget though, that when considering traffic issue, nothing has a better turning circle than a politician - especially ones trying to balance the books.

Posted by [General Disquiet](#) at [10:11](#) [No comments](#): [Links to this post](#)
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Labels: [A303](#), [A303 Stonehenge Scheme](#), [Amesbury](#), [Bypass](#), [Stonehenge](#), [Winterbourne Stoke](#), [World Heritage Site](#)

Sunday, 5 February 2017

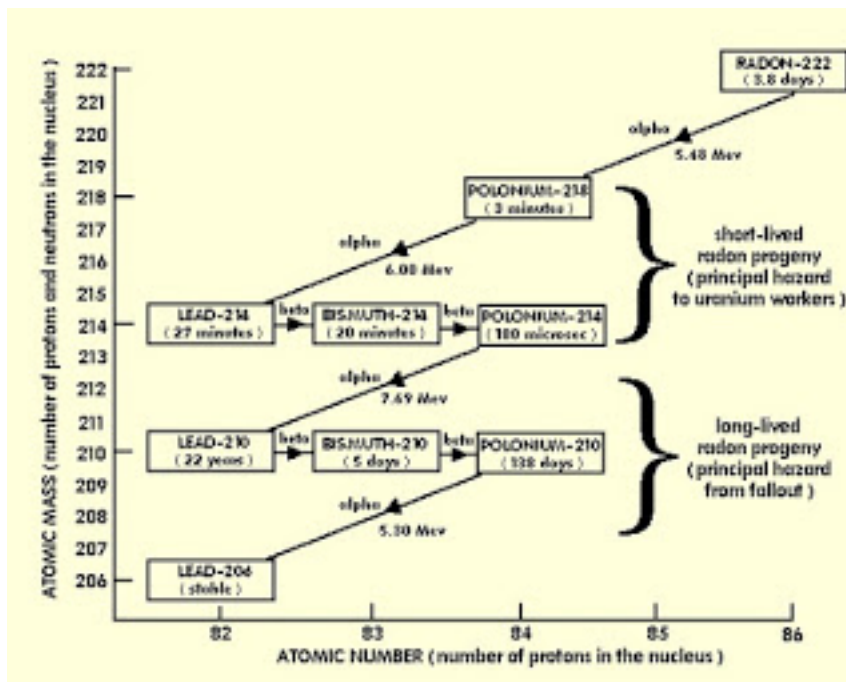
[Some of the Daftest Things Heard at the A303 Consultation Presentations](#)

Most folk who have been along to the A303 Stonehenge Scheme Public Consultations went to find out more, to learn of the proposals and to ask questions of Highways England. So, I guess you would have hoped, expected really, that the people fronted up by Highways England would be fully up to speed with the documentation and underpinning information. You would also have hoped they would be familiar with the current situation on the A303 and know why some of the jams occur, even though the overall flow of traffic would suggest it shouldn't be happening.

What got us thinking about this in the first place was overhearing one of the presenters/hosts telling a visitor, who was not from the immediate area, and telling them quite authoritatively, that the speed limit on the A303 past Stonehenge was 50 mph! That's right, 50 mph! Certainly news to us locals who have been driving it for decades.

Another example was a local who was interested in the phosphatic chalk issue. This is the reportedly 15 metre thick band of an unusual (for the UK and Europe) form of chalk that underlies Stonehenge. It was reported back in 2014 and Highways England are, as this is being written, taking samples to establish how far it extends and how much of a problem it is actually going to present. You see, its consistency is not at all rock-like and it seems that it gives off what have been described as high levels of radon gas - just like the granite rocks in Cornwall. It's a bit of a problem when it comes to disposal of the spoil from the tunnel as you don't really want the phosphatic chalk leaching into the water table, nor do you want the decay products of the radon, known as radon daughters, or, in these politically correct times radon progeny, which are the decay products of radon-222.

"Don't worry!" said the nice man from Highways England, the problem will only last for 3 days. Oh really! The decay of radon looks like this:



So, another error of fact. The half-life of radon is 3.8 days, but that doesn't mean it's all gone after this time, just that half the radioactivity has decayed. He also forgot to mention that radon is produced by the decay of elements in the thorium and uranium series - and these have a half-life measured in billions of years. Oh, he forgot to mention the nastiness of the radon progeny. Unlike radon, which is a gas, the progeny - Lead-210, Bismuth-210 and Polonium-210 can be deposited on dust particles that blow around in the wind or get deposited in soil and water and then taken up by plants, animals and people. Of course, this is only a hypothetical issue at the moment and the levels of radon and radon progeny might turn out to be insignificant in the greater scheme of things, but that doesn't excuse misleading people.

One of the daftest things we have heard, and heard in this context is perfectly accurate, was the "sound booth". Just about everyone we've spoken to thought this was something of a joke. Listen to the recorded sound of the A303 taken a couple of meters from the edge of the carriageway and then walk 5 paces to the door of Manor Barn and listen to the sound of the real A303 about 25 times further away. Guess what, the real A303 sounded much, much louder, even when the real sound level should have been between 9dB(A) and 12dB(A) lower by virtue of distance. We would have thought it not too difficult to have had the volume on the earphones turned up to a level that recreated reality - but would that have made the bypass options, and the new Countess Roundabout flyover in Amesbury, sound unpleasantly, but maybe realistically loud?

By far the daftest, yet most worrying thing heard, goes to the Highways England oft-repeated mantra that "you can't expect the level of detail you are asking for at this stage of the project when there are two alternative bypass routes". Really? Bear in mind the whole A303 Stonehenge Scheme has been lauded as one of the most expensive road schemes ever undertaken in the UK, it may come as a surprise to some to take a look at the [Highways England website Pre-Consultation documents for the Lower Thames Crossing at Dartford](#) a scheme that even at the pre-consultation stage, had all the detail and information we have been asking for with respect to the A303 - but there it was done for 4 routes. No doubt Highways England will come out with some fatuous comment to the effect that the Thames Crossing was atypical, somehow different, anomalous. Baloney!

What the Lower Thames Crossing was, even if it wasn't perfect, was "best practise" and that is something everyone needs to reflect upon.

Posted by [General Disquiet](#) at 11:38 [No comments](#): [Links to this post](#)
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Thursday, 2 February 2017

[On Ignoring The Obvious and Pulling The Wool Over People's Eyes](#)

The last couple of weeks have been rather surreal, ever since Highways England launched their plans for a tunnel under Stonehenge and a bypass for our beleaguered village of Winterbourne Stoke - and added a sting in the tail by offering a southern bypass route as an option. Although Highways England claim not to have a preference for either route, it is clear from their presentation material, from general reactions and to be honest, from verbal comments made by their own staff at several of the consultation events that there is a degree of bias towards the southern route.

Now we here at WiSBANG prefer the northern route for a couple of very simple reasons: lower levels of noise and pollution. Figure 1 below shows exactly why this is. The prevailing wind, as is easily confirmed by recourse to the UK Met Office is from the south west, at lower levels, within the village there are 5 years-worth of readings that show the wind at ground level comes from the south-south-east - there is a wind-rose in the bottom right hand corner of Fig 1 that shows this clearly.

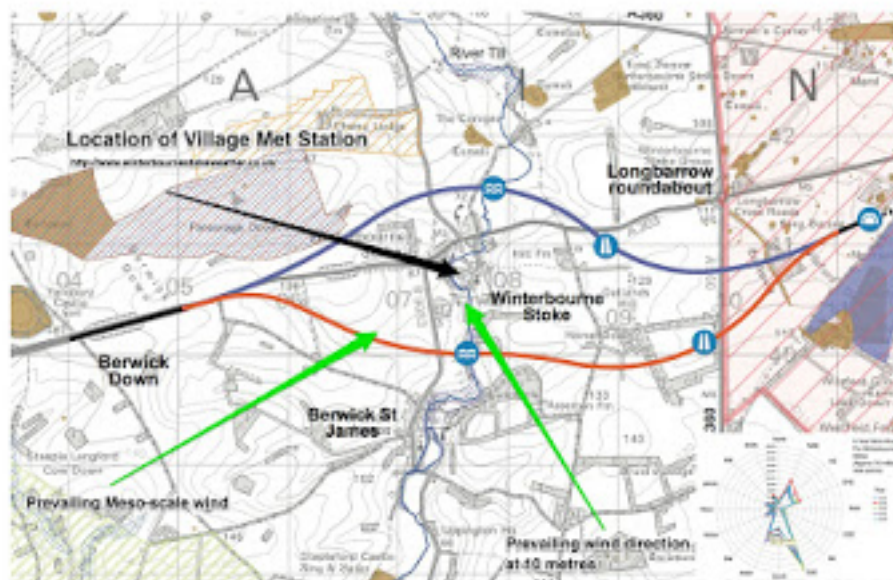


Figure 1 - Local Meteorology: The mesoscale meteorology shows the prevailing wind in Wiltshire comes from the South West and the average wind-speed (Met Office) is 4mS. Terrain features and facade effects mean at ground level, the prevailing wind direction at the heart of the village is perceived as predominantly south-south-easterly in the summer and north-north-easterly in winter.

Consequently, noise and pollution would be blown from the southern route into the heart of the village. Now, leaving aside those members of the community whose business interests would be best served by not having the northern route, you have to ask who in their right mind would opt for the southern route?

So, putting the bypass to the south of Winterbourne Stoke is quite simply, on environmental grounds alone, a crass idea for Winterbourne Stoke. The genius who had this brainstorm doubled the environmental impact by stuffing the route midway between Winterbourne Stoke and Berwick St James to the south; doubling the numbers of folk affected by additional road noise at a stroke.

In the case of the northern route, the noise and pollution is helped on its way by the prevailing wind, up into the Salisbury Plain Training Area where it might annoy the odd rabbit that isn't already stone deaf from listening to the Army AS-90s and whose sense of smell has been dulled by screening smokes.

Oddly, Highways England reckon, in the turgid depths of their Technical Appraisal Review that there is little to choose between these two routes on environmental grounds. Really? How can this be so?

Let's be charitable and call it "pulling the wool over people's eyes." This is how it seems to work. Rather than considering the impact of each route just from the A360 to Berwick Down and the people directly affected by it - say 80 or so households in Winterbourne Stoke and 70 or so in Berwick St James, why not consider the whole route from Amesbury to Berwick Down and aggregate all those affected in Amesbury as well (about a 1000) with the numbers from Winterbourne Stoke or Winterbourne Stoke + Berwick St James. Then apply a crude level of granularity, by considering only blocks of 100 houses in your evaluations.

So if you consider the first case and look at each route and those households directly affected within 1km of it, then the northern route affects around 80 households. On the other hand, the southern route affects $80 + 70 = 150$ households. So again, no right thinking person would ever opt for the southern route - it affects nearly twice the number of households as does the northern route.

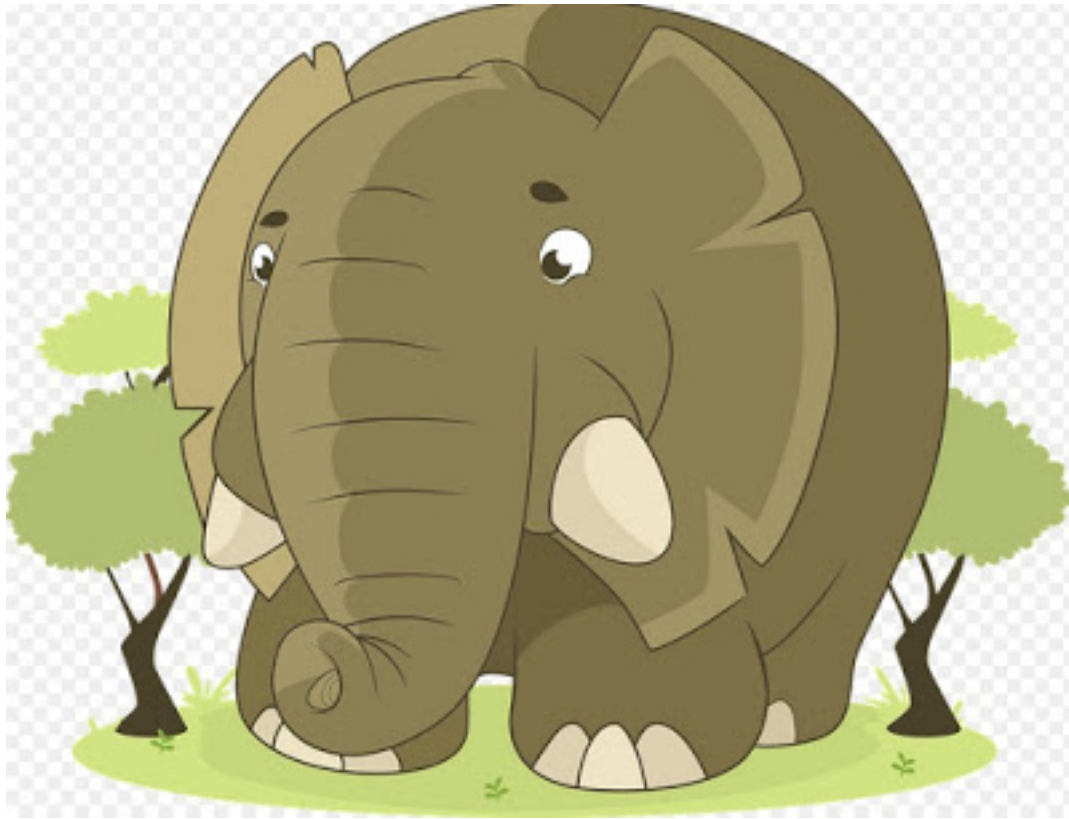
However, if you live in the brave new world of Highways England, the equation is like this: the northern route affects $1000 + 100$ (because 80 is nearly 100) = 1100 households. On the other hand, the southern route affects $1000 + 100$ (because $80 + 70 = 150$ which isn't near enough to 200 to be counted as 200) = 1100. QED!

Both routes have the same environmental impact? Well I'm blown. Highways England have just proved black is white. Whoever came up with this way of 'selling' the bypass should hang their head(s) in shame.

Highways England would clearly like us to take their assessments as articles of faith. Getting any real information out of them is hideously painful and is following an all too predictable course. The rules of the game are simple, the more you already know, the more you will get. You first get a flat denial that information exists. When you apply a little pressure you are told that they wouldn't normally collect that sort of data at this stage. Some may falter now, but don't. Grab them by their metaphorical testicles and squeeze - please do not do so for real, no matter how tempting things get!

The third stage is confession and confession they say is good for the soul - it isn't quite as good for our blood pressure though. They admit to having got the data, but suggest that "you probably wouldn't understand it" and when you point out that "yes you would." the pantomime descends into its final stage of obfuscation. "The data is available, but you have to go through official channels to get it!" But this isn't a game! It is our future!

Well, the channels have been gone through and the silence from Highways England is positively deafening!



Call us cynical, but you get the feeling that the prime driver for route selection, at least as far as Highways England is concerned, is to pick the route that helps them get rid of all the spoil dug out from under Stonehenge for the tunnel and that happens to be the southern route. That's the elephant in the room, the spoil. That might go some way to explain why Highways England are reluctant to share information with the public - they might spot the 2 million ton elephant.

Now don't get me wrong, we need a bypass, badly. But not a bypass at any price, not a bypass route that isn't the best option for the most households, not a bypass route that we have to accept as an article of faith. We want to be able to make our preference known on the basis of evidence and not the smoke and mirrors that seems to be the mainstay of the Highways England approach.

Posted by [General Disquiet](#) at 17:48 [No comments](#): [Links to this post](#)
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Labels: [A303](#), [A303 Stonehenge Scheme](#), [Amesbury](#), [Bypass](#), [Highways England](#), [Stonehenge](#), [Stonehenge World Heritage Site](#)

Wednesday, 11 January 2017

[Rumours and Little All Else](#)

The announcement of the Public Consultation on the A303 Stonehenge Scheme is a long time coming. The [Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council website](#) is being helpful in publishing what factual information it can find, but there are increasing rumours circulating of what is, or what is not going to happen.

We are not certain that blame for the delay can be laid at the door of little green men, UFO's, or crop circles, the "go-to" scapegoat for most unexplained phenomena in Wiltshire. Nor do we accept that Brexit or Donald Trump are to blame - in the case of the latter, we think the suggestion is simply taking the p\$££; but whatever turns the Donald on!

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council website has just provided [a link to a Highways England document](#) that outlines the process that is being followed and its certainly worth taking a look before the public consultation kicks off.

Posted by [General Disquiet](#) at [09:31](#) [No comments](#): [Links to this post](#)

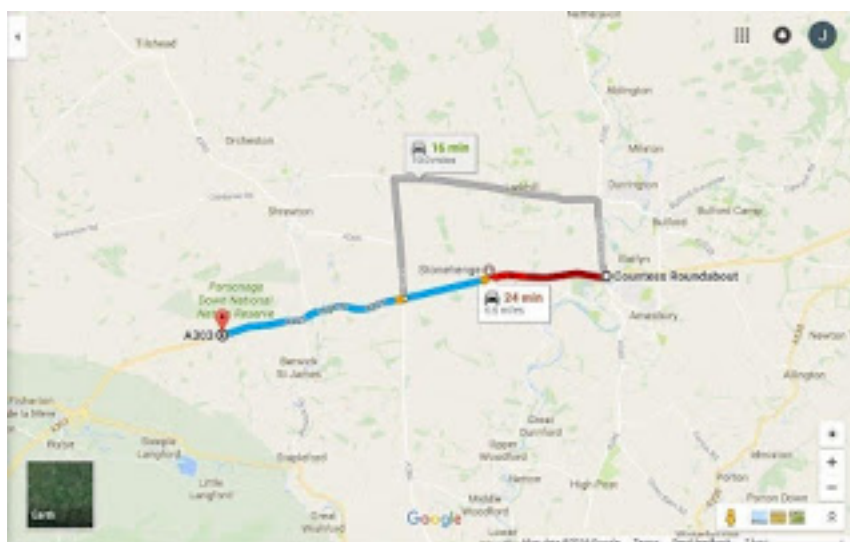
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Friday, 6 January 2017

[A Very Strange Day Indeed](#)

Yesterday was one of those days. First, some sort of post New Year brainstorm had affected several people in relation to the A303. Back on the 16th of December, [Highways England had posted a Tweet on their A303 Twitter](#) feed showing that it was quicker to leave the A303 at Countess Roundabout, travel north to the Packway, then west through Larkhill; finally turning South at Rollestone Crossroads, over the Airman's Cross roundabout at the entrance to the Stonehenge visitor centre before finally rejoining the A303 at Longbarrow Roundabout.



As far as we are aware, this is a very long-standing diversionary route for when the A303 comes to a standstill; particularly in the case of accidents. It's also a fact of life that most modern and up to date SatNavs would offer this alternative, when traffic delays on the A303 exceed a certain level.

In fact, this route was the only possible route west a few days later on 23rd December, following a dreadful fatal accident. So the reality is that Highways England was, unwittingly perhaps, doing a great service by pointing out the diversion. Moreover, the diversion offered goes through no local

villages, touching only the outskirts of Durrington and passing through the military town of Larkhill. In particular, it goes nowhere near the village of Shrewton

What happened next was rather bizarre and surprising as BBC Wiltshire ran a story conflating the Highways England Tweet, with the results of a traffic census run in Shrewton a couple of months earlier. The clear thrust of this radio news item and subsequent newspaper articles was that the Highways Agency Tweet had driven traffic into and through Shrewton and other local villages - utter baloney.

Only people leaving the A303 and **disregarding** the Highways Agency alternative could have ended up in Shrewton - most likely these were either folks relying on out of date SatNavs or locals avoiding the A303.

So the articles have been disingenuous in the extreme and by being so have actively detracted from the real problem of rat-running in Shrewton - the need to re-engineer Rollestone Crossroads to deter the majority of those now using the B3086 west of Rollestone from doing so, and to encourage them to follow the route shown above. Traffic calming measures into Shrewton on the B3086 are also desperately needed. **Now that really would reduce rat running in local villages and these measures are needed NOW. If only Wiltshire Council would de-digitate!**



Second, after all this idiocy we did get a bit of real news at a STAG meeting yesterday evening. [The A303 consultation is about to begin.](#)

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Wednesday, 13 April 2016

[Those That Walk Amongst Us](#)

We predicted, some time ago, that the announcement that the Government wished to push ahead with improving the A303/A30/A358 corridor to the West Country would flush out every failed and ill-considered proposal that has ever seen the light of day over the last half century or so. Sadly, but all too predictably, we have not been disappointed.

We've said, all along, that our goal is to dual the A303, bypass the beleaguered village of Winterbourne Stoke and improve the traffic situation on local roads, particularly those in and

around Shrewton to our north. However, in achieving our goal, our second aim is to ensure the best possible environment for the whole of the World Heritage Site; much of which lies within our Parish boundaries - almost certainly making us the most visited village in England, on a per capita basis, as English Heritage's Stonehenge Visitor's Centre lies within our boundaries. Also lying within our perimeter lies what is arguably the most important feature of the World Heritage Site - not Stonehenge, which is something of a "Jonny Come Lately", but the Longbarrow which pre-dates even the earliest phase of Stonehenge by half a millennium.



Actually, only the left hand side of the Longbarrow lies within the parish of Winterbourne Stoke, the right hand (south eastern) side lies in the parish of Wilsford Cum Lake.



You'd have thought that there would be a common view, locally, to enhance this landscape. Not a bit of it, it seems. Though to be fair, no-one has yet, in recent times, sought the views of the locals in any consistent way. That said, there seem to be several favoured alternatives locally:

- A - Any solution that gets rid of the traffic jams;
- B - A tunnel of 2.9km;
- C - An even longer tunnel;
- D - Dualling along the existing route, but sinking it in a ditch;
- E - Putting the road way to the north, across the southern edge of the Salisbury Plain training area - to the north of Larkhill;
- F - Putting the road south of Amesbury on any one of half a dozen routes.

The first solution (A) is borne of desperation by those who live along the A303 - understandable, but it may not help preserve our heritage. (B) and (C) achieve the aims of dualling the A303 and taking the road out of the World Heritage Site. The longer the tunnel the better, in environmental and heritage terms, but it comes at a cost. Perhaps the biggest advantage is that it would enable ALL vehicles, including most of the coaches used by English Heritage and the risible Land Train, to be excluded from the environment. Of course, you would need to provide some mechanised transport for the disabled and elderly, but every other bugger could walk into the landscape from the Visitor's Centre, Larkhill, Amesbury, etc. The route of the A303 could be returned to a green Bridleway throughout the WHS

(E) is an interesting option. The Armed Forces would kick and scream, but even with the current re-basing exercise, it's hard to justify still needing as much space to exercise our much diminished Forces as we did at the height of WWI and WWII. It would be an inexpensive route, with few landowners to deal with and would remove the A303 from the WHS. Far too sensible an option to be considered.

(F) looks superficially promising, until you get stuck into the detail. There are way too many vested interests that would help kill it off. It may have been a viable option 50 years ago when the idea of improving things was first mooted, but the world has moved on - unlike many of the proponents of this schemes.

Finally, we have option (D). About the only positive thing that can be said about this option is that it is cheap and cheerful. It does nothing to enhance the environment of the World Heritage site - and here it is important to stress one thing - whether or not the landscape around Stonehenge remains as a World Heritage site is immaterial to the argument of how the area is crossed. It comes down to whether WE as a region, WE as a nation, want to leave something valuable to posterity - or simply want to bung in a cheap and nasty road and to hell with the consequences. Those that are pushing for this option are doing so on the basis of simple cost (certainly not cost in the broader sense, or else they would soon realise how utterly indefensible their position is).

So, do they have a point when it comes to pounds shillings and pence? Lets look at just a couple of hard facts. Even the 2.9 km tunnel is going to cost at least £2billion. Now that is a big number and I can't imagine what it would look like as a pile of fivers, but is it really excessive in the greater scheme of things? Well let's compare it with something else equally controversial.

Now I could choose the cost of membership of the EU as the comparator, but the booklet of facts on staying in the EU, or leaving, dropped through the door the other day and when I opened this piece of Tory propaganda, I found all the facts were missing from my copy - and the same was true in every other copy I've looked at, so that isn't going to be overly helpful. What else might be a good comparator? Something else that is expensive and controversial - like the UK's Foreign Aid budget.

In 2013, the UK spent 0.7% of GDP, £11.4bn on foreign aid - money spent that does not benefit the UK directly and some would argue is often misspent, maladministered and way too much. We can point the finger of blame at the Lib-Dems for pushing the 0.7% of GDP target in Parliament. The Tories and Labour seem happy with the spend, through the Greens would like to increase it to 1% of GDP. UKIP on the other hand, want to reduce the Foreign Aid budget to 0.2% of GDP and spend the rest within the UK. In a time of austerity, it's hard to justify spending anything not of direct benefit to UK citizens, but I digress...



Back to a fact or two. Back in 2014, we gave India £279 million in Foreign Aid and that was 40% down on 2011. India has its own space program, it has a planned mission to Mars, and the whole program costs £500 million to run per year. So, in bald terms, the money we put into the Indian economy was equivalent to more than 50% of the cost of their entire space program or could have funded 7-8 missions to Mars. We may have been funding it entirely prior to 2011.

Now DfID will argue that the money was targeted on things the Indian's wouldn't have spent their own money on anyway, but the bottom line was that India had a choice on how to spend its money and chose a space program over health and education. I'm sure a little digging would uncover even more egregious examples, but this one will do for the moment.

So, the 2.9 km Stonehenge tunnel option might cost £2bn at December 2014 prices, but over the 40 years (more like 50, but lets be conservative) that there has been talk of improving the A303, we've probably ploughed a demonstrably un-needed £11.6 billion into Indian Foreign Aid. During the same period, we've probably ploughed close to half a trillion pounds into Foreign Aid in total.

Well, there you have it. A one-off spend of £2bn on a tunnel for Stonehenge is peanuts in the greater scheme of things and can easily be afforded by cutting the Foreign Aid budget from those countries, like India, that can well-afford to look after their own population's interests, but choose to ignore them. Of course, digressing again, there are real emergencies and situations that call for Foreign Aid and I wouldn't want to stop that, but we need to spend more wisely.

We have those that walk amongst us who believe a £2 billion tunnel is an extravagance, whilst their political bed-fellows were responsible for the concept of blowing 0.7% of GDP on Foreign Aid

without any clear demonstration of need. I would beg you to treat these people gently; their sanity is surely in question.

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About Me



[General Disquiet](#)

I'm someone who is intrigued with the idiocies of existence and who does not suffer fools gladly. As I get older, I have a sense of general disquiet about the way things are going.

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