

From: [Mike O'Dowd-Jones](#)
To: [A303 Sparkford to Ilchester](#)
Subject: Interested Parties invitation to comment 19 August 2020
Date: 16 September 2020 10:18:25
Attachments: [A303 Steering Group Letter Sparkford-Ilchester DCO 110920.pdf](#)

Please see the attached letter sent on behalf of the **A303 Steering Group** of interested local authorities promoting the need to improve the A303/A358/A30 Corridor (Somerset, Devon, Wiltshire, Dorset).

This is in response to the invitation issued on 19th August 2020 for interested parties to comment in light of the 'Minded to Refuse' letter issued by the Secretary of State.

Kind Regards

Mike O'Dowd-Jones

Strategic Commissioning Manager - Highways and Transport

Somerset County Council

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As a result of Coronavirus, all Somerset County Council staff have been asked to work from home, where this is practically possible, or to support other services if their role is not critical to the Coronavirus response. This will have an impact on our ability to deliver some services, so we thank you for your patience and understanding during this difficult time.

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[Somerset County Council.](#)

Secretary of State for Transport

Via email to:

A303SparkfordtoIlchester@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Please ask for: Cllr David Hall

Email: DHall@somerset.gov.uk

Direct Dial: 0300 123 2224

Date: 11 September 2020

Dear Secretary of State

Application by Highways England for an Order granting Development Consent for the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling.

Further to your letter of 19 August 2020 to all interested parties.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for comments on the applicant's response to the Secretary of State's 'minded to refuse' letter of 21 July 2020.

We are writing as Cabinet Members engaged in the A303 Steering Group, a longstanding corridor coalition of local authorities promoting improvements to the A303/ A358/A30 corridor.

We wish to ensure that Government is clear on the priority of delivering an end to end dual carriageway improvement along this route to form a second strategic route connecting the South West.

An independent economic assessment commissioned by the Local Authorities and the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, and validated by DfT demonstrated that improving the whole A303/A30/A358 corridor would:

- create 21,400 jobs and deliver a £39bn boost to the economy
- deliver £21.2bn of taxation, welfare savings, disposable income and tourism benefits;
- create £1.9bn in transport benefits from reduced journey times and greater resilience;
- save 1807 fatal or serious casualties;
- reduce carbon emissions by 9%.

We are extremely concerned that the DCO process for this section of the route has come to a position where the Secretary of State is minded to refuse the application for what is clearly a national priority of enormous strategic importance to the South West and the UK. The scheme is more vital than it has ever been for levelling up the economy as we continue the post-lockdown recovery. Every element of the end-to-end corridor improvement is of critical importance.

The statutory consultees for this scheme including Somerset County Council in their role as Local Highway Authority are best placed to respond in detail on the further information provided by Highways England. As a strategic steering group, we are confident that Highways England will be able to find appropriate and acceptable solutions to the outstanding matters of detail by working with the statutory consultees and relevant competent bodies.

We strongly urge the Secretary of State to ensure that any remaining matters of detail are considered in light of the enormous strategic benefit of the schemes and ensure that appropriate processes are put in place to enable any remaining issues to be resolved as part of the current DCO application rather than refusing the DCO at this stage.

The parties working together can undoubtedly ensure that details are finalised in a manner that ensures the scheme is acceptable in planning terms. Refusing the DCO would be a disastrous step backwards for the scheme at a time when the investment is most needed and would undoubtedly result in considerable additional delay and cost to the public purse which must be avoided.

This investment is a key priority for our authorities, our sub-national transport bodies and our Local Enterprise Partnerships and we urge you to keep the process moving forwards rather than let it slip backwards.

Somerset County Council

County Hall, Taunton
Somerset, TA1 4DY



Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

Cllr David Hall – A303 Steering Group Chair

Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure.

[Redacted signature]

Cllr Andrea Davis -Devon County Council

Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste

[Redacted signature]

Cllr [Redacted] Wiltshire Council

Portfolio Holder for Strategic Highways

[Redacted signature]

Cllr [Redacted]
Cabinet Member for Highways, Travel and the Environment

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted signature]