



RAMBLERS

Gloucestershire Ramblers Area A417 NH DCO - Cotswold Way Diversion

Re: A417 Missing Link at the Air Balloon

National Highways Application for a Development Consent Order

Cotswold Way Diversion Report and relevance to Walking and the Countryside

The following submission by the Applicant is noted:-

TR010056-000604-7.11 Cotswold Way National Trail Diversion Report.pdf

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All parties agreed with the proposed diversion of the National Trail across the Cotswold Way crossing.

a) Gloucestershire Ramblers did not offer agreement.

Ramblers have been trying to ensure that the route options retain the Cotswold Way on its authors' line next to the Air Balloon Inn, a popular and historic landmark next to the Trail.

b) The meetings are not where parties present necessarily agreed and also all relevant parties may not be present. Generally the applicants updates to their proposals are described and these can be considered after the meeting.

The applicants proposal to divert the Cotswold Way and demolish the landmark Air Balloon Inn does not meet Ramblers aims to defend footpaths and protect the landscape nor does it seem to meet the scheme aims of recreational enhancement and landscape led.

There were other submissions about the National Trail for example

TR010056-001604-Natural England - Responses to ExQ2 on the Cotswold Way National Trail-1.pdf

On Page 2 of 3 it makes the request

Prior to implementation of the route variation, NE would ask that National Highways is required to consult with the Cotswold Way Trail Partnership and Natural England,

It's not clear which organisations comprise the Cotswold Way Trail Partnership. It would be great if feedback could also be sought from Gloucestershire Ramblers.

The Cotswold Way is regarded as a 'Jewel in the Crown' for Ramblers Nationally.

Ramblers in Gloucestershire were instrumental in its inception and creation over 50 years ago and also pressed for its recognition as a National Trail in 2007.

Any suggestion for diversion away from the published alignment or proposals that adversely impact landmarks along the route will naturally be strongly resisted.

The Applicant doesn't seem to have considered any options to retain the Cotswold Way alongside the landmark Air Balloon Inn.

It could be distressing to read a guidebook, discussing its heritage, to find a footnote saying 'demolished in 2026 to make way for a new road scheme'.

To emphasise the point, on 22nd April 2022, the Applicant published the press release shown overleaf.

It majors on what has been included in the scheme but not what has been taken away. There is nothing about diversion of the Cotswold Way or the loss of the Air Balloon.

Members and walkers have let us know that since the applicant no longer mentions demolition, they trust that the Inn will be retained in line with the scheme aims of landscape-led and recreational enhancement.

There is still time to update the scheme so that they are not disappointed.

National Highways Press Release 22 April 2022

A417 Missing Link

A landscape-led highways scheme that will deliver a safe and resilient free-flowing road while conserving and enhancing the special character of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Our scheme will improve the connection between two dual carriageway sections of the A417 at Brockworth and Cowley.

National Highways awards major A417 contract to Kier

National Highways has awarded a £460 million contract to Kier to design and deliver an upgrade to the A417 between Gloucester and Swindon.

An artist's impression of the scheme shows plans for a 37m-wide crossing, connecting habitats and allowing users of the Gloucestershire Way to cross the improved A417 safely.



The contract award follows a competitive procurement process through National Highways' Regional Delivery Partnership framework.

Kier and National Highways completed a budget setting process in the early part of this year (2022). Kier's team will include Volker, Arup, Tony Gee and RPS to prepare for and construct the 3.4-mile route.

The Planning Inspectorate is examining our Development Consent Order (DCO) application, which is needed for all Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects prior to construction starting.

Following the examination's conclusion in May, the Planning Inspectorate will send its recommendation of a decision to the Secretary of State for Transport in the summer, with a decision on the route expected by the Secretary of State in the autumn.

Michael Goddard, Project Director for the A417, said:

We are delighted to be working with Kier to move forward this vital scheme.

Kier has an extensive track record working with National Highways and delivering large scale infrastructure projects, so we are confident they will deliver a scheme that meets our landscape-led vision. We will work together to deliver a project that is sympathetic with the special character of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and will support economic growth, improve traffic flows at peak times and make the road safer.

Paul Baker, Kier Highways project director, said:

Delivering highways infrastructure which is vital to the UK is Kier Highways' purpose and we are proud to be doing this through the delivery of the A417 contract. We look forward to working with National Highways and our supply chain partners to deliver this vitally important infrastructure project to improve the connectivity of the strategic road network.

We are a national business with a local focus and throughout the duration of the project, we will support the local community through employment opportunities and social value initiatives that leave a positive legacy.

Councillor Mark Hawthorne, Leader of Gloucestershire County Council, added:

I'm really pleased we've reached this key stage of this vital project. After such a long wait, it really feels like the solution for the 'Missing Link' is much closer to becoming a reality.

Completion will bring improved safety and air quality along with more reliable journey times leading to huge benefits for our county's economy as well as creating new habitats and habitat connections for native wildlife.

The A417/A419 provides an important route between Gloucester and Swindon that helps connect the Midlands/North to the South of England. It's an alternative to the M5/M4 route via Bristol.

The Missing Link itself is a three-mile stretch of single-lane carriageway on the A417 between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout in Gloucestershire.

The Missing Link causes many problems for road users and those who live or work in the area. Congestion can be frequent and unpredictable, so some motorists divert onto local roads to avoid tailbacks.

This causes difficulties for neighbouring communities and local roads were not built to accommodate so much traffic. Poor visibility and other factors also mean that accidents, many of which are serious, occur frequently along this section of road.

Our aim is to improve this section of the A417 with a scheme that includes:

- 4 miles of new dual carriageway connecting the existing A417 Brockworth bypass with the existing A417 dual carriageway south of Cowley
- the section to the west of the existing Air Balloon roundabout would follow the existing A417 corridor. However, the section to the south and east of the Air Balloon roundabout would be offline, away from the existing road corridor
- a new junction at Shab Hill, providing a link from the A417 to the A436 towards Oxford and into Birdlip
- a new junction would be included near Cowley, replacing the existing Cowley roundabout
- the existing A417 between the Air Balloon roundabout and the Cowley roundabout would be repurposed. We would convert some lengths of this existing road into a route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, while retaining other sections to maintain local access for residents.
- Similarly, supporting the landscape vision of the scheme, we continue to work with our stakeholders to maximise the benefits. We will be creating new habitats and habitat connections for native wildlife including bats, bees, badgers and more to flourish.