

Anthony Eric Metcalfe

Sunday, 18 December 2022

To
A66 upgrade public enquiry.

Dear enquiry,

As stated on my registration I wish to raise 2 main objections / subject areas to the scheme as presently proposed, but first I will tell you a little about myself. I was born in 1957 at Nateby (near Kirkby Stephen) and in 1961 my father bought [REDACTED] business in Kirkby Stephen. Running this business required daily supplies being delivered along the A66 from Darlington and alternate weekly travel to both Carlisle and Darlington. Since 1963 I have lived in Kirkby Stephen and from 1984 commuted to Carlisle daily. From 1999 to 2013 I commuted daily to Penrith and from 2018 to present commute to Penrith 1 to 4 days a week. In 2016 March to November I worked in Penrith at Eden District council which involved travel around the district. I was also UK Fabrication manager for an international company that moved goods,, often urgent along the A66 and I have considerable experience of civil engineering and construction. From the above you can see that I have long term experience of using the A66 and M6 and am aware of construction costs. I have taken an interest in road building particularly since 1997 when the Kirkby Stephen bypass should have gone ahead.

My objections are:

- 1) The Kirkby Stephen Bypass should have been included in the trans Pennine upgrade
- 2) The proposed route from Appleby to Penrith has many drawbacks and will give a poor value for money outcome.

The Kirkby Stephen Bypass should have been included in the trans Pennine upgrade

During the construction of the M6 along the Lune gorge it became clear that the A685 link between Tebay (now J38) and Brough on the A66 needed upgrading and opening up to HGVs. A further need to upgrade the A685 was apparent when the A66 Brought – Stainmore – Bowes was being upgraded in the 1970s. The A685 saw significant improvements, much of it new road but in Kirkby Stephen they attempted to accommodate increase traffic flows by knocking down buildings and road widening. Just before the 1974 local government reorganisation that created Cumbria, Westmorland country council realised that knocking down more buildings in Kirkby Stephen was not going to solve the issue and a bypass was proposed. The scheme was put on Cumbria's Transport Priority Programme and came to the head of the list in 1976 after the completion of the Staveley bypass. The route was decided, surveyed and designed. A public enquiry was held in January 1997 (Inspector R G Brown at Kirkby Stephen Methodist Chapel). Before the enquiry was decided on Labour came to power both on Cumbria County Council and Nationally in May 1997 and the Kirkby Stephen Bypass was cancelled. When the result of the enquiry was published it "found a compelling case for the bypass and rejected the alternatives". The Kirkby Stephen Bypass still has not been built and the result is substantial past and ongoing

damage to the Northern economy. (See spreadsheet and word cost documents). The abandonment of the Kirkby Stephen Bypass caused local uproar and as a result Cumbria County Council introduced an 18.5 tonne weight restriction on the A685 through Kirkby Stephen. This means good vehicles have to find an alternative route which is much longer. Via Penrith which is the option for many involves a 23 mile detour. My cost sheets are at 2020 prices. I believe the extra costs will now exceed £15 million per year. This mean a Kirkby Stephen Bypass costing even £30 million will be pay for itself in 2 years, an extraordinarily rapid rate of return.

Initially a Kirkby Stephen Bypass was proposed as art of the trans Pennine / A66 upgrade but was removed. I believe it removal was a serious error and based on incorrect and omitted (accident) information. See letter from Jesse Norman (Chief Secretary to the Treasury) to Rory Stewart (MP) dated 24 July 2017.

From the letter – in heavy print

- **provide a slight improvement in journey times for traffic travelling between the M6 junctions and the A66; and**

In fact the savings in journey times would by considerable, typically over an hour for vehicles over 18.5 tonnes and in the region of 10 to 30 minutes for other vehicles. The town is frequently gridlocked. Compare this to the times savings being used to justify the horrendously expensive HS2. The 18.5 tonne weight restriction results in 230 HGVs per day detouring via Penrith. This adds over 2 miles per day to the Penrith roundabout queues. The mileages given in the stage 3 report fail to include the effects of the 18.5 tonne weight restriction.

- **reduce severance and noise in Kirby Stephen as well as improving air quality.**

The above is true but it fails to mention the costs and health issues of childhood asthma which in some cases extends into adulthood.

The letter and stage 3 report fails to mention the A685 KSI statistics which for the length to be bypassed at Kirkby Stephen are 72% above the national average and make the road statistically more dangerous than the A66. Just within the last month or so there have been 3 serious incidents I am aware of. (See attached accident lists)

The report fails to mention the costs of disruption to the Carlisle Settle railway due to bridge strikes – it is one of the most hit railway bridges in England.

The cost of a bypass was estimated at £88m excluding inflation, which is some way above the £20m quoted by your constituent. The report is publically available and can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-trans-pennine-strategic-study-stage-3-report>

The Kirkby Stephen Bypass was costed at £8.7m excluding inflation of which around £0.7m has already been spent on preparation and the 1997 public enquiry. My figure of circa £20m was based on the Kirkby Stephen Bypass original budget, the actual cost of the Temple Sowerby bypass and my knowledge of construction industry costs. It seems the Kirkby Stephen Bypass may have been discounted from the A66 upgrade because someone got the decimal point in the wrong place.

Building a Kirkby Stephen Bypass before work starts on the Brough - Penrith section of the upgrade will also greatly facilitate traffic management and relive pressures on A69 towns such as Warwick Bridge.

Kirkby Stephen already has serious traffic problems and congestion. The forecasts are that traffic will increase significantly during A66 dualling and by a lesser amount afterwards. Even this lesser amount will have a significant negative impact at peak flow congestions times. It is my understanding that the effects of major highway changes on feeder roads has to be properly considered. In discontinuing the Kirkby Stephen Bypass from the trans Pennine scheme the highways authority has failed in its duty to do this. What is the point of the A66 upgrade that eases the burden of traffic of the very few homes along the A66 only to increase te traffic burden on the very many homes and businesses very close to the A685 in Kirkby Stephen?

The second part of my objection to the present proposal.

The proposed route from Appleby to Penrith has many drawbacks and will give a poor value for money outcome.

There are a number of serious problems with the scheme as proposed. At Penrith the following roads intersect. M6, A66, A6, A592, A686 and B5320. This means that incidents on some of these roads has a major knock on effect and results in Penrith, the A66 and the M6 in particular becoming gridlocked. The present proposal does nothing to separate these intersections. National traffic needs to be separated from local traffic.

The question that has been set is “how to upgrade the A66”. The question that should have been set is “what is the best route from Appleby to the M6 and how do we solve congestion in and around Penrith”

Several people wrote to the local paper (The Herald) and to the enquiry suggesting alternative routes along similar lines to my suggestion but these have been ignored. I believe the consultation was not genuine and the Highways were overly influenced by where they have already spent money upgrading the A66. The alternative route needs proper independent examination and costing.

The proposed route has many drawbacks.

- 1) A number of complex, expensive junctions, particularly the replacement underpass for Kemplay roundabout.
- 2) The present proposal does not alleviate problems at Skirsgill. This is a really serious and frequent congestion source and will remain so.
- 3) Major disruption to present route and traffic problems on diversion routes during upgrade.
- 4) The proposed route is 1 km longer than existing route mainly due to Gypsum / Kirkby Thore loop.
- 5) The number of junctions will be a source of increased accidents. Junctions are a notorious source of accidents on many dual carriageways.
- 6) The slip roads at Temple Sowerby are not long enough and will cause even more problems when traffic on A66 increases.

Routing the road via Hackthorpe (or thereabouts) has a number of advantages

- 1) Greatly reduces traffic a Skirsgill
- 2) Gets HGV traffic out of Shap, Clifton and Eamont Bridge

- 3) Minimal interference with present road and minimal traffic management during construction.
- 4) Leaves present road for local commuter and agricultural traffic.
- 5) Provides alternative diversion routes in future if either road is closed for maintenance or due to accidents.