



It's been some time since our last newsletter and there are a few important things to update you on.

Public Consultation on M5 J9 & A46 Transport Scheme

In December we shared our thoughts on why the public consultation had been delayed again (i.e. insufficient National Highways resource and a disagreement on where a new bypass would join the M5). We don't know if these issues are now resolved but we understand significant additional funding has been provided to GCC to continue with their work and that the transport minister, Baroness Vere confirmed her support for the scheme last November.

We've been told that the public consultation is expected to be either in June or September this year to avoid the July/August holiday period. Some councillors think it will be June although September is the date mentioned in both Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) February minutes for a meeting of the "Economy, Environment & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee" and in a written response made in relation to a scheme update request from the Department for Transport (DfT). Experience suggests September is more likely but we will see.

DfT Spending Review of Major Road Network (MRN) and Large Local Major (LLM) Programme

We have been made aware of a nationwide review of all MRN/LLM schemes by the DfT. This has asked all transport bodies and council promoters to reconsider whether their schemes continue to meet a list of specified objectives such as addressing strategic priorities, making timely progress, has local support and provides value for money (given an increasing cost penalty for adding to an existing carbon footprint). For the South West region this covers numerous schemes (e.g. the A417 missing link, M5 10 expansion etc.) and not just the proposed A46 bypass.

Under a freedom of information request we have recently obtained copies of both GCC's input to this review and Western Gateway's (WG) written response to the DfT submitted in March. Both of these documents can be viewed on our website. [LINK](#)

Unsurprisingly, GCC and WG remain strongly committed to promoting a new bypass as evidenced by expenditure to date of £8m (double the figure of £4m advised to us in November). More disappointingly, WG continue to position this scheme to support the wider objective of a north-south A46 strategic transport corridor, an argument that favours a dual carriageway or expressway solution.

Tucked away in all the detail are a few crumbs of comfort in that construction is stated as scheduled to start in January 2028 for completion in July 2030. A long way off and much can change; however, the public consultation this year remains a critical step as our best and perhaps only chance to influence the route.



A46 Bypass Route Options

In recent newsletters we have given a lot of coverage to Cllr. Vernon Smith's route proposal. In a nutshell, this appears to be the ONLY option we've seen that seeks to avoid using the A435. This received a lot of support during and after the Tewkesbury 2030 Exhibition. However, we don't know if this will also be viewed favourably by National Highways and included as one of probably only two route options they publish for public comment.

We recognise the continued uncertainties but also think it would be naive to wait and assume all will be OK. We've seen strong evidence that National Highways favour using the A435 as part of the new bypass from their 2018 Assessment Report (obtained under a freedom of information request) showing all 3 of their then route options using the A435 and, in 2020, an e-mail which suggested that using the A435 was the only route option being considered. We have regularly outlined our arguments for not wanting the A435 to be used and it is highly frustrating that, Vernon aside, we may end up being ignored.

Our suggestion is to conduct a brief survey to collect residents feedback on the assumption that the A435 will be used. This will enable us to know the level and strength of opinion, from which we might then look to invite local councillors and other key people to a public meeting to share their views and hear your concerns.

We will e-mail this one page survey next week. Please do look out for this and spend a few minutes to consider and complete.

Gloucestershire and Worcestershire Parish Council Association (GWPCA)

The GWPCA was set up last August in response to mounting concerns with the way in which new developments are being progressed without seeking the views of local residents. Unfortunately, this group has been disbanded after less than six months due to a lack of interest.

Finally, we would like to wish everyone a Happy Easter.