

**Statement of the Valley Parishes Alliance
regarding the proposed Link Road
between the A36 and A46
in the Avon and Limpley Stoke Valleys
(11th July 2017)**

Who are we?

The VPA (Valley Parishes Alliance) is an alliance of 7 Parish Councils to the east of Bath, across the B&NES and Wiltshire boundary. Our parishes all share the beautiful rural setting provided by the Avon and Limpley Stoke valleys.

The Alliance was born of a desire to safeguard the Valley's unique environment and give voice to the very real concerns of its residents. Too often the Council's policies and decisions appear to privilege those who live in the city centre. We don't believe in an "us vs. them" approach, but we do believe that our voices should be clearly heard in all policy discussions which potentially affect us in a predominantly negative way."

We bring together the knowledge and commitment of seven Parish Councils to support any plans and projects which enhance our environment, and conversely, we seek to oppose those which do not.

The VPA has stated its opposition to a link road between the A36 and A46 on multiple occasions in the past. Various Link Road schemes have been proposed in the past 30 years. Despite considerable pressure on the part of successive administrations, none of these have been considered viable. There must be fundamental reasons for this!

- **Any link road would be in the Cotswold AONB and setting of the Bath World Heritage Site.** A Public Enquiry concluded that a link road - *QUOTE* - would have intolerable impacts on the landscape and be devastating to its recreational amenity *UNQUOTE*.
- **The two roads to be "linked", the A36 and A46 are geologically unstable**, requiring frequent closures for maintenance. Highway England has stated that they are unsuitable for an increase in HGV and other traffic that would result from a link road. Despite recent political pressures, we know that Highways England is NOT in favour of a link road project (indeed, a link road does NOT figure in their latest RIS2 planning horizon). (mention here RIS timescale and info gleaned from Exeter meeting).
- **Bath's congestion, where it occurs, is due to traffic which is predominantly local.** Government figures show that only 1 in 20 cars represent through traffic. Minor congestion relief from a link road would therefore be felt **temporarily** around Cleveland Bridge and London Road but NOWHERE ELSE in Bath. And what about through HGV movements? How would those be affected by the existence of a link road?
- **The solution favoured by the haulage industry to connect the M4 to the South Coast involves further improvements to the A350 (including a Westbury bypass).** This has the added benefit of NOT attracting traffic to the Bath area. Far from reducing it, new roads are invariably proven to induce more traffic.

- So, at best, the “link road” would be reduced to an ineffectual Bath “relief road”, at huge financial cost and causing severe environmental damage.
- But what about the alarming levels of pollution in some areas of town? These are due to diesel fumes which discharge dangerous particulates and Nitrogen Oxides in the air we breathe. Having noted that diesel cars — long touted as environmentally less damaging by our governments — are actually more polluting than commercial diesel engines, what are the alternatives to reducing HGV pollution and pollution in general?
 - a congestion charge scheme
 - Low Emission Zones (LEZs);
 - regional signing strategies;
 - improved parking for coaches.
 - out-of-town transport hubs served by electric vehicles

to name but a few.

- Bathampton is on the edge of an Air Quality Management Area with emissions just below EU safety limits and on a rising trajectory - while parts of London Road already exceed them. A link road attracting more traffic (as shown in Government statistics) could only lead to further rises in emissions levels.
- A36/46 link road proposals fundamentally conflict with B&NES Council’s own environmental policies.
- Despite unsubstantiated claims of possible benefits there is no proven economic case for a new link road.
- Not only are proposals a threat to the character and amenity of the UNESCO WHS setting of Bath but also to the many communities and environments throughout the Avon Valley South of Bath, to Beckington and beyond.

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The questions to answer, before considering any link road project are:

- Will the project achieve what it sets out to do?
- Where is the evidence?
- Does a cost/benefit analysis support it?
- What is the realistic timescale of the project?
- If congestion and pollution are such pressing problems, shouldn’t we be looking at cost-effective, simpler solutions that can be deployed in the near to medium-term future?

These questions deserve serious consideration and not simplistic, politically motivated answers. Any proposal should be based on publicly available data, not factoids.

Yes, BATH DESERVES BETTER – North East Somerset does too.

Thank you.