

Annex B



Cambridgeshire
County Council

My Ref.: BS
Your Ref.:
Date: 29/9/03
Please ask for: B. Smith
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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT
COUNCIL
- 2 OCT 2003
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

Bill Wadrup
Traffic Operations Director
Eastern and South Eastern Regions
Highways Agency
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Dear Bill,

Re: A14 Thrapston to Brampton Grade Separated Junctions

I am writing to express the concern and frustration of elected Members at the news of the Agency's decision to defer or down grade the above junction improvements. Indeed on the basis of the letter received by the Chairman of the County Council it is not precisely clear what the decision is and why it has been taken at this time.

I particularly object to the poor communications in this episode. The indistinct nature of the decision and the totally unsatisfactory manner in which it was publicised has caused confusion as different interests have struggled to understand and naturally try to retrieve the situation.

The letter itself appears to have internal contradictions, in that it appears work is still proceeding in some respects of the published schemes, yet the schemes and further work on them has been shelved or abandoned. Jonathan Djanogly, MP has already highlighted a series of obvious questions that frankly ought to have been explained at the time of the decision, and I expect you will be responding helpfully to his requests.

I have subsequently learned that a change of heart on these schemes was prompted by an enquiry as to the current position by one of the Parish Councils. We are aware that the schemes were not in the targeted programme, but within an ongoing regional programme of local schemes, which gives your office a good deal of flexibility as to scope of works and programming. Given the lengthy history of the development of these schemes, involving a lot of effort by the County Council responsible for the affected adjacent local roads and public rights of way, District and Parish Councils and other stakeholders, a more measured exit, if really necessary, was called for.

There is a feeling, strongly shared by the Planning and Transport Lead Members of the County and District Councils that the Highways Agency should have, under these circumstances, recognised the need to forewarn local decision makers of the difficulties it foresaw with the schemes in their present form. Having failed to do this, there should have been far better dissemination of the facts. The limited amount there was, was particularly mis-targeted to Chairmen of the County and District Councils, (rather than Chief Officers), and to three of the parish councils affected.

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This action failed to understand and recognise the roles, duties and interests of elected Members at all levels. Many of these Members feel totally frustrated that once again the Highways Agency has failed to communicate with local Members in an appropriate way.

There is much new infrastructure that needs to be delivered in the County in the coming years which requires closer partnership, as I am pleased to say we now appear to have on the CHUMMS A14 schemes. The County Council stands ready to assist, albeit reluctantly, even with breaking the ground for bad news providing we have adequate warning and fully understand the reasons. We recognise that at times priorities have to be reassessed, and there are often ways in which this news can be presented which makes it more tolerable and does not give the impression of wasted effort by large numbers of people.

I am sure you will share my conclusion that locally the Highways Agency has not emerged with credit in this affair from the way the decision was taken or announced.

I hope we can all learn from this incident and I think it would be appropriate if our officers were to meet to clarify the difficulties your office sees with the schemes and determine which elements of the schemes might yet be retained.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brian Smith

Director