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15th August 2018

Dear Nick

A417 Missing Link

As we have underlined on many occasions, the Board supports a solution to the A417 Missing Link. We jointly agreed a vision for a landscape-led scheme, with three design principles together with a suite of more specific objectives and sub-objectives to which we contributed substantively.

We are also pleased to continue to contribute constructively to seeking the development of an exemplary scheme. However, we remain very concerned that the vision and objectives that were agreed have not so far been championed and implemented in the strategic manner that we feel the sensitivity of the landscape demands. You will have noted from the Board's formal response to your consultation that it seeks a landscape led solution rather than an engineering solution with landscape mitigation. Our concerns around the direction of travel of the project and the sudden change in the process ahead of the consultation were set out in our letter dated 24th March 2018.

We have raised concerns over the lack of papers in advance of meetings and lack information in some instances. Rather than this continues to be an issue for future meetings we have a series of questions. It would be helpful if we could have the details outlined below. We find it surprising that you have not provided any long sections or cross sections of the proposed routes as part of the information for consultation. Without the vertical geometry of the proposed routes and the topography in section, it is impossible to come to a proper view as to the landscape and visual impacts of the various schemes. Such information is integral to the engineering design process and so it is concerning that it has been omitted from the consultation to date.

Information request:

1. Can you now share the detailed analysis of the consultation responses and HEs response to the issues raised? The consultation closed at the end of March and it is reasonable to assume the results are available.
2. In Spring 2016 HE asked the Board to submit a set of Core Environmental Design Objectives and we duly did so. During the Value Management Workshops and discussions agreeing the Vision etc HE and its consultants advised that there was to be a schedule of design issues sitting below the sub objectives. Is this still the case? Can you share this listing with partners? If not, why not?
3. Prior to the consultation deadline HE undertook to provide details of how the removal of the toll on the Severn Bridge would impact on traffic flows on the M4 and A417/419. Can this material be made available? If not, why not?
4. The proposed link from the A436 to the A417 continues to use Birdlip Hill and proposes new access road configurations at the top of the escarpment. What other options were considered in establishing whether there could be a more logical and

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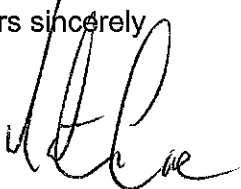
less damaging solution in terms of landscape, natural environment and visual intrusion e.g could any link road be set back from the escarpment and come off the current A436 nearer to Seven Springs?

5. Please provide the following information to help us make properly considered comments on the evolving design development for options 12 and 30:
 - a. Please show on a plan and sections the consideration given to refining the horizontal and vertical alignment across the High Wold in the southern half of the scheme;
 - b. Please provide copies of the long sections of road level relative to ground surface for each of the two options under consideration (we appreciate that these will only be indicative at this stage);
 - c. What is the height and basal width of the principal embankments likely to be required to achieve the balance of cut and fill now proposed as an objective?;
 - d. Other than the fill required to build embankments to achieve necessary gradients without the road becoming more intrusive in the landscape, what is the current estimate for the area of land likely to be required for landscaping fill? Where is such fill most likely to be distributed? Please show on a plan; what assumptions have been made about the relative quantities of engineering fill and unsuitable fill arising from the excavations;
 - e. We have received the diagrams within the PowerPoint slides from the recent technical working group but they lack long sections, scales and indications of orientation. Please provide copies with these details and also indications of whether or not cutting slopes will need to differ for the abutments of potential land bridges at each site;
 - f. We note that the examples of land bridges mentioned in the technical presentation do not include any that match the circumstances for the A417 and nor, so far as we can see, does the Natural England Review. What examples are there of land bridges on UK dual carriageway trunk roads spanning cuttings over 12m deep and/or in situations with changes of general topographic elevation of over 40 metres.

Reasonable alternatives:

6. What criteria have been applied to identify 'reasonable alternatives' and how do they relate to best past practice in similar situations? In the Board's consultation response and those of Natural England and others, concern was expressed that no tunnel options were taken forward to consultation despite them being the best performing shortlisted options overall. This appears contrary to Environmental Assessment requirements regarding consideration of 'reasonable' alternatives that meet scheme objectives – including those for environmental protection.
7. Given that the A417/436 is a 'landscape led' scheme, how does the range of options subjected to consultation differ from other schemes in protected landscapes with regard to any structural solutions to avoid/ reduce serious landscape impacts?
8. Noting that the principle reason for not including tunnels at the consultation stage appears to have been almost solely budgetary, was any consideration given to alternative means of funding such measures e.g. smart tolls to secure environmental benefits?

Yours sincerely



Martin Lane
Director