



24th March 2018

Comments on the A417 proposals by the Cotswold Way Association

Headlines

The hugely popular Cotswold Way National Trail will be severely impacted by both of the proposed A417 route options as they pass through one of the most important parts of the Cotswold escarpment. We are looking for clear statements about what protection the area will have, the restitution of the surroundings and the maintenance of one of the most used and internationally valued walking routes in the UK

In our view these proposals are ill-considered and simply an attempt to drive through the cheapest possible solution, whereas the best solution would be to take the road away from this sensitive area. Hence one of the discarded tunnel options should be re-considered.

Further Details

The Cotswold Way Association is a registered charity dedicated to the improvement of the Cotswold Way National Trail and related long distance paths. A visit to our website will demonstrate the practical support we provide – www.cotswoldwayassociation.org.uk

Our concerns about the A417 re-development proposals relate to the impact the development will have on the Cotswold Way which currently crosses the A417 at the A436 roundabout. However the proposals submitted in the consultation totally lack any detail as to how they will impact on the trail and more particularly on the landscape surrounding it, they are just lines on a map without any of the information needed for us and those concerned with the environment to reach any conclusions.

Our specific concerns are as follows :-

1. Routing of the Cotswold Way National Trail and other walking routes Our National Trails, with their high standards of maintenance, clear signage and ease of access are cornerstones for introducing walking to as many people as possible, with all the benefits well documented by the NHS and supported by governments of all parties. The Cotswold Way is walked by thousands of

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people every year and is the base for a support industry from Bath to Chipping Campden, an industry that brings in significant foreign currency and has the highest environmental standards. We look for a clear statement that the Cotswold Way National Trail will remain open to walkers throughout the works and when finally realigned will be on a safe and aesthetically pleasing route and no less commodious that the present routing .

Other long distance routes, and well-used paths intersect with the Cotswold Way at this location. Again, we wish to see, at this stage, assurances that these routes or acceptable diversions remain in place, and that any closures are strictly temporary, with closure and re-opening dates clearly defined as early as possible.

2. Impact on the Landscape around the Cotswold Way The popularity of the Cotswold Way is in no small way due to the quality of the scenery along the Cotswold escarpment through which it passes. One of the most spectacular sections is crossing the valley between Crickley Hill and Birdlip Hill.

The consultation documents admit that “both surface routes will have an adverse effect on the landscape and impact the overall scenery in this area.” The comments that “widening the existing route corridor through the sensitive escarpment at Air Balloon roundabout will minimise the impact on the escarpment elsewhere” is of little help to the Cotswold Way as this is where the trail crosses the valley. Therefore it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that both of the proposed options will have a devastating impact on the landscape along this section of the Cotswold Way and will therefore seriously reduce the enjoyment of the walk.

3. Effect on historic and protected landscapes The Cotswold Way corridor between Crickley and Birdlip Hills is unique in that it is host to the Crickley Hill and Barrow Wake Sites of Special Scientific Interest and also the scheduled historic monuments of Emma’s Grove and Crickley Hill Camp. The consultation document admits that there is the potential to adversely impact all these sites as well as to negatively impact the wildlife populations of the area.

Recent studies and reviews have emphasized the need to join environmentally protected areas to allow passage of wildlife of all descriptions. Both route options would sever forever any link between the two SSSI areas of nationally scarce habitat and would be a massive negative development.

There is no allowance in the consultation proposals for the restitution of the land along the present line of the road. To leave an unnecessary tarmac and concrete scar in place in an area such as this is clearly unacceptable and would make the zone of impact even wider just where the Cotswold Way crosses the valley

What should happen ...

We are presented with a choice between two proposals which both follow the valley between Crickley and Birdlip Hills where it is crossed by the Cotswold Way. What is needed is for the road to take a totally different route and hence one of the

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tunnel options previous discarded should be re-considered. The consultation documentation shows that Options 12 and 30 are the worst possible choices on every basis other than cost.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JAB', is written over two parallel diagonal lines that slant downwards from left to right.

John Bartram
Chairman – Cotswold Way Association