



Department
for Transport

Dave Orr

Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR
Tel: 0300 330 3000

Web Site: www.gov.uk/dft

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

DATE 21/07/17

Dear Mr Orr

A358 Taunton to Southfields

Thank you for your information request of 3rd of June 2017. I am sorry for the delay in replying. You requested the following information:

Q1. Did HE Ltd consult with or inform the DoT about running a consultation during a local election purdah for Somerset County Council elections in May? If so, what advice did the DoT provide? Did the DoT consult with the Cabinet Office at any time?

Q2. Were the DoT party to or informed of the decision by HE Ltd to consult only on one preferred option for this scheme? If so, please provide all details, correspondence, emails etc.

Q3. Do the DoT hold information on the basis for which the remaining 3 options in the Technical Assessment Report (TAR) were eliminated by HE Ltd for this scheme? If so, please provide all details, correspondence, emails etc.

Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I am writing to confirm that the Department for Transport (DfT) has now completed its search for the information.

With regard to Q1, four documents have been found that include information that refers to the issue of local election purdah:-

- DfT internal email of 2/2/17
- Document attached to email of 2/2/17
- DfT internal email of 16/2/17
- DfT internal email of 22/2/17

One document has been found that includes information refers to the Cabinet Office, though this relates to general election purdah rather than local election purdah and the postponement of the public consultation event that was due to take place at that time:-

- DfT email to Highways England of 2/5/17

With regard to Q2 and Q3, one document has been found that includes information that relates to DfT's awareness of or involvement in the selection of options that were included in Highway's England's public consultation document. This confirms the point at which DfT was informed by Highways England of the selection of options for consultation.

- Highways England email to DfT of 22/3/17

The attachments referred to in this email are the final versions of the consultation documents that were published on the Highways England website on 27 March 2017 at

<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a358-taunton-to-southfields/>

These attachments are therefore not included in this response, in accordance with Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act, information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means.

A copy of the above information is enclosed. Where the information relevant to your request is contained within larger documents I have extracted this from these documents. The names and personal details of DfT staff below the Senior Civil Service, and of Highways England staff, have been redacted, in accordance with Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act (s40 FOIA), personal information.

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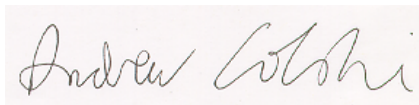
If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to the Department's FOI Advice Team at:

Zone D/04
Ashdown House
Sedlescombe Road North
Hastings
East Sussex TN37 7GA
E-mail: FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Please send or copy any follow-up correspondence relating to this request to the FOI Advice Team to help ensure that it receives prompt attention. Please also remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Please see attached details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Colski', is displayed within a light pink rectangular box.

Andrew Colski
Strategic Roads Directorate

Your right to complain to DfT and the Information Commissioner

You have the right to complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its FOI publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

DfT internal email of 2/2/17

From: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Sent: 02 February 2017 15:40
To: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Cc: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]; Jon Griffiths
Subject: RE: A303 Sparkford to Ilchester - SoS announcement of consultation start
Attachments: 170202- HE position on A303 sparkford and A358 taunton consultations.docx

Categories:Egress Switch: Unencrypted

[text redacted under s40 FOIA]

HE have sent their response to your request below to me, attached.

[...]

A358 Taunton consultation won't be possible until 13 March at the earliest and that would be pushing it. [...] Work is ongoing, and the production of cost estimates and traffic and economic assessments will not be completed until early March. Subject to completion of HE internal governance and assurance, the earliest anticipated date for the launch of a consultation for the A358 scheme would be during week commencing 13 March 2017.

If, as is likely, it is a bit later than that, it will slip into local election purdah period and have to wait until after the elections. That is quite likely and not a huge problem for A358....

[...]

Thanks

[text redacted under s40 FOIA],
Strategic Roads - Capital and Resource Delivery, Department for Transport
3/27 GMH | [text redacted under s40 FOIA]

Document attached to email of 2/2/17

[...]

A358 Taunton

For the A358, we are not yet in a position to go out to consultation. [...] Work is ongoing, and the production of cost estimates and traffic and economic assessments will not be completed until early March. Subject to completion of HE internal governance and assurance, the earliest anticipated date for the launch of a consultation for the A358 scheme would be during week commencing 13 March 2017. This date however carries a lot of risk and is not for public release at this stage.

On a general note, Highways England has sought to manage the consultations along the corridor in a staged way as there are resource issues to consider; A303 Stonehenge events running from 14 January to 8 February, A303 Sparkford events running from 14 February to 10 March and A358 Taunton events potentially running from 13 March (although this has yet tbc).

Also worth noting that if we push back the consultation on the A303 to align with A358, then we potentially run into purdah on both schemes. This will present its own issues and we will be in the position of having to add additional time onto the consultation period to allow appropriate levels of interaction and engagement from stakeholders and the public.

I hope this provides sufficient information for you and makes the position clear regarding the next key milestone achievement for both schemes.

DfT internal email of 16/2/17

From: Jon Griffiths
Sent: 16 February 2017 14:39
To: Jill Adam
Cc: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Subject: RE: Have a call with Jim Fri 9.15am

Jill

One other issue may appear either from Jim or asked by the SoS – the A358 scheme between Taunton and the A303 at Ilchester, so a quick heads up following a brief discussion with [text redacted under s40 FOIA]:

[...]

* HE need to get the route options out for consultation before local election purdah at the end of March to secure the March 2020 date

Our lead, [text redacted under s40 FOIA], can provide more when back in.
Hope this is helpful

Jon

Jon Griffiths | Deputy Director, RIS Client Division, Strategic Roads Directorate,
Department for Transport
3/27 GMH | [text redacted under s40 FOIA]

DfT internal email of 22/2/17

From: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Sent: 22 February 2017 12:05
To: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Cc: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Subject: RE: A358 consultation

Categories: Egress Switch: Unencrypted

[text redacted under s40 FOIA]

We still don't have a specific date for this. HE would like to get it out before local election purdah, but may not be ready in time.

Thanks

[text redacted under s40 FOIA],
Strategic Roads - Capital and Resource Delivery, Department for
Transport
3/27 GMH | [text redacted under s40 FOIA]

From: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Sent: 22 February 2017 12:04
To: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Cc: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Subject: A358 consultation

[text redacted under s40 FOIA],

You asked about the timing of the A358 consultation, I'm forwarding to [text redacted under s40 FOIA] who leads on this scheme.

[text redacted under s40 FOIA] – grateful if you could update [text redacted under s40 FOIA] on what we know about the timing of the A358 consultation.

Thanks,

[text redacted under s40 FOIA]

Strategic Roads - Capital Delivery, Department for Transport
3/27 GMH | [text redacted under s40 FOIA]

DfT email to Highways England of 2/5/17

From: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Sent: 02 May 2017 17:17
To: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Cc: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Subject: A358 public consultation event

Hi [text redacted under s40 FOIA],

Just tried to call.

To be on the safe side I sought advice from our Perm Sec's Office on the A358 consultation events.

We've had a bit of back and forth because the consultation is ongoing and I feel this constitutes business as usual; you've also agreed not to do proactive comms and these events are low key and not aimed at media.

However, the Perm Sec's office is adamant these events should not go ahead. They (and Cabinet Office) feel even without publicity it can still develop as a local issue and parliamentary candidates could seek to use the event as focus for their campaign, either directly or indirectly. Cabinet Office steer on consultations is that they can remain open for people to respond if they would like, but nothing can be done to draw attention to them and holding a public event would do that.

If you want to contact the Perm Sec's office direct – let me know and I'll provide details.

Regards,

[text redacted under s40 FOIA]

Senior Press Officer, Communications Directorate
5/31, Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 4DR
[text redacted under s40 FOIA]

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Highways England email to DfT of 22/3/17

From: Ministerial & Parliamentary Affairs
<Ministerial.ParliamentaryAffairs@HighwaysEngland.co.uk>
Sent: 22 March 2017 11:39
To: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Cc: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]; PressOffice
Subject: FW: A358 consultation document
Attachments: M160541_A358_Scheme exhibition_final.pdf; M160539_A358
scheme consultation brochure_V2.pdf; A358 final questionnaire.pdf

[text redacted under s40 FOIA],

Please see the attached.

[text redacted under s40 FOIA]

Ministerial & Parliamentary Affairs Team | Communications Directorate
|Highways England
Highways England | Bridge House | 1 Walnut Tree Close | Guildford | Surrey |
GU1 4LZ
Tel: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]

Please follow this link for our Guide to: Correspondence and Briefings

From: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Sent: 22 March 2017 09:04
To: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]; Ministerial & Parliamentary Affairs
Cc: [text redacted under s40 FOIA]
Subject: A358 consultation document
Importance: High

[text redacted under s40 FOIA],

As discussed yesterday, grateful if you could send us the latest version (presumably final at this stage) of the consultation document for the A358 Taunton (M5) to Ilminster/Southfields (A303) scheme as soon as possible this morning. This consultation will be launched alongside announcements on other things this Friday.

Late yesterday the SofS asked for an article to be drafted for a local newspaper to coincide with the consultation launch and the consultation document is probably the best source of material for us and our press office/speech writers to work with.

Thanks,

[text redacted under s40 FOIA]

Strategic Roads - Capital Delivery
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