

## **A30 Fingle Glen Junction - Gap Closure**

Report of the Director of Environment, Economy and Culture

***Please note that the following recommendations are subject to approval by the Executive and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution before taking effect.***

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that Devon County Council:

- (a) raises an objection to the proposal by the Highways Agency to close the central reservation gap at Fingle Glen in isolation from the Improvement Scheme consulted upon at the end of 2006;**
- (b) confirms continued support for the Fingle Glen Junction Improvement which was being promoted by the Highways Agency and recommends that it should progress the Statutory Procedures leading to a Public Inquiry to complete the scheme as soon as is practicable;**
- (c) confirms that it will lobby Government for resources to be allocated to this important scheme which is justified on road safety grounds and will avoid the displacement of accidents on to the County Road Network.**

### **1. Summary**

Just before Christmas 2006 the Highways Agency announced that it intended to close the central reservation gap on the A30 at Fingle Glen Junction in isolation, and that it was no longer prepared to complete the improvement scheme which it had been promoting, due to a shortage of funding and the number of objections received following the statutory procedures.

### **2. Background/History**

The A30 trunk road through Devon was built with a number of junctions which involved at-grade crossings of the central reserve. Due to the increase in traffic on the route this has been proved to be a safety hazard. Progressively junctions on the A30 have been grade separated, the most recent being that at the Merrymeet Roundabout at Whiddon Down. Prior to that the junction at Woodleigh was grade separated.

There have been several attempts to find an acceptable solution at Fingle Glen junction, the most recent proposals emerging in 2003. The scheme, which progressed to the formal consultation on orders at the end of 2006, sought to utilise the existing bridge opposite the Five Mile Hill Cross Junction with the C50, which was originally built with this purpose in mind when the A30 was constructed. This simple junction arrangement would provide new westbound slip roads, with a traffic signal controlled junction permitting entry onto the C50 at the junction with Heath Lane.

When this scheme was initially proposed by the Highways Agency in 2003, it was welcomed by the County Council (see section 3 of the report to Executive of 29 July 2003, which is attached as Appendix II).

### **3. Highways Agency Position**

A letter from the Highways Agency dated 14 December 2006 was received by the County Council. This is included at Appendix I and explained the reasons for its decision to promote the gap closure with no other mitigation measures. Since that time various representations have been made to the Highways Agency with a view to understanding the impact on the County Road Network as the result of this unilateral action. The current position is that Devon County Council has not agreed to the redistribution of traffic from the A30 onto to County Road network which would occur as a result of the right turn into Fingle Glen being banned and the westbound right turn traffic exiting from the Fingle Glen junction being banned.

The concerns that have been raised with the Highways Agency relate to the transfer of traffic movements onto the C50. There has been little effort on the part of the Highways Agency to analyse the implications of the transferred traffic movements, nor to assess or consult on the potential impact on the communities affected. The County Council continues to deal with concerns that relate to the existing situation on the County Road network at the Ide junction; the C50 at Pocombe Bridge; the B3212; the speed of traffic through the Pathfinder Village; concerns in Tedburn St. Mary; and a general concern about the impact on equestrian use of the C50.

### **4. Consultations/Representations**

The Highways Agency plan to close the central reservation gap using a temporary traffic order. This would enable representations or objections to be made during the currency of that order, which could be up to an 18 month period. Concerns from businesses and the communities alike are that no consultation is being undertaken and there are fears that unless compelling reasons can be provided, the Highways Agency will be minded to continue with the gap closure. The Highways Agency plan to hold a public meeting in Tedburn St. Mary on the 20 February 2007. Whilst this is not a consultation, it gives an opportunity for the Highways Agency to outline the reasons as to why this decision has been taken.

The Highways Agency have indicated that they would be prepared to fund mitigation measures which could be put in place prior to the gap closure and that they are also committed to monitoring the situation after closure, to respond to any ongoing concerns. A full re-signing scheme would be completed at the time of the gap closure which should be designed in conjunction with Devon County Council as Highway Authority. The Highways Agency have also indicated that they would be prepared to meet with the local elected Members and the Executive Member for Environment at a private briefing to further discuss the situation and to receive representations.

Following the Executive on the 18 January the resolution passed expressing the County Council's concern was transmitted to the Highways Agency who have been asked for a response. Any correspondence received will be tabled at the Executive.

### **5. Options Available and Reasons for Recommendation**

The County Council has the option of responding further to the Highways Agency or alternatively of allowing the gap closure to take place and delaying any further representation until the impact of the gap closure can be monitored.

The County Council has not been presented with any persuasive information as to why the Fingle Glen improvements should not be progressed, and for this to be completed prior to the gap closure being undertaken. It is understood that the Statutory Procedures are now time expired and need to be republished, but notwithstanding that the County Council position is to support the improvement works and all mitigation measures that were planned for the C15 as a part of it. The County Council is recommended to lobby the Highways Agency to reconsider the funding position as far as this scheme is concerned due to its importance and significance locally.

Edward Chorlton

**Electoral Division: Chudleigh Rural, Exminster and Kenton,  
Alphington and Cowick**

Executive Member for Environment,  
Councillor Margaret Rogers

Local Government Act 1972

List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Lester Willmington

Room No: AB1 Lucombe House, County Hall, Exeter

Tel No: (01392) 383379

| Background Paper | Date | File Ref. |
|------------------|------|-----------|
| None             |      |           |

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sc/a30 fingle glen junction  
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ED/03/200/HQ

Executive  
29 July 2003

**Highways Agency Consultations – Proposed A30 Improvements at Merrymeet and Fingle Glen Junctions**

Report of the County Environment Director

**Recommendation: It is recommended that:**

- (a) the Highways Agency decision to proceed with their provision of a grade-separated junction at Merrymeet is welcomed;**
- (b) the Highways Agency proposals for an A30 Exeter to Penzance Route Management Study, together with their inclusion within that study of HGV access between the A3124 and the A30 at Whiddon Down is welcomed;**
- (c) the Highways Agency proposals for the closure of the central reserve gap on the A30 at Fingle Glen, together with their proposals for the provision of a grade separated junction serving west bound traffic based on the existing Barton Head Road overbridge is welcomed;**
- (d) the Highways Agency proposals for an A38 Exeter to Bodmin Route Management Study is welcomed.**

**1. Summary**

This report welcomes specific proposals for progressing grade separated junction proposals at A30 Merrymeet and at Fingle Glen to address safety issues. In addition, it welcomes proposals by the Highways Agency to undertake the A30 Exeter to Bodmin and A38 Exeter to Penzance Route Management Studies. These will provide an opportunity to identify and address local access and other network issues on these strategic County routes.

**2. A30 Merrymeet Junction and Whiddon Down HGV Issues**

In early 2002 the Highways Agency conducted a limited consultation on proposals for a safety improvement at Merrymeet roundabout on the A30 (West).

A report to this Committee (ED/02/90/HQ, 19 March 2002) welcomed the Highways Agency proposals for grade separation at Merrymeet, and noted disappointment that these could not include consideration of the heavy goods movements through Whiddon Down.

At Whiddon Down, approval was given for further County Council investigation of a draft layout of a proposed local road diversion around the village as an alternative to a direct connection between the A30 and A3124.

In response to County Council, West Devon District, local HGV operators and business concerns about poor HGV access between the A3124 and A30, the Highways Agency investigated a number of solutions to both Merrymeet and the A3124 HGV access issue, but as in earlier years were unable to generate a single, comprehensive, economical solution to address both safety and access issues. The options considered were shown at the public consultation but have now been rejected by the Highways Agency in favour of the Merrymeet junction improvement as shown in the drawing number 200229/HWAY/WIN/DRG/5000 Rev P2. (See Appendix I - large scale drawing will be on display at the meeting).

The Highways Agency have advised that this stand alone improvement at Merrymeet has now been included in their "Targeted Programme of Improvements" and that the delivery of this important safety project cannot be held up by further investigations into the A3124 Whiddon Down access issue.

However they have confirmed the commencement of their A30 Exeter to Penzance Route Management Study, which will examine short to medium term operational and safety issues. They have indicated a willingness to consider this HGV access issue within the overall A30 strategy, and prioritised accordingly subject to their own network constraints, but they have also reiterated their view that this is primarily a local network issue.

This process will enable the wider question of a direct eastbound access slip roads between the A3124 and A30 reflecting the significant HGV movements, to be considered. Such additional slip roads would be an alternative to the proposal approved in principle by Executive in March 2003, for improvement to the existing A3124 county road at Whiddon Down. Hence it is proposed that this improvement be deferred until the outcome of the A30 Route Management Study is known.

### **3. A30 Fingle Glen Junction Improvement**

In 2001, without prior consultation, the Highways Agency advanced proposals for closing the central reserve gap at Fingle Glen, on safety grounds. In response to County Council and local objections to the proposal, which would have routed west bound traffic via the Woodleigh Junction, the Highways Agency conducted a local Traffic Impact Assessment and proposed a revised scheme. On 22 May 2003 they held a public consultation in Pathfinder Village Hall based on the proposal for a new additional part-movement junction close to Fingle Glen as shown on their drawing number HHM43831D/106. (See Appendix II - large scale drawing will be on display at the meeting).

The Highways Agency proposal is now a revised and extended scheme, similar in concept to that presented for public consultation in 1992, and proposes:

- The existing central reserve crossing be closed eliminating the right turn off the A30 and preventing access from the C50 roundabout for westbound traffic.
- All eastbound traffic movements to and from the A30 would remain with vehicles using existing slip roads.
- Westbound traffic movements to and from the A30 would use the new two-way slip road and the existing Barton Hill Road Overbridge.
- The existing road over the bridge would be widened by about one metre to provide 6.6metres overall for traffic whilst maintaining provision for pedestrians.
- At Five Mile Hill Cross, where the new slip road meets the C50, a signal-controlled junction would be provided.
- The remaining section of Barton Head Road would be connected into the new slip road at a priority junction, with priority given to slip road traffic.
- The new access to track to Newhouse Farm would connect into Barton Head Road to the south of the slip road junction.

A number of representations have been received by the County Council, in response to the Highways Agency consultation, expressing concerns about:

- The appropriateness of the proposed solution, with some consultees suggesting that this is the wrong scheme in the wrong place. They suggest consideration might be given to providing an underpass at Fingle Glen junction. However, the Highways Agency dismissed this as not cost effective.
- Concern was expressed by some about the potential of the new junction being an encouragement to “rat running” on Heath Lane between the A30 and Crediton. In this respect the Highways Agency have agreed that the access width into Heath Lane should be of minimal width, to reflect the constrained nature and width of the rest of this route and be a discouragement to increased HGV use. The Highways Agency have agreed to sponsor further traffic surveys in Heath Lane to establish a robust data base and to meet with the Directorate staff and local residents in a few months time when this information is to hand. There is also concern about adequate provision for horse riders exiting from Heath Lane on to the C50, under vehicle actuated traffic signal control, but this is a matter that can be addressed in the detailed design of any future signals.

- Questions have been raised about the appropriateness of traffic signals at the slip road/C50/Heath Lane junction. On balance it is considered that they will beneficially act as a traffic calming speed regulator on this approach to Pathfinder Village, and would only require a short extension of existing street lighting. Also, traffic signals would avoid the need for extensive road lowering works along the line of the C50, to improve local visibility for vehicles exiting on to the C50 from the Hill Barton Overbridge/slip road, that normal priority junction visibility would require.

Overall, it is believed that the closure of the central reserve crossing and the Highways Agency proposal for a grade separated junction at Fingle Glen, provides a substantial improvement on the current layout and subject to the resolution of a few details is to be welcomed.

#### **4. A38 Exeter to Bodmin - Route Management Study (RMS)**

In addition to the A30 RMS referred to in paragraph 2 the Highways Agency have also confirmed the commencement of a Route Management Study for the A38 Exeter to Bodmin by consultants Parsons Brinkerhof and this will provide a welcome opportunity to bring forward a number of Devon issues including the A380/A38 junction at the bottom of Telegraph Hill for investigation and discussion.

#### **5. Reasons for Recommendation/Conclusion**

The Highways Agency proposals are a positive move towards addressing safety considerations on current at grade crossings on fast dual carriageways and assuring that there adequate provision for walking and cycling as well as addressing the wider business and community access interests in the area.

#### **6. Sustainability Considerations**

The primary objective of these two junction schemes is to improve safety. Any minor increases in travel distance will be greatly outweighed by safety benefits.

Edward Chorlton

**Electoral Divisions: Exeter - Exwick and Cowick, Exeter- Alphington and St Thomas, Belvedere, Crediton Rural, Hatherleigh and Chagford**

Executive Member for Environment,  
Councillor David Morrish

Local Government Act 1972

List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Malcolm Baker

Tel No: (01329) 383234

| Background Paper  | Date             | File Ref |
|---|------------------|----------|
| 1. Report EP/86/75/W to West Devon Area Highways Sub-Committee. | 17 November 1986 | DGW/CU9  |
| 2. Planning and Transportation Committee Min *256               | 25 June 1986     | DGW/CU9  |
| 3. Executive Committee report ED/02/90/HQ Min 126               | 19 March 2002    | DGW/CU9  |