

Jan - we have re-read through Des Derrien's evidence to the Enquiry - Please take particular note of Page 4/2.6. Environmental Benefits!

P+J.

**WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**A35 CHIDEOCK-MORCOMBELAKE BYPASS**

**PUBLIC LOCAL INQUIRY**

**COMMENCING 12 APRIL 1994 AT LYME REGIS, DORSET**

**Statement of D D Derrien, Director of Planning and Environmental Services on behalf of West Dorset District Council**

**D D Derrien BA MSc MRTPI  
14 April 1994**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. I am the Director of Planning and Environmental Services for West Dorset District Council, a post I have held since January 1991. I had previously been the District Council's Chief Planning Officer since April 1981. My responsibilities include the Planning and Environmental fields that form part of the title of my post. I also have an important role in encouraging the diversification of the local economy.

1.2. The District Council was consulted at officer level on routes for the Chideock/Morcombelake Bypass as early as August 1977. In the Dorset (Excluding the South East) Structure Plan approved by the Secretary of State in 1983, the Chideock/Morcombelake Bypass was amongst those included in Policy TR17 as proposed for construction or completion in the Plan period. Further consultations took place during 1986 leading up to the public consultation procedures of 1987. It was following a thorough examination of the various options put forward by the Department of Transport that this Council, in October 1987, decided to offer support for the then "Yellow Route". This is the published route now under consideration and I therefore intend to confine my statement for the most part to explaining why the District Council continues to support the Department of Transport's published scheme.

1.3. I shall explain that the District Council also supports the scheme because of the importance to the local economy. Delegations have gone to see Roads Ministers to press for a higher priority to be given to improvements to the A35/A31 Trunk Road - including Mrs Lynda Chalker (twice), Mr Peter Bottomley (in London and in Dorchester when he opened the Dorchester Bypass), Mr Christopher Chope on two successive visits to Dorset, and most recently to urge Mr Robert Key, the Under Secretary of State for Transport, to reinstate the Tolpuddle-Puddletown Bypass back into this year's programme of Trunk Road Schemes.

2. EXPECTED BENEFITS TO ACCRUE FROM THE PROPOSED TRUNK ROAD IMPROVEMENT

2.1. The Statement of Government Policy for trunk roads published in February 1990 sets out the objectives underlying trunk road building as follows:

- "(i) To assist economic growth by reducing transport costs;
- (ii) To improve the environment by removing through traffic (especially lorries) from unsuitable roads in towns and villages; and
- (iii) To enhance road safety.

Most National schemes serve all these objectives in varying proportions and, in meeting them, care is given to the need to protect the countryside. The priority given to schemes takes account of all three objectives and does not depend solely on relative rates of economic return."

2.2. The A31/A35 Trunk Road forms the main south coast artery linking the ports of Portsmouth/Southampton and Poole with Exeter and the South West, and as such carries a considerable and ever-increasing volume of business and commercial traffic, as well as the more seasonal tourist traffic that is attracted to the south coast resorts and countryside. Improving the efficiency of this route by implementation of the Department of Transport's proposed scheme will be of economic benefit both to the District and the road users, in terms of easing access to ports and destinations. It will relieve the driver frustration which results from the holdups and low average speeds that are experienced on the trunk road. This, both within the villages of Chideock and Morcombelake where traffic speeds are regulated, and outside of the villages where the steep gradients and sinuous nature of the existing route slows the traffic down.

2.3. Chideock and Morcombelake are visited each year by many thousands of people. The chief source of income and local employment in this part of Dorset is now tourism and yet the traffic acts as a serious disincentive to many visitors who take their life in their hands if they try to stop outside a local hotel or guesthouse. Walking across the A35 in the village centres on a Saturday morning in August is an extremely dangerous habit and one needs to set aside a good proportion of the morning to do so.

2.4. With traffic removed from the centres and pavements introduced for example to the villages, the atmosphere would be transformed. Access to Seatown Caravan Park via Duck Street in Chideock is a particular hazardous one, especially if towing a caravan. Without the level of traffic through the village it might well be possible to introduce some traffic management schemes for Duck Street and North Rode in the village centre to improve safety levels. Making these villages attractive and safe places to stay can only benefit the economy of the area as a whole.

2.5. The above benefits accruing from the bypass would meet Objective No (i) of Government Policy for Trunk Roads and are also consistent with Government aims as set out in the recently published PPG 13, Para 1.5, by: " - reducing local traffic on trunk roads and other through routes."

2.6. Environmental Benefits

Chideock was designated a Conservation Area in August 1973 and was accepted for grant purposes as an Outstanding Conservation Area by the Historic Buildings Council in February 1980. The village contains many listed buildings, including 27 which front directly onto the A35, which splits the village along its entire length. The smaller

settlement at Morcombelake is for the most part spread around Hardown Hill to the north of the A35 (90% of the population), while the village post office/shop, Church, Moore's bakery and the filling station lie to the south of the trunk road.

2.7. The range of environmental benefits which would be achieved as a result of bypassing the villages is so wide as to make it difficult to cover succinctly. However, the following list sums up the main aspects of environmental damage caused by the A35 as existing (in no order of importance).

- (1) Physical damage to buildings and the environment through the sheer volume of the traffic - 10-12,000 vehicles per day on average and expected to rise to 18,000 by the year 2011.
- (2) Air and noise pollution, dirt, and congestion (the latter particularly in the summer months.
- (3) Severance causing hazards to pedestrians crossing roads to reach services - there have been fatalities, for example in 1991 at Morcombelake a villager crossing the road to the post office/shop.

(4) Accidents caused by steep gradients and the sinuous character of the existing road, particularly on Chideock Hill, where runaway lorries have already demolished buildings and resulted in fatalities.

(5) Continuous deterioration in quality of life for the villages as the traffic levels have increased over recent years.

(6) Disincentive to visitors, loss of tourist income - now a vital part of the rural economy.

2.8. The above problems would be cured by the construction of the proposed bypass and the benefits accruing would meet objectives (ii) and (iii) of the Government Policy for trunk roads referred to in paragraph 2.1.

#### 2.9. Economic Priorities of the District Council

Cut backs in Defence expenditure and changes in agricultural employment and other economic problems have led to a sustained increase in unemployment and lack of investment in South Dorset in the 1990s.

2.10. Recent studies (such as Coopers and Lybrand's Inward Investment Study, December 1992) have shown that the Dorchester and Weymouth and the Bridport Travel To Work

Areas have fared particularly badly compared to other parts of the country. The Rural Development Commission has recently designated this part of the county a Rural Development Area in recognition of the problems experienced and, of course, the Government has designated part of the Dorchester and Weymouth Travel To Work Area as an Assisted Area.

2.11. According to the latest records, for February 1994, there are almost 6,000 unemployed claimants in the South Dorset area - male unemployment in South Dorset is running currently at 13%.

2.12. A major constraint to Inward Investment and thus the area's future prosperity, recognised by Coopers and Lybrand in their Study, was the poor road communications to the major highway network. The A35 through West Dorset is an important access route to the M5/M3 motorways for Dorset companies. The improvements that have been made to the A35 over recent years, including bypasses to Dorchester, Bridport and Charmouth, have significantly reduced journey times. However, more needs to be done to encourage investment in the area, including an early start to both the Chideock/Morcombelake and Tolpuddle/Puddletown Bypasses.

2.13. Time and time again, I am asked about road improvements and the time it takes to travel from London or Southampton,



Bristol or Exeter. Until the road links are improved, the current road system will act as a serious disincentive to investment and employment opportunities in West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland. At a recent meeting of local businessmen with Lord Shuttleworth, Chairman of the Rural Development Commission, the inadequacy of the local roads was one of the main subjects of discussion.

2.14. The designation of Weymouth, Portland and Chickerell as an Intermediate Assisted Area and the better accessibility of this area from the area and the rest of the UK and continental Europe, have combined to attract a number of enquiries from prospective new investors. There is a hope that the Duchy of Cornwall's development at Poundbury, Dorchester, may also bring new jobs to Dorset. In contrast, I am not aware of a single expression of interest from outside businesses to invest in that part of Dorset west of Dorchester.

2.15. The concern over the local economy stems from an over-representation of declining industries, low activity rates and an increasingly high proportion of elderly persons in the population. This is now a Rural Development Area and the local authorities are prepared to invest to bring in new jobs and to allow local firms to expand. If we are not careful, none of this will happen and the western part of Dorset will subside into being a retirement area only. The

bypass will provide a real boost to accessibility and demonstrate to the outside world that this could be a good place to invest.

### 3. BACKGROUND HISTORY, POLICY AND COUNCIL DECISIONS

#### **POLICY**

- 3.1. Central Government Advice in PPG 13 Transport, published in March 1994 (paragraph 2.8) recommends that Local Plans "should promote healthy rural communities where people can live and work"; and, that in developing transport proposals (paragraph 5.2), the local planning authority should aim to "- improve the environment; and - reduce accidents", and it reminds in Paragraph 5.11 that:- "The trunk road network is primarily to serve long distance through traffic". That the Chideock/Morcombelake trunk road improvement scheme is consistent with this advice is borne out by the fact that neither it, nor the Tolpuddle/Puddletown Bypass scheme, also on the A35T in West Dorset, have been cut from the new road building programme announced by Mr McGregor on 30 March. Indeed, in announcing the new programme, the Minister indicated that priority be given to the bypassing of communities to get heavy traffic out of villages and towns, while those road schemes which have the potential to cause environmental damage have been cut.

### 3.2. Structure Plan

The Chideock/Morcombelake Bypass was programmed into the Dorset (excluding the South East) Structure Plan, as approved in July 1983, under Policy TR17 as one of the Trunk Road Schemes proposed for construction/completion within the plan period. The Structure Plan is "rolled forward" in the second alteration, which was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 12 May 1993. The provision of the Chideock/Morcombelake Bypass is included therein as a proposal under Amended Policy TR6. The A35T along its whole length in Dorset is defined in the approved Structure Plan as a primary route under Policy TR1.

3.3. The proposed route falls within the designated Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Amended Structure Plan Policy C6 ensures that special attention be paid to the design of new development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Land to the South of the A35 at Chideock, and including Hardown Hill to the north of the A35T, falls within the West Dorset Heritage Coast where approved Amended Policy C9 relates. Copies of all the Structure Plan Policies referred to above are submitted as Appendix A.

### 3.4. The West Dorset District Local Plan

The Consultative Draft Local Plan was first published in November 1992 and in accordance with its programme for leading up to adoption, the amended plan for deposit was approved by the full Council in January this year and is expected to be published in next month. A schedule of the amended policies is available to be read in conjunction with the Consultative Local Plan until the Deposit Plan is published.

3.5. Policy TR2 refers to the Department of Transport Schemes for trunk roads which are expected to be undertaken during the plan period and includes the Chideock/Morcombelake Bypass Scheme.

3.6. Other relevant Policies within the Local Plan which relate to the protection to the built and rural environment, and which should be taken into account in considering the Bypass Scheme are:

L1 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty),  
L2 and L3 (Heritage Coast Protection and Management),  
L6 (Nature Conservation), (Now amended to L10, 11, & 12 in  
the Deposit Plan),  
CD2 (Tree Planting),

CD3 (Landscaping),  
CD4, CD5 and CD7 (Conservation Areas),  
CD8 and CD10 (Listed Buildings),  
CD17, CD18 and CD19 (Archaeological Sites), (Amended to  
CD16, 17 and 18 in the Deposit Plan),  
and finally Policy CD20 (Sustainability) (deleted in the  
Deposit Plan at the request of the DOE).

An extract from the Consultative Local Plan Proposals map shows the boundary of the Heritage Coast, Nature Conservation Areas, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Department of Transport Bypass proposal TR2 for the proposed scheme, for this Western part of the District between Bridport and Lyme Regis. Inset 47, Chideock, from the West Dorset Consultative Local Plan, shows proposals for the Chideock area including the Conservation Area boundary and the Defined Development Boundary, and, on the obverse side, a written description of Chideock and the relevant policies. Chapter 7 from the Consultative Local Plan, "Conservation and Environment", contains all the L and CD policies referred to above. Copies of all the above Local Plan extracts are attached as Appendix B1-4 and the Schedule of ratified policies at Appendix B5.

### **3.7. Council Decisions**

In accordance with both the Structure Plan and its own adopted policies, the District Council has consistently

supported the Department of Transport initiatives to progress the scheme for the bypassing of both Chideock and Morcombelake.

3.8. The principle of the Bypass was strongly supported at the examination in public of the Structure Plan before its first approval in 1983. The first formal views on the route of the Bypass were given following the consultation exercise carried out by the Department of Transport in the summer of 1987. A copy of the report to the Development and Planning Committee of 29 October 1987 is submitted as Appendix C1. The report considers the implications of the alternative routes offered by the Department of Transport in terms of planning background, landscape, agriculture, conservation, traffic and land uses. In the light of this wide ranging and strategic overview the Report concludes:-

#### "9. CONCLUSION

9.1 In the case of Chideock it is considered that a well proven case can be demonstrated for the construction of a Bypass. The Northern route is preferred, although if the Department opt for a Southern route the provision of a junction with Sea Hill Lane/Mill Lane should be seriously considered as this would further reduce traffic in the village.

9.2 At Morcombelake the case for a Bypass compared with the improvement of the existing route is more balanced. The traffic, environmental and community benefits that would result in the construction of the green/red route, are not considered to outweigh the serious detriment to

visual amenity that would result from construction of the large scale embankments necessitated by this route. If the need and policy commitment for a complete bypass are accepted, then the yellow/blue route is preferred.

## 10. RECOMMENDATION

10.1 That the District Council supports the construction of the yellow route for the Chideock/Morcombelake Bypass."

3.9. The recommendation to offer support for the yellow route was accepted after a long and closely argued debate. However, at the meeting of the full Council on 12 November, the matter was referred back to the Committee at the request of the local Councillor. On 26 November 1987 the Development and Planning Committee again considered the matter in the light of the decisions by the County Council and Parish Council to support the red route. However, the motion to reverse the decision and adopt the red route was lost. Copies of extract from the agenda and minutes are submitted as Appendices C2 and C3.

3.10. Thus, despite reservations about the undoubted adverse impact on the character of the high quality landscape and environmentally sensitive areas at Morcombelake which include the National Trust land and the SSSIs, the Council decided to support the route, an extension of which is now under consideration.

3.11. On 1 July 1993, the Development and Planning Committee considered a report by the Planning Policy and Conservation Manager into the draft orders and environmental statement which had been published by the Department of Transport in May. The Committee were aware of the fact that the proposed bypass was now extended eastwards to join the Bridport Link Road and westward to the Charmouth Bypass, and that the road had now been upgraded to dual carriageway standard. A full copy of that report and of the Minutes adopted by the full Council on 5 August 1993 are attached as Appendices C4 & C5. In accepting the report's recommendation, the Committee resolved:-

"That the Secretary of State for Transport be informed that:

- (a) The District Council supports the proposed route of the A35 Chideock/Morcombelake Bypass and urges its early construction in order to achieve a substantial reduction in the volume of traffic through these villages. No objection, in principle, is raised to the published Draft Orders.
- (b) The lack of direct access to Chideock from the bypass means that adequate early signposting is essential in support of the amenities provided in this village.
- (c) All regrading of slopes must be carried out as proposed and all planting areas proposed in the landscape report must be implemented, including the additional areas, outlined in red, to be achieved.
- (d) The alignment of the route on embankment north of Chideock is highlighted as an area of concern in view of the potential effect on properties to the south of the road and comment is reserved until further details relating to landscaping and sections are available.



- (e) Attention is drawn to the fact that the route is close to the northern edge of the site of Chideock Castle and the observations of the County Archaeologist are relevant in this matter.
- (f) It is noted that the landscape report makes reference to the planning designations and policies as at February 1992 and attention is drawn to the fact that since that date the West Dorset District Consultative Local Plan has been published and the Secretary of State has approved the second alteration to the Dorset (Excluding South East) Structure Plan."

Details of the Council's resolution were relayed to the Secretary of State for Transport by letter on 12 July 1993.

3.12. Since then Officers of the District Council have been consulted on the five items of concern raised in the above resolution, and the follow matters have been agreed:

Item (b) Signing - draft proposals for the traffic signing were considered by the Development and Planning Committee on 12 March 1994 when the recommendation agreed was that:

"The District Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Traffic Signing Proposals for the A35 Chideock/Morcombelake Bypass and endorses the draft proposals." (This decision is subject to ratification by full Council on 12 May 1994.)

Item (c) Regrading and Planting Proposals - the Department of Transport have confirmed that all the landscaping and landscaping areas shown on the scheme plans are included in the proposals.

Item (d) Embankment to the North of Chideock - the District Landscape Architect is satisfied with drawing no. 308/69B "North Road Landscape Proposals", which was received on 14 March 1994 following discussions with the Department of Transport's landscape consultants and the County Council.

Item (e) Archaeological Observations - I understand that the County Archaeologist has been consulted and is satisfied with the mitigation measures being undertaken.

Item (f) Status of the Local Plan and the Structure Plan - the Department of Transport have acknowledged the present position.

3.13. In January 1994, and in accordance with the provisions of Circular 18/84, the District Council's views have been sought in respect of two sites where listed buildings need to be demolished as a result of the published proposals. It is proposed to demolish a small lodge building at Chideock and re-erect this building in an area of new parkland between the village and the new road. At Ship Farm, Morcombelake, agricultural buildings adjoining the listed farmhouse need to be removed. These will be replaced by a new group of agricultural buildings and wall at the southern corner of the site, together with substantial landscaping and tree planting to assist in shielding Ship Farm from the bypass.

3.14. Both consultations were treated as planning applications and considered by the Western Area Planning Sub Committee on 24 March 1994. The Committee resolved to inform the Department of Transport that no objections be raised to either of the proposals. The Council's views were relayed to the DOT on 30 March; copies of these letters are submitted as Appendix D.

4. AMPLIFICATION OF REASONS FOR THE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE PUBLISHED ROUTE

4.1. Three reports to the District Council's Development and Planning Committee are attached as Appendices to this Statement. The reports indicate the detailed study to which the alternatives have been subjected. There has been a very thorough examination of the scheme, the alternatives and possible variations. The decision to support the "yellow" route in 1987 was finely balanced, but I believe it to be the correct one, taking into account the importance of minimising the damage to one of the most attractive landscapes along the south coast of England.

4.2. Any Bypass constructed in this area of exceptional landscape quality will have considerable impact on the environment. However, given the chosen route, I believe that the mitigation measures undertaken by the Department

of Transport in preparing the final scheme will result in a road which will do least damage to the landscape whilst at the same time providing relief for the residents and good prospects for reviving the local economy.

4.3. I have drawn attention to the very substantial problems facing the local economy. Many areas are facing problems because of the recession, but we can anticipate that circumstances will improve with the upturn in economic activity as the growth cycle gains momentum. The situation in West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland is different. The main employer in the area and the main generator of activity in many closely linked, high technology businesses, has been the Ministry of Defence. It has been announced that the largest single part of the Ministry of Defence's establishment in this area, the Procurement Executive, will move to Bristol area in a couple of years time. The Defence Research Agency is being reduced in size and it is hoped that a smaller agency will remain in the area. The Portland Naval Base has been steadily scaled down and is closing. It is essential that existing businesses are encouraged to diversify and find new markets and that new sources of employment are attracted to this area. Time and again the poor road communications to West Dorset are quoted for the reason why this area is not attractive new businesses.

4.4. We are now having to face directly the implications of changes to the defence industries, and no less important is this western part of the District, is the continuing contraction of employment in the agricultural industry. The desirability of diversifying the local economy has long been apparent and it is for these reasons, as much as for the environmental and road safety consideration, that have prompted the District Council to urge successive Ministers of Transport to give a high priority to improvements along the A35/A31 Trunk Road.

4.5. **Listed Building, Conservation Area, and the Built Environment**

Figure number 5 of Volume 1 of the Environmental Statement published in May 1993, illustrates the existing and proposed routes in the context of the conservation area, built environment, listed buildings and services of both existing and proposed routes as they pass through/by the villages of Chideock and Morcombelake. The Inspector will see at the site visits, and will no doubt hear from local groups and residents, the damage the existing A35 has done to the fabric of the settlements as well as to social and economic life of the residents.

4.6. The need to remove the trunk road traffic from the village of Chideock is clearly proven, but with few listed

buildings, and a more scattered settlement pattern, the need at Morcombelake is less obvious. In these circumstances I can understand the views of objectors who wish to minimise the undoubted damage to the landscape and ecology which will result from the construction of the bypass on this steeply sloping and environmentally highly sensitive location.

4.7. Some have even suggested bypassing Chideock only, ending the bypass at Morcombelake to leave the existing road through the village. This would clearly be impractical as well as unacceptable. Morcombelake has also suffered fatalities along the road which has led to the 40 mph speed limit being introduced through the village. I consider that the effect of taking the trunk road traffic direct from a dual carriageway bypass into the speed restricted village environment would be disastrous both from a road safety point of view as well as for the physical environment of Morcombelake.

4.8. There is no doubt that the built environment of the villages through which the existing trunk road passes will be immeasurably enhanced when the bypass is built.

4.9. Environmental Factors

The District Council regrets that the damage the proposed bypass will do to those areas south and west of

Morcombelake which are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Trust Land. Figure number 6 of the Environmental Statement does however illustrate that the bypass route has been aligned so as to minimise encroachment into the more sensitive areas along this stretch of road. My Council is satisfied that the mitigation measures to be undertaken by the Department of Transport will address these problems satisfactorily.

## 5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. The route for the bypass will undoubtedly have an adverse impact on some areas and some residents, particularly to the North of Chideock, and at Morcombelake. Sadly, it has to be accepted that some will lose individually for benefit of the community at large. In the view of the District Council the Department of Transport has chosen a route and designed the bypass in such a manner as to minimise damage and inconvenience to those who do suffer from the proposals. However, these residents, with the rest of the community, will be able to enjoy a much more peaceful and tranquil environment of our rejuvenated villages when they are free from the constant menace of the traffic rushing through their centre at great speed.

5.2. In visual terms the bypass will radically and permanently alter this part of West Dorset. However, I do believe that the carefully considered landscaping proposals will soon blend the new roadway into the landscape in an acceptable manner.

5.3. I have stressed the social, economic and environmental benefits and the improvements to road safety that the bypass will bring. The District Council has considered the alternatives, consulted over them and discussed them over a period of 8 years. The economic and environmental need for the residents of this area has never been questioned. Repeatedly the same conclusion has been reached. On behalf of the West Dorset District Council I ask the Inspector to recommend to the Secretary of State that the Department of Transport proposals are accepted and adopted and the compulsory purchase orders confirmed.