

**Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership**

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Your Ref:  
Our Ref: ph\_180506\_J Williams\_Clun Bridge  
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Dear John

### **Clun Bridge Improvements**

I am aware that your consultation on Clun Bridge ended some time ago and that the work is shortly to commence, but felt that I should nevertheless pass on our thoughts on this matter. The Shropshire Hills AONB is a statutory designation covering 23% of the county, and the AONB Management Plan lists both historic structures and tranquillity as among the area's special qualities.

We are unconvinced that this improvement to the bridge represents the right approach, in relation to the historic bridge itself and the broader knock-on effects. The proposed alteration is relatively modest and we understand that English Heritage made no objection to the Listed Building Consent. A large part of the justification for the work seems to be to avoid future damage to the bridge. While this argument is understandable, we believe it is flawed, as it is likely that the widening will simply encourage larger vehicles to attempt to cross the bridge. We note that a large proportion of residents in the consultation expressed concern that the improvements would lead to an increase in HGV traffic, and we share this concern. The argument is proposed that this will not happen because of other pinch points in the village, but this further calls into question why the work is in fact necessary. Surely damage to the bridge can be reduced by discouraging its use by larger vehicles, and this requires a rather different approach to the overall situation than that represented by your reference to the late 1990s consultation.

The AONB Partnership outlines in the statutory Management Plan for the area a vision for its future based on sustainable development. In this, the long term economic well-being of the area is seen as dependent on maintaining the quality of the environment. This quality can be an economic asset which businesses can draw on in a sensitive and appropriate way, as much as a restriction. Such a vision therefore challenges the 'predict and provide' model of transport provision which sees increased traffic (in this case by larger vehicles as much as more vehicles) as either desirable or inevitable. We would argue that if the limitations of the road network prevent some kinds of businesses operating in the Clun valley, then they are likely to be businesses which would harm the special qualities of the area, and that is not a real loss. Other businesses will be able to benefit from the unique and nationally valued tranquillity of this area. This vision is widely supported by members of the community, including those who are part of our Partnership and many others. We would urge that the Highways Department consider its statutory duty under S85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to the purposes of AONB designation, in future consultations and deliberations of this kind.

Yours sincerely

Phil Holden  
AONB Manager