

Newsletter No 2

Introduction

Welcome to issue No 2 of the Tonbridge to Pembury newsletter. We hope you found the previous issue useful. In this issue we explain what has been happening since the Public Exhibition held in November 2002. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who visited the Exhibition and for all the comments received.

Post Consultation

Following the Exhibition all the comments received were reviewed and an Exhibition Report was prepared. This Report, together with other information, was put before the Secretary of State for his decision as to whether or not the project should proceed to the next stage.

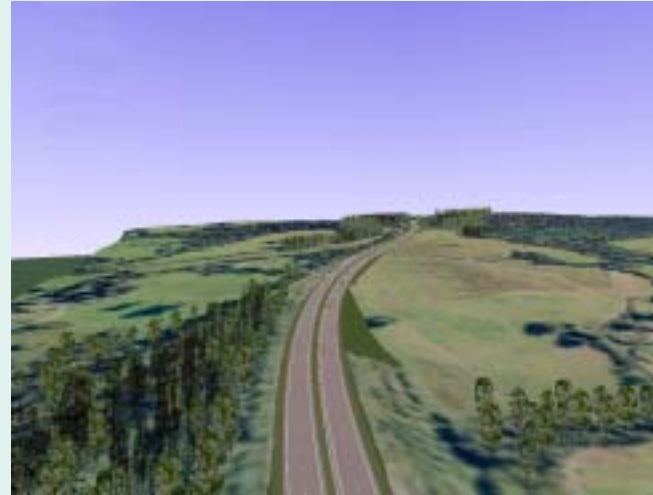
On 9th July 2003 the Transport Secretary, Alistair Darling, announced that the scheme was being added to the Governments Targeted Programme of Improvements (TPI) and an announcement of the new Preferred Route was made on 30th July. The Highways Agency has now resumed preparations to select a contractor to complete the design, take the scheme through a Public Inquiry and then undertake construction.

Traffic studies and ecological surveys were both started in 2003 and these are explained in more detail in the following sections.

Discussions have also been had with some of the landowners along this line of the Preferred Route.

Traffic Studies

Traffic surveys and the collation of existing data have been carried out in the study area to measure journey times and traffic delays throughout the day, together with traffic flows and turning movements at the major road junctions. A computer model is



Virtual Reality at the Exhibition



now being developed to represent traffic conditions on the existing road network and provide a basis for forecasting increases in road traffic and congestion in the future. This will enable us to improve on earlier traffic forecasts which were largely based on data from several years ago. The traffic model will then be used to assist in the detailed design of the A21 improvement scheme and to assess the impact of the scheme including travel and accident benefits, predicted reductions in traffic congestion and other environmental factors.

Ecological Surveys

The following ecological surveys have been ongoing since last April:

Habitat Survey - This identifies the type and extent of the variety of habitats present along the scheme

Bat Survey - Since bats are protected under UK and EU law a bat survey has been carried out along the length of the scheme. The survey found a number of mature tree specimens which have holes suitable for bats to roost in. The buildings along the scheme may also have potential as bat roosts.

Bird Survey – Part of the Hadlow estate is an RSPB reserve and as such there is great interest in the bird species present within the reserve. A breeding bird survey has been carried out to give an idea of the type and number of species of bird present in the reserve and the surrounding area.



Typical photo of the RSPB reserve being surveyed

Amphibian Survey - There are a number of ponds near to the scheme and most of these have been surveyed for great crested newts using a variety of methods including egg searching, night-time torch surveys and bottle trapping. These surveys were done by staff licensed by English Nature to carry out this work. Great Crested Newts are protected under UK and EU law, however none were found during the survey.

Reptile Survey - A survey has been carried out in a suitable habitat for reptile species using artificial refuges, which the animals like to bask on or under, enabling the monitoring of the population size of reptile species within a particular area.

A21 Tonb

Badger Survey - Badger activity is present along the scheme. The badger survey will determine whether there are setts present that will be affected by the scheme and whether the scheme will require specific badger mitigation, such as badger fencing or tunnels.

Fungal Survey – Part of the RSPB reserve is also a proposed SSSI (site of special scientific interest) due to the range of fungal species present. As a result a fungal survey has been carried out to gain an up to date understanding of the range of species present.

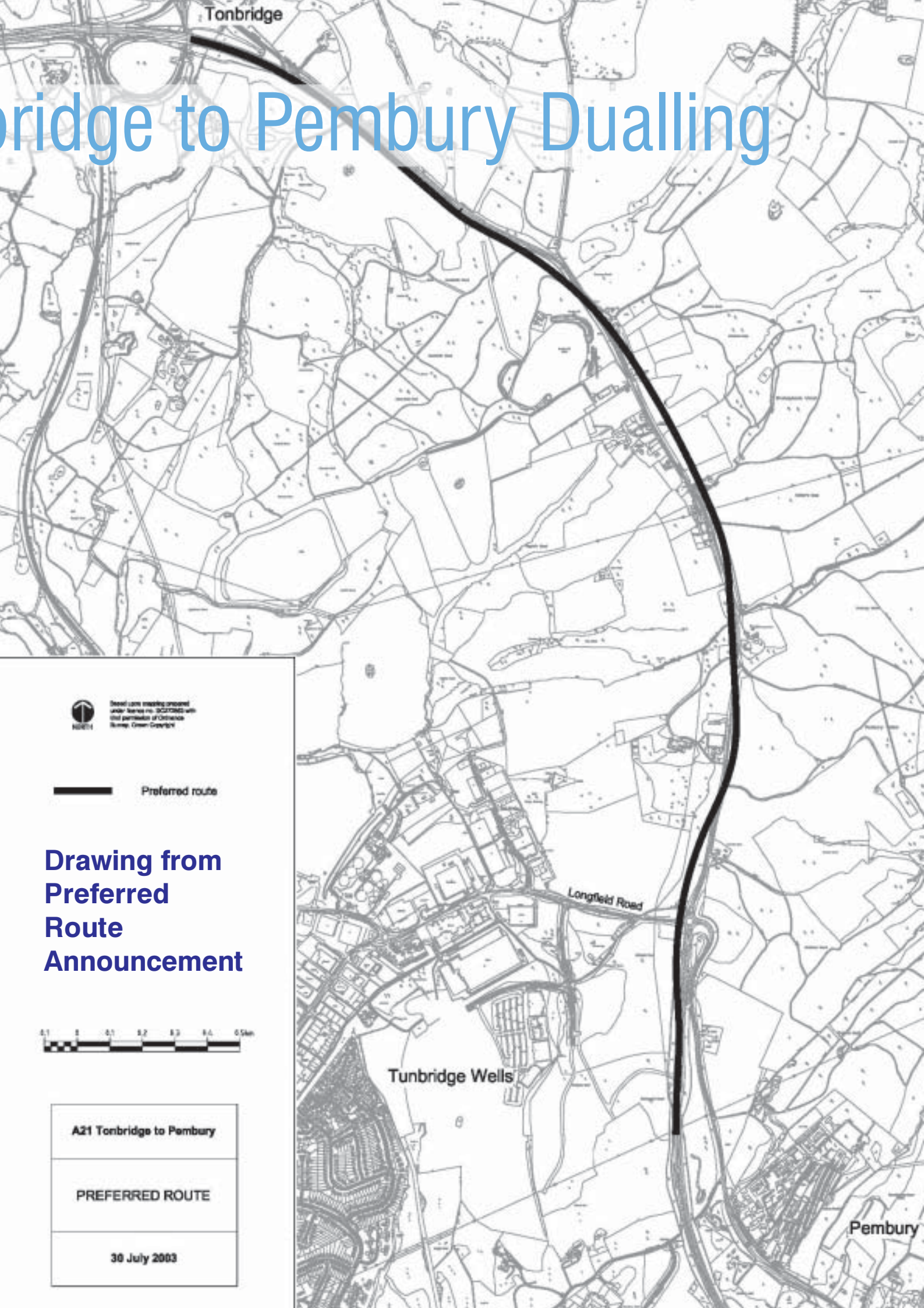
Dormouse Survey - Many of the woodland areas are designated as ancient woodland, as they have been continuously wooded for centuries. The dormouse has been associated with these sorts of woodlands, and although there were no recent records of dormouse in the woodlands affected by the scheme, there were recent records in woodland areas and on highway land very close by.

A dormouse survey was therefore set up in potentially suitable areas along the scheme. The dormice have been monitored throughout their active season and the final checks were carried out before they went into hibernation. The dormouse is protected under UK and EU law as it is a species that is thought to have undergone a decline in its population.

The surveys carried out should establish at what population levels dormice are present along the scheme and enable ecological mitigation for this species to be built into the scheme.



Dormouse photo by Hilary Nightingale



Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling



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 Preferred route

Drawing from Preferred Route Announcement



A21 Tonbridge to Pembury
PREFERRED ROUTE
30 July 2003

Tender Preparation

Documents are now being prepared to invite tenders in the Spring. There will be a 2 month tender period before tenders are returned in the summer. The tenders will then be assessed on the basis of their quality and a contract will be awarded. The appointed contractor will develop the scheme further, prepare the Environmental Statement and draft Orders under the Highways Act will be published.

The Orders

The legal basis on which trunk road schemes are promoted relies on the publication of draft Orders under the Highways Act 1980 and Compulsory Purchase Orders. Another exhibition will be held before these Orders are finalised so that local concerns can be further addressed. It is hoped that the Orders will be published in Spring 2005.

As part of this process it will be necessary to publish Orders to revoke approvals for the earlier off-line scheme.

Depending on the level of objections to the Orders, it is likely that a Public Inquiry will be necessary later in 2005. Subject to the outcome of the Public Inquiry the contractor will be ready to start work without undue delay.

Communications

As the scheme develops we will keep you informed by newsletter. Information can also be accessed as it is published at the Highways Agency's website, www.highways.gov.uk.

If you would like to receive future issues of the newsletter by post then please send a request to be added to the 'Mailing List', including your details, to one of the contacts described below.

Further Information

If you want to discuss or write to us about any issue please contact:

Graham Link (Project Sponsor) on 01306 878122

Highways Agency, Room 2C,
Federated House, London Road,
DORKING, Surrey, RH4 1SZ

Or the Highways Agency Information Line:
phone: 08457 50 40 30

email: A21TonbridgePembury@highways.gsi.gov.uk

The ECI Contract

The Highway Agency's contract will be of the "early contractor involvement" (ECI) style, which saves time. Unlike the road building contracts of some years ago, the contractor will be involved much earlier in the life of the scheme. He will work up the design from its present level of detail and will assist with the statutory processes necessary for the publication of the draft orders and Environmental Statement. The contractor will normally employ a civil engineering consultant to do the design and deal with environmental matters. The whole process will be based on a partnership approach with the spirit of partnering being extended to other stakeholders with an interest in the scheme such as local authorities, environmental and conservation groups and representatives of local residents and business interests.

Future Steps

Spring 2004:	Invite ECI Tender
Summer 2004:	Tender Awarded
Spring 2005:	Further appraisal of the proposals leading to publication of draft Orders and an Environmental Statement
Summer 2005:	Public Inquiry held, if necessary
Summer 2006:	Start of construction
2008:	Completion of construction

Dates are dependent on the completion of Statutory Procedures and on funds being available.



Stay safe on the roads this winter

Advice to help drivers to travel safely on the roads this winter

- The British winter is unpredictable. If you must drive during severe weather, make sure you are prepared for bad weather conditions. When driving in snow, make sure you're equipped with warm clothes, food, boots, a torch and spade.
- Check local and national weather forecasts. Listen to travel information on radio.
- Take care around winter weather vehicles. Don't be tempted to overtake snowploughs by squeezing into partially cleared lanes.
- It can take ten times longer to stop in icy conditions. Allow extra room to slow down and stop.
- Use the highest gear possible to avoid wheel spin. Manoeuvre gently and avoid harsh braking and acceleration. If you start to skid, ease off the accelerator and apply the brake gently, not suddenly.

**Remember that tiredness kills.
Take regular breaks from driving.**