

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Hardy, Hereford	Under Biodiversity Net Gain (2.10.11) we are told that the loss of approximately 1.3 acres of Ancient Woodland as a result of the Phase One scheme, will be replaced with almost 12 acres of species-rich woodland and woodland edge. With the overall loss of such rare, valuable and irreplaceable habitat as ancient woodland and venerable trees and the removal of red listed species for which this is home, will the committee review where the new 12 acre woodland habitat is to be created and how this site will be protected & managed in perpetuity as offset, so that residents of South Hereford, most affected by the scheme, will benefit from this mitigation?	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
Response: Many thanks for your question. I will circulate your question to the committee in advance of its meeting to plan its lines of enquiry. However, I cannot guarantee that the committee will ask your question of the Cabinet members and officers in attendance.			
Supplementary question: Thank you for the answer to my question. The part of Phase 1 of the proposed bypass known as the Clehonger link involves the felling of two magnificent oak trees, one of which is listed on the Woodland Trust inventory of veteran trees. Would this committee review this decision in the light of the Council's agreement with an independent engineer's assessment that these trees could be spared by moving the route slightly to the north-east without affecting the viability of the road?			
Supplementary response: Thank you for your supplementary question. The committee's objective at its meeting is to scrutinise whether Cabinet has sufficient information with which to base its decision on the Hereford Bypass Phase One scheme. Your suggested line of enquiry is pertinent to the decision that Cabinet is required to make, and I recommend that you ask this question of Cabinet, as cost-effectiveness would form part of their consideration.			

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 2	Mr Sherlock, Hereford	Much work has been done on identifying and calculating the financial benefits of the Hereford Bypass – Phase 1. However, there does not seem to be the same detailed work on identifying and calculating the loss of ancient woodland, venerable trees and the impact on historic landscapes and listed buildings of this area of Haywood, none of which can be replaced or fully mitigated. Will the committee review how TAG Unit 3 Environmental Impact Assessment (Published May 2026) has been applied to this road project and confirm that the Full Business case includes the cost of all these environmental and historic losses?	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

Response:

Thank you for your question. The committee's objective at the meeting is to scrutinise whether Cabinet has sufficient information with which to base its decision on the Hereford Bypass Phase One scheme. The committee will have sight of your suggested lines of enquiry when they plan their own lines of enquiry in advance of the meeting. However, they may choose to prioritise scrutinising other aspects of full business case to meet their stated objective.

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 3	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	WebTAG uses a discount rate of 3.5% for the first 30 years of a project, falling to 3% thereafter. This road is to be funded by public borrowings of at least £40million. Current interest rates for a 40 year public loan are 6.5%. Will this committee review the financial costs of funding this road project and the impact this will have on Herefordshire residents and the local economy by increasing council tax bills by over £3million pa across Herefordshire for the next 40 years, a form of taxation which disproportionately affects lower income households and reduces disposable income across the county for decades.	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

Response:

Thank you for your question. The committee's objective at its meeting is to scrutinise whether Cabinet has sufficient information with which to base its decision on the Hereford Bypass Phase One scheme. As a result it will not be pursuing the line of enquiry that you suggest. Your suggested line of enquiry is pertinent to the decision that Cabinet is required to make, and I recommend that you ask this question of Cabinet.

Supplementary question:

Thank you. In assessing any business case for investment, the financing of a scheme should be considered, especially when funded nearly 90% by loan finance, and at a rate of 6.5% interest, 3% higher than the WebTAG discount rate.

Loan finance has implications on Council finances as well as directly on disposable household income and thus the local economy, for the next 40 years. IT is particularly important during a cost of living crisis and when the Council is in a capital rationing situation, lacking funding to complete other important capital projects that are running over budget and behind schedule.

Will the Committee review the implications of financing the scheme through loan finance, the sort of information needed in any good Business Case assessment alongside BCR and NPV, and therefore relevant to any good, well informed decision?

Supplementary response:

Thank you for your supplementary question. As already stated, the committee's objective at its meeting is to scrutinise whether Cabinet has sufficient information with which to base its decision on the Hereford Bypass Phase One scheme. As a result it will not be pursuing the line of enquiry that you suggest. Your suggested line of enquiry is pertinent to the decision that Cabinet is required to make, and I recommend that you ask this question of Cabinet.

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 4	Ms Laan, Hereford	Economic case makes much of the benefits of defence and cyber security and being the Midlands Centre for cyber security located at HEZ. Will this committee consider whether this £45million road scheme to improve access from South West Hereford to HEZ, is the most cost effective and direct way to improve connectivity with the Midlands and the University of Wolverhampton, as well as linking to the Leominster and Ledbury "Functional Urban Areas" all of which lie to the East or North of the city?	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

Response:.

Many thanks for your question. The committee's objective at its meeting is to scrutinise whether Cabinet has sufficient information with which to base its decision on the Hereford Bypass Phase One scheme. Your suggested line of enquiry is pertinent to the decision that Cabinet is required to make, and I recommend that you ask this question of Cabinet, as cost-effectiveness would form part of their consideration.

Supplementary question:

As the Southern Link Road does not link with any of the sites mentioned for defence, cyber security, or Functional Urban Areas to the east and north, will the Committee recommend that it would be specious to include them as a wider economic benefit when there is no evidence that the scheme will improve connectivity with these areas, unlike a potential bridge to the East which would link more directly with them?

Supplementary response:

Thank you for your supplementary question. Any recommendation made by the committee will arise from the lines of enquiry pursued in the meeting. As such we cannot commit to making your suggested recommendation.

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 5	Mr Milln, Hereford	Referring to agenda item 7 concerning the draft FBC for proposed Southern Link Road (aka W Bypass phase 1), on page 130 of Appendix 2, Table 1-4 shows Key Project Milestones for the scheme, including planning applications to be submitted in July 2026, and fully discharged in September 2026. Any costs in delay around approval would fall on Herefordshire Council and not the contractor. Will the committee review how the risks around issuing works contracts before they are determined could impact the scheme costs as well as require further works to deliver BNG?	Chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
Response: Thank you for your question. The committee's objective at its meeting is to scrutinise whether Cabinet has sufficient information with which to base its decision on the Hereford Bypass Phase One scheme, rather than reviewing and assessing risk around works contracts issued. As a result, it would not be appropriate to pursue the line of enquiry that you suggest. However your suggested line of enquiry is relevant to the decision that Cabinet is required to make, and I recommend that you ask this question of Cabinet.			