

Day 3: 99 Problems but a bridge ain't one...

So far this week, as the Warwickshire County Council budget decision draws nearer, we've highlighted several important areas in the WCC savings plan where money allocated to the Bermuda Connection project could be spent more effectively. These have included:

- Allocating funding to the Accident Reduction Fund
- Paying for more speed cameras and traffic calming measures at accident 'black spots'
- Buying more pedestrian, puffin and toucan crossings to facilitate Safer (and more environmentally friendly) Routes to School and work
- Not cutting funds for Special School and Looked After Children transport
- Allocating funding for additional personal payments for children who meet the need for an Education, Health and Care plan

Today, we would like to point out the similarities with that other elephant in the room: the funding of the white elephant – the Rugby Western Relief Road.

Well, Warwickshire County Council have found a new home for the white elephant alongside the Bermuda Connection linking to Bermuda Park in West Nuneaton



Although we have insisted since the beginning of the proposals that the Bermuda Connection route is inappropriate and dangerous, our concerns as a community have been largely ignored and dismissed.

Let's not forget that in an extensive consultation, 57% of all respondents in the 2015 WCC consultation stated that they didn't want the plans to go ahead.

2 out of every 3 people were not in favour of the Project!

Why is this important?

Well, it's worth remembering that alongside the myriad of safety issues surrounding the plans, the financial cost of the proposals has already doubled and by our calculations will treble:

ESTIMATE	WCC OCT 2014	BBAG OCT 2015	WCC NOV 2015	COMMENTS
Base Cost	£ 3.7M	£6.5M	£ 5.3M	Large Increase!

Estimating Uncertainty	44%	44%	12% !	40% would be typical for feasibility design
TOTAL	£ 5.3M	£ 9.3M	£ 5.9M	The Bridge is now costing the same as the full A444 Upgrade

As elected representatives of the taxpayers of Warwickshire you should be concerned – it has already been reported to Cabinet that applied estimating uncertainty levels should be as low as 8% (which would normally be reserved for Construction Tender stage), while the industry recommended value for feasibility design would have an uncertainty range of 40%. The design simply isn't at a stage where this low level of certainty can be applied and the costs will almost inevitably increase further as the design is developed.

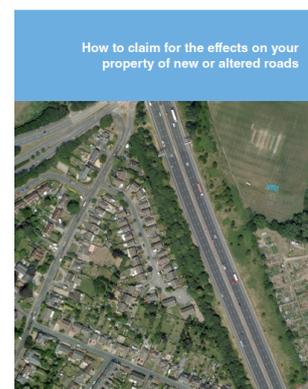
The estimates don't include the additional costs associated with a long planning battle and that of compensation for all homeowners along the route if the scheme is forced through:



Roads: compensation for homeowners

Standard Note: SN/BT/146
 Last updated: 19 November 2010
 Author: Louise Butcher
 Section: Business and Transport

This note explains the right of homeowners to compensation where they are affected by road works of one type or another.



The Rugby Western Relief Road

The findings of the scrutiny into the implementation of the RWRR are fascinating and has striking parallels with the Bermuda Connection project. Its chief conclusions can be summarised as:

- Lack of commercial skills within the council and lack of experience of managing Target Cost Contracts for major construction projects.
- Desire to progress the project as quickly as possible.
- Incomplete design and design errors.
- Inadequate risk management and contingency.
- Inadequate project governance.
- Problems associated with Network Rail and other Public Utilities.

The identification of multiple factors is symptomatic of systemic failure; taxpayer value-for-money represented by the RWRR has, inevitably, lessened due to the delays and overspend.

“A DAMNING inquiry has found a massive £60m of taxpayers’ money was poured into the disastrous building of a four-mile road in Warwickshire. Rugby’s Western Relief Road exceeded its original budget by a staggering £24m, it has been revealed. The overspend could have paid the salaries of nearly half the 1,800 Warwickshire County Council workers whose jobs now face the axe from unprecedented £60m budget cuts.”

<http://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/local-news/rugbys-western-relief-road-exceeded-3047658>

The Bermuda Bridge Action Group has a far more cost effective suggestion: **Scrap the proposed plans for the Bermuda Connection.** Concentrate the additional funding required on completing the A444 upgrade programme of works which benefits a much wider area of Nuneaton & Bedworth for the same cost and that could also be grant funded.

www.bermudabridgeactiongroup.co.uk/