

## **Cycling objection to Lime Down.**

Sherston Velo CC is a local cycle club based in Sherston as the name would suggest. The club has been in operation for the last 11 years. Over those years the club has grown to its current establishment of about seventy active members.

I am writing this report both as an avid cyclist, member of the club and for 7 years was the chairperson of the club.

The club is part of the fabric of the village and brings together people from all of the village's demographic and people of all different cycle abilities. People have moved across to Sherston Velo from other local clubs because of its welcoming nature and it's ethos of inclusivity.

One of the benefits of cycling with a club is the companionship when out on rides but overriding this is the safety. As a club we are constantly monitoring risk associated with cycling around local roads as we are mindful of making sure that all our members when out on a designated club ride can be rest assured that we have their safety at the foremost of our mind.

Also, as a cyclist I feel privileged that I can benefit from cycling around small local roads that attract little traffic and set within an area of outstanding natural beauty.

As a club we operate and publish rides both through winter and summer. We run several rides each week. We use the platform 'Strava' to publish rides. Each member then signs up to a ride on our dedicated Stava club page.

Each of our rides are carefully considered taking into account, distance, destinations, type of roads – avoiding main roads wherever possible, weather conditions, rider abilities and what is paramount is safety. Each of our rides has a designated lead rider who takes on the responsibility of the safety of the ride.

Most of our rides vary in distance but are generally between 40 – 60 miles. During the summer we may run some longer rides. Group size can vary but we generally ride in groups of six. This means if there is a large sign up for a ride it may be split into several groups setting out in predetermined timed intervals.

As a local club ALL of our rides start and finish in Sherston. Generally, they start in the village hall car park and finish in the 'Courtyard café'

As mentioned, we are privileged to be surrounded by safe roads, so no matter the destination we are cycling to we do not travel along main roads, we may cross a few and as we do a circuitous route we return along similar safe roads.

Therefore, it is with total dismay that the 'lime down' project will completely destroy all of that and will put into absolute jeopardy the 'safety' of all our club riders as well as other riders that pass through the village and therefore use all the approach roads.

During construction there will be large numbers of extra vehicles using many of the approach roads to Sherston and the same on exiting the village.

A large proportion of these vehicles will be large in size up to and including HGV level. This means the majority of the roads we use as a club to go out on a ride and return from a ride will be turned from safe low level traffic roads into incredibly dangerous roads with high volumes of large vehicles. It will become almost impossible to undertake those rides without fear and trepidation of being involved in an accident.

Riding along a road that was once a fairly quiet rural road is a totally different experience to being sucked into the pathway of large and articulated vehicles.

'Sucked into the pathway' is not an exaggeration. When a large vehicle comes passed, you literally get into a vortex that sucks you sideways towards the vehicle and you have to fight it both to keep away from the vehicle and to prevent losing control and coming off.

A rule of the club is that you must wear protective gear on a ride which in essence means a helmet. However, there is no protective cycling kit that is going to prevent serious injury when you get hit or dragged under one of these many vehicles that will now be using the road. The chances of an accident occurring involving a cyclist will increase significantly due to sheer increase in volume of traffic but also increase in the type of vehicle using those roads.

The fosse way, in particular between Grittleton and the unmettled road by Ladyswood farm is a stretch of road that is used so much by cyclists. It is basically a convenient link road between rides that are in the Chippenham area and beyond and for cyclists from that area coming over to cycle towards the Cotswolds and Bath area. It is not only busy with groups of cyclists out on club rides or singularly on a casual ride but is busy early mornings with cyclists commuting to and from work. Currently the width of the road for most of its distance between the two points mentioned above is barely wide enough for two cars to pass each other safely and you have to drop your speed significantly on approach of oncoming vehicles. When you throw cyclists into the mix then there is a bit of a battle between car and bike. However, because of its width it means vehicles have to slow down when cyclists are on the road. In particular there is no room to pass cyclists easily due to slight rises and twists in the road inhibiting vision. It means vehicles behind cyclists have to slow down and are sometimes kept from overtaking for some time. There are no real pull ins for cyclists to move over and let traffic by.

This stretch of road in particular is going to be significantly altered by the lime down project to make it wider and more suitable for the large construction traffic. Not only large in numbers but large in vehicle size. This will mean that now traffic approaching cyclists will have a perceived confidence to squeeze passed the cyclists even with oncoming traffic approaching and will have the confidence to drive the road faster because of its new width.

The inherent danger this will cause to cyclists needs no explanation. The confidence of having the knowledge that vehicles behind can only get by at certain points and are held behind at a slow pace will disappear and cyclists will be faced with a white-knuckle ride along the Fosse as vehicles of all sizes fly passed at speed and will undoubtedly have to pass in close proximity.

This is currently just not the case.

I mention later about being left with a legacy and this road will be the same. Once the project is complete there will be no rectifying it back to what it was, and it will become forever a 'rat run' for traffic that currently do not use it. Therefore, once again a fairly reliable and safe cycle route will be destroyed by the project.

Although we are a Sherson based club, not all of the seventy members are from Sherston. As mentioned, all the rides start and finish in Sherston. This means that some members have to cycle over to Sherston to start the ride.

Such members will now have to negotiate those aforementioned roads just to join the rides and then have to travel down some further dangerous roads created by 'Lime down' as they set off on a ride.

This will have a seriously detrimental effect on club membership as I know already from 'group chatter' whilst on current rides that they would not put themselves in such a vulnerable position as the chance of accident increases.

Sherston is a village that many other clubs from across the county use as a stop on their routes or just a beautiful village that they pass through. Particularly clubs from Chippenham, Swindon, Bath, Cheltenham, and Gloucester. Certainly, when the construction commences and the roads become treacherous, they will of course be avoiding Sherston village as it will simply be deemed too much of a risk.

This will also have a knock-on effect to other businesses. The Courtyard café is a cycle friendly café with cycle racks installed. It is visited by cyclists from all the aforementioned clubs and more. The café derives a lot of business from the cycling community, and the manager of the establishment has anecdotally mentioned to me on many occasions that without the business from the cyclists then the business would struggle.

The proposed altering of various roads surrounding the village to accommodate both the large number of vehicles and large type of vehicles required to complete the project will of course create a 'rat run' for other large vehicles, previously not experienced in this area. Once these roads become altered then they will become a viable route for other commercial vehicles not associated with the project. Previously these roads would not have been considered by other companies because they would have been deemed too small and unsuitable. Now all of a sudden, they become an attractive cut through.

As soon as these alterations are completed other traffic will start to use these routes, possibly even before construction traffic.

This of course will be an everlasting devastating legacy. There are no plans that I am aware of to reinstate the roads back to what they were once the construction is complete. Therefore, they will always remain as I say an attractive cut through from traffic not previously there.

Once again this means that the inherent dangers of that type of traffic to the very active cycling fraternity in the area will forever have the devastating impact on cycle rider safety which is the most important fact but of course will also destroy the beauty of the area which is another reason why cyclists have some much desire to pass through here.

Having said all of the above my biggest fear is that cyclists are a pretty resilient bunch and may decide to ignore all the obvious dangers thrust upon them from this project and will attempt to continue to ride along these roads with total resolution and this will end up with a consequence of serious accident. This is not an attempt to over dramatize the issue but is a genuine concern.

The number of cyclists that use the area cannot be underestimated.

There has as far as I can see been no consideration by the authors of the project for other road users. Cycling is not undertaken purely for pleasure but there are a cohort of people in the area that use cycling as a means to commute to and from work. I am one of those people. When the roads become that inevitable danger then I will have to consider if commuting by bike is a safe option. I will then become another car driver adding to the countries issue with carbon emissions.

This project will have a massive effect on the ability for cyclists in the area to cycle safely along what is currently relatively traffic free country roads and I really believe could affect the

sustainability of the local cycle club. This will ultimately undermine the very ethos of the club of bringing like-minded people together, to enjoy their sport and promote fitness in a safe environment.

**Steve Harvey – Cycle club member.**