

[REDACTED]

From: Planning
Subject: FW: HARP Planning Application -ref. no. 2021/0660

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 February 2023 11:13
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: HARP Planning Application -ref. no. 2021/0660

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Dear [REDACTED]

As a resident of Newton in Bowland I'm somewhat alarmed to learn that the above application is likely to go to committee with a recommendation in March, subject to the resolution of some highway matters.

This would suggest that you think the period for public consultation and gathering community feedback might be at an end. However, based on conversations taking place locally and on social media I believe this to be far from the case. It is clear that many residents are still unaware of the size and scale of the project and its detrimental effect on the area. Those that are aware have very many concerns and issues that to date have not been addressed in any public forum.

I believe that community engagement regarding this project to date has been sadly lacking. With the exception of a couple of "sales pitch" type presentations from United Utilities well over two years ago, and with the planning application having been with the Council for 18 months, I'm not aware of any significant public engagement (please correct me if I'm wrong)

The concerns and issues being expressed locally are many and varied. They include the strategic question "why a new tunnel as opposed to other alternatives?" Local people were not consulted before a decision was made by UU/OFWAT to go for the construction of a new concrete lined tunnel with its massive environmental and carbon impact on people and environment, and rule out all other options. The rationale for this decision has never been shared publicly and I wonder if the council have requested access to this information as part of the application scrutiny? Interest has been expressed in the fact that this option creates a hugely valuable asset for UU that other alternatives would not.

Other concerns focus on the environmental impact. As you can imagine the people of this area take their responsibility to safeguard the Forest of Bowland AONB very seriously. Given the protection in law granted to the AONB they are astounded that a project on this scale can be contemplated over such an extended period, and with the level of damage will occur impacting on flora, fauna, landscape, heritage, dark skies and unique historic character of Bowland.

The area is also a workplace. Many people both live and work in the area. Major business sectors such as farming, hospitality and tourism, providing much needed employment will be adversely affected.

Relating to the practicality of living in Bowland is the road network. This network has evolved over time to meet the changing needs of the community and businesses but has always been respectful of the areas AONB status. Local roads, bridges, retaining walls, cattle grids and field boundaries, whilst entirely appropriate for the AONB area, are completely unsuitable for construction activity on the scale being proposed. Further afield, residents in the surrounding area are concerned that traffic unable to negotiate the inevitable delays close to the contraction site will increase traffic on unsuitable roads to get to and from Clitheroe.

This brings me back to the point about public consultation and engagement. As I stated previously, I believe that such a fundamental change to RVBC's Planning Strategy and Policies should have been subject to much wider public consultation. I have sensed a sad resignation in some people with them feeling that, as a result of being so small in number and isolated, their voice doesn't count in comparison to large corporates like the UU. Many have expressed disillusionment with the Planning process in relation to a scheme of this scale. While they had previously believed they were to a degree protected from intrusive and inappropriate development as a result of being within an AONB, but now they find it incomprehensible that a scheme like this can even have the possibility of being compatible with: local planning policy and the area's designation as an AONB; national legislation such as the Climate Change Act and its obligations on us all to reduce carbon emissions.

Frankly, they would like to hear how these concerns and issues are being addressed by the Council.

I sincerely hope that this application does not go to committee with a recommendation before these issues have been addressed in an open and transparent manner and that the people of Bowland are satisfied that their voices have been heard.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards

