

Crowdfunding for second bypass challenge begins

A crowdfunding campaign has been launched to raise money for a second legal challenge to the Arundel Bypass plans.

Last month, Highways England announced it had chosen Option 5a as its preferred route for the new dual carriageway through Arundel – the route which would cut through the villages of Binsted and Tortington and some ancient woodland.

It was tweaked to reduce the impact on the villages after listening to residents' concerns – but provoked outrage among environmental groups and villagers, with claims that the information gathered during the public consultation was not reliable, something Highways England denies.

Less than two weeks after the decision was announced, the South Downs National Park Authority announced it was seeking a judicial review of the controversial decision, claiming Highways England had not complied with the planning rules with regard to national parks.

Now, a second judicial review of Highways England's decision is being applied for by Dr Emma Tristram, grandmother, historian and author of *Binsted and Beyond* – and a crowdfunding campaign has been launched to support it.

Dr Tristram said: "My application for judicial review is based on



Dr Emma Tristram

the extensive faults in the 2017 public consultation, which hid the true destructive nature of Option 5A. This bypass would in fact be extraordinarily damaging."

According to Highways England, just over 2,800 people responded to the public consultation questionnaire, and more than 7,000 replied by letter or email. Two other routes went to public consultation, which ran from August 22 to October 16: option 1, which went through Arundel, and option 3, which went slightly further north of option 5a through the

national park and Binsted Woods.

The results were that 48 per cent of people supported option 5a, 27 per cent backed option 1 and 23 per cent backed option 3. Out of the respondents, 79 per cent agreed that the road needed to be improved.

Dr Tristram claimed that in a recently published report on their consultation, Highways England admitted it got the figures 'badly wrong': "The consultation's benefit cost ratio made 5A look good value for money, but now it looks much poorer. The consultation information made 5A seem less ecologically damaging than Option 3, but now they are both assessed at the worst level, 'very large adverse'.

"If this had been declared at the time of the consultation, it would have affected public and local authority views on 5A."

A judicial review involves a judge looking into the lawfulness of a decision made by a public body.

Speaking when the A27 scheme was announced, Gillian Brown, leader of Arun District Council, which supported the scheme, said: "I understand why they would do it if they are local people, but for the benefit of the majority we have to move ahead."

She added: "I am absolutely delighted; it is the route that we chose

after a lot of debate and deliberations.

"We have waited 30 years for this decision to be made, having been nearly there so many times before."

To the residents of Binsted and Tortington, she said: "I understand their concerns – of course I do – but life changes. We have so much more traffic than we had in years past, and the environmental impact of this increasing would do as much damage as the bypass."

Environmental groups, including the Campaign to Protect Rural England's Sussex group, have backed a judicial review. Director Kia Trainor said: "Highways England is not immune from legal and policy compliance; it is not above the law.

"The decisions made by Highways England have huge and far reaching impacts on local people and the environment and it is critical that these decisions are made properly and that it can be held accountable."

Henri Brocklebank, director of conservation at the Sussex Wildlife Trust, said: "The trust was shocked at the poor use and interpretation of evidence in the Arundel A27 options consultation.

"The natural environment and local communities are paying the price for this poorly executed process.

"We fully support Emma's bold decision to take Highways England

to judicial review, based on this. We hope to see consultations of this importance done properly in the future."

Kay Wagland, chair of residents group ArundelSCATE, advocated a proposal similar to Option 1 through Arundel, but with a less environmentally damaging design.

Dr Tristram is an active member of several community groups including the Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee. Committee spokesman Bill Treves said: "ABNC and other local and environmental groups have welcomed and supported the National Park Authority's application for judicial review, and we also welcome Emma's application. The two different cases being made are complementary.

"Highways England have not listened to the people of Walberton, Binsted and Tortington or to the many environmentally conscious people in Arundel, or nationally.

"They listened neither to Natural England nor to the National Park. That's why an individual and an authority now have to take legal action to hold Highways England to account. We hope many people will support Emma by donating on www.crowdjustice.com/case/save-arundels-countryside-from-bypass-ruin."