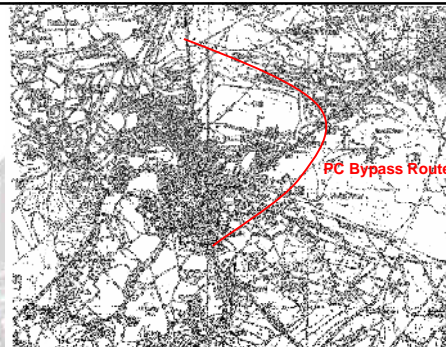


The case for a Lyndhurst Bypass

This presentation is a revised and condensed version of three previous talks by the Lyndhurst Parish Council Bypass Committee to the following:-

1. To the New Forest Transport Strategy Group of Hampshire County Council, **April 2005**
2. A specific talk on ecology made to the above group and English Nature, **November 2005**
3. A combined talk to Lyndhurst's Annual Parish Meeting, **March 2006**

**Presentation to the Hampshire County Council New Forest Transport Seminar, Beaulieu, 19 January 2007,
by John Charlesworth and Keith Barber**



The problem is obvious from any map – the village is at the centre of four major roads and most traffic simply wants to move through to somewhere else.
The only real solution is a bypass.

Brief history and present situation

- **1930s Bypass begun and abandoned**
- 1975 Public Inquiry – outer routes
- 1983 Public Inquiry – inner routes
- **1987 House of Lords approval**
- **1988 Talked out in House of Commons**
- 1992 HCC put the bypass back on the agenda with MTM report
- **2001 Lyndhurst High Street changes**
- 2002 Lane narrowing in Emery Down
- 2003 Lyndhurst Parish Council (LPC) form another bypass committee
- 2004 Parish council contacts NFDC and HCC to start discussions with them.
- **2004 Colbury right turn opens**
- 2005 LPC approve route and start campaign

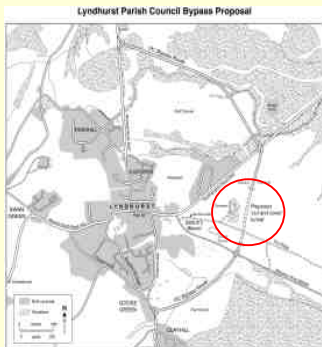
Lyndhurst as the 'Capital' of the New Forest National Park has the following major problems...

- **It is choked by traffic congestion**, over 80% being through traffic.
- **Frequently has stationary traffic** on all routes, with queues up to 4 miles long.
- **It has pollution** in excess of environmental guidelines.
- **Its road infrastructure is being damaged** by the overload of traffic.

Our support is widespread ...

- **Most Parish Councils agree that something has to be done about congestion in the Forest.**
- **All of the largest councils support our views.**
- **The Residents' Association wants action.**
- **Lyndhurst Chamber of Trade wants action.**
- **Our local MPs agree about action, providing it is action that suits everyone's needs.**
- **Lyndhurst Parish Council, backed by the majority of the parishioners, is determined to pursue a solution that will relieve both Lyndhurst and the rest of the Forest.**

Route recommendation



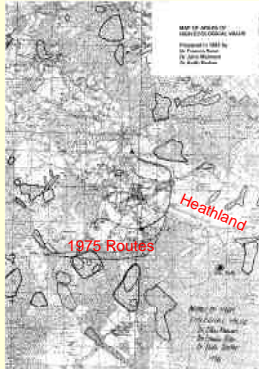
The unanimous recommendation of the Bypass Committee, approved by the full Parish Council, is that the route shown here be adopted for a Lyndhurst Bypass.

A major improvement to previous plans for this route deals with the separation of the land around Bolton's Bench from the rest of the Forest. **Instead of a narrow bridge we propose a "cut and cover" tunnel.**

Environmental matters

- **In recommending this route we are aware of all the evidence put forward in the 1983 Public Inquiry – Prof. Barber was there throughout - and the discussion of the 1987 Private Bill.**
- **At the 1983 Public Inquiry expert testimony on behalf of the village refuted the conservationist arguments based on faulty ecological theorising, and whilst the status of the Forest may have changed the ecological evidence has not.**
- **The inner routes that have been proposed are similar to the 1983 Route 3 which the inspector's report ... "rejected .. at once", as did the House of Lords report of May 1987, for the damage it inflicted on the village.**

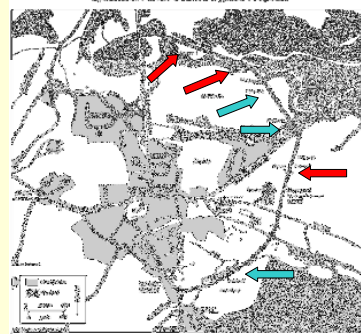
It is a myth, and contrary to common sense, that all areas of the Forest have high ecological value



If a Lyndhurst Bypass had been constructed in the 1980s it is unlikely that the conservation interest of the Forest would now be regarded as significantly lower.

The Forest does include some exceptional habitats, but we need to look at the actual evidence of harm that would be caused by the PC Route, and not be enslaved by the idea that the blanket conservation designations of the whole Forest mean that all areas are of equal conservation value.

Map created in 1982 for Shell Oil inquiry.



Ecological survey, 2005
The PC Route can be split into six sections of differing ecology.

The survey was concerned with the plants and soils and did not consider birds and insects which are dependent on plants, but which can migrate to similar habitats nearby.

See report for details.

- Section 1 From the A337 Romsey Road to the first alder carr
- Section 2 The first alder carr
- Section 3 The second alder carr and rest of golf course – low value and so not discussed here
- Section 4 The woodland north of A35 Southampton Road – not discussed here
- Section 5 The heathland from the A35 to the Beaulieu Road
- Section 6 From the Beaulieu Road across Vernal's farm fields to A337 Lyndhurst Road – n.d.h.

Section 1 – the birch woodland



This section, nearest to the A337 Romsey Road, begins with an area of extensive young birch woodland with some older pines and occasional mature oak trees – all recent colonisers of the open ground shown on Driver's 1789 map.

Areas such as this are subject to rapid ecological change because of vegetation competition and succession and are not generally regarded as being of high ecological interest or conservation value.

Section 1 – the heathland



Lowland heathland is a largely a man-made habitat, created and maintained by burning and grazing.

The large expanses of lowland heath that exist in the New Forest were created by our ancestors during the Stone Age and particularly from Bronze Age times onwards – the last 4000 years.

Not all heathlands are of equal value, though assessing this is complex. Highly-disturbed heath is less likely to be a habitat favoured by rare species such as ground-nesting birds.

Dry heath dominated by common heather with many eroded tracks.

Section 2 – the alder carr woodland



- This carr has a typical species mix of trees including alder, willows, blackthorn and much holly, with the occasional ash and oak tree ... the ground flora includes wood sorrel and brambles.
- Twelve cores of sediment showed only 10 -15 cm of peaty alluvium over grey-blue clay. **This contrasts with a number of other alder carrs in the Forest which are much more valuable because of their greater depths of peat that preserve site history (2006 PhD by Michael Grant in Prof. Barber's Palaeoecology Lab).**
- In 1981 Mr. Tubbs and Prof. Barber compiled a list of 23 valley bogs and carrs for survey by the Field Unit of the Nature Conservancy Council (Alcock et al. 1984). **None of the alder carrs in the area of the PC Route was considered important enough ecologically to be included in this survey.**

Section 5. View from near the top of The Ridge, near the cemetery, looking back to Southampton Road. Although disturbed by dog-walkers, this area is probably the highest value habitat along the PC Route but with the proposed "cut and cover" tunnel the heathland can be restored.



View towards the village from the line of the PC Route on top of The Ridge. This wide connection with the Open Forest would be maintained. This is at the far western edge of an expanse of heath which stretches for miles to the south-east. **The route cannot therefore be portrayed as fragmenting a large area - an argument that was used but refuted at the 1983 Public Inquiry.**



This report was given to English Nature in November 2005, with an offer to meet and discuss points of difference. This offer was declined.

Ecological survey conclusions

1. **The PC Route would take only 15 acres of land over its 2.0 mile length.** New Forest Special Area for Conservation (SAC) is 72,277 acres; 15 acres = 0.0207%, remainder = 99.97%.
2. **No ancient woods or valley mires are affected by this route; heathland could be re-established over the tunnel section in less than a decade.**
3. **The roads that criss-cross the Forest now have not ruined its ecological and conservation interest.** The impact of this route on the ecology of the Forest would be low and the measures that can be taken in mitigation would be effective in maintaining the open Forest around Lyndhurst.

The various conservation designations cover more or less the whole of the Open Forest – BUT not all areas are of equal conservation value ...



The conservation designations of SSSI, SAC and SPA do not rule out a **single carriageway unlit road** across part of the Open Forest which is not of especially high ecological value. Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive allows for projects of this nature in specific cases of need.

THE CASE CAN BE MADE IF THE POLITICAL WILL IS THERE.

Economic issues

- Lyndhurst is a **tourist destination but coaches are now avoiding the village** and “passing trade” is much reduced – evidence from our Chamber of Trade.
- We have researched the impact of bypasses on trade. Witnesses from both Okehampton and Alresford said that trade **increased** after their bypasses were completed, owing largely to the more pleasant shopping environment.
- Two major reports support this finding. *Better Places through Bypasses* (Dept. of Transport 1995), and *The Impact of the Okehampton Bypass* (Transport Research Laboratory 1997) both concluded that trade can benefit: **“Some traders reported an astonishing increase in trade of 50%....”** (Okehampton study, page 56.)

People matter too!

- We are proud of our village, its setting in the Forest and its Victorian and Edwardian heritage. We want our village to thrive, not stagnate.
- In every poll, and at every meeting, where the traffic issue has been aired over the last 25 years, the people of Lyndhurst have been adamant that any bypass route should not carve up the village and its immediate environs, particularly Bolton's Bench, or detract from the attractive approaches to the village, such as north of Racecourse View.
- We maintain that the maintenance and enhancement of this unique village, the need to improve the quality of life for residents and for others living and working in the Forest, outweighs the loss of a few acres of open Forest.
- **It is a question of balance – a small loss for the open Forest to be set against a great gain for the people of Lyndhurst and beyond, and a gain for the health of the children at the Primary School.**

View west from top of PC Route tunnel. We value the close relationship between the village and its broader Forest setting and our PC Route would maintain a wide connection to the Open Forest. This is as close as a bypass can come to the village without cutting through areas precious to the residents.



Conclusions - 1

Current Government guidelines offer five key objectives by which to judge the relative merits of transport projects:

1. Promoting accessibility
2. Improving safety
3. Contributing to an efficient economy
4. Promoting integration
5. Protecting the environment

Our proposed bypass scores well against these objectives if the term 'environment' includes all aspects of the Forest including the villages themselves.

Conclusions – 2

- **National Park status will increase tourism** – we are the smallest National Park in area but the largest in population, and major developments continue to take place in and around the Park.
- **The lanes around Lyndhurst, and the Forest as a whole, cannot cope** with the current volume of traffic. With the projected increase in the traffic levels the future situation can only get worse.
- **An inner route is NOT an acceptable option.** Moving lights or changing the one-way system would not solve the problem of congestion.

Conclusions - 3

- The parishioners of Lyndhurst have compromised on their wishes for a full bypass, including a south-west sector.
- We urge that action is taken now, in a spirit of cooperation, common sense, and in recognition of the economic and health issues involved.
- **This problem can be solved if the will to do so exists.**