

A249 IWADE BYPASS TO QUEENBOROUGH IMPROVEMENT SCHEME (Including - THE NEW SWALE CROSSING)

Newsletter Issue 2

October 2004

Introduction

Welcome to Issue 2 of the A249 IWADE BYPASS TO QUEENBOROUGH IMPROVEMENT SCHEME newsletter. This issue explains what has been happening over the past three months and gives details of the construction programme until early 2005. As part of the project, Sheppey Route Ltd's contractors, Carillion, are designing and constructing the 5km long A249 Iwade Bypass to Queenborough Improvement. The scheme provides a new high-level crossing over the Swale, linking the Isle of Sheppey and mainland Kent, and will extend the existing dual carriageway northwards from Iwade to just north of Queenborough. Construction of the new crossing began in June 2004 and completion of the entire project is expected in Summer 2006.

What is happening?

Transporting 200,000 cubic metres of clay from a source on the island to form the new embankments started in April 2004 and has been completed in areas next to the existing A249. These embankments will be left to settle for approximately nine months before construction of the new road commences on top of them. The diversion of telecommunication and electricity cables along with water and gas pipes began earlier this year and will continue until the end of 2004.

What will the new crossing look like?

The design of the new crossing, which has been approved by the Royal Fine Arts Commission, minimises the impact upon the local environment. This has resulted in a long smooth-flowing structure that blends in with the Sheppey landscape. The crossing will consist of two abutments, 18 pier bases (13 will be on land and 5 will be within the Swale Estuary), 36 supporting columns and 1.25 kilometres of bridge deck. The new crossing, which will provide un-interrupted access to the island, will carry four lanes of traffic, two in each direction and will provide clearance of 29 metres above high water level.



Yee Associates working with the Highways Agency

Artist's Impression of the New Swale Crossing



Pier base with reinforced concrete piles



Cages used to reinforce concrete piles

How will the new crossing be constructed?

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Two massive foundations called caissons, designed to protect the bridge against collision from shipping, will be built in the river on either side of The Swale. Each caisson is sunk 10 metres into the silt, contains 4000 cubic metres of concrete and will protrude above the water line.

Temporary jetties have been built from the banks of the Swale out into the estuary allowing a working platform from which the crossing will be constructed while permitting shipping to pass uninterrupted through the works. The jetties will remain in place until the completion of the bridge deck by Easter 2006 and will then be removed.

Early 2005 will see the start of the construction of the bridge deck. An innovative launch method will be used, pushing each separate section of the steel skeleton of the bridge deck into place from each end, avoiding the need for heavy cranes over the whole length of the bridge. The first of three sections is due for launch from the island side of The Swale in January 2005.

How will these works affect me?

We will manage traffic by using contra-flows, temporary traffic lights and reduced speed limits to reduce the effect of road works in the area by diverting traffic away from the site of the works. This will ensure the safety of the road user and the workforce. All traffic management arrangements will be planned and reviewed by the Highways Agency, Sheppey Route Ltd. and its contractor, along with the local council and Police to ensure that the impact on road-users is minimised. Changes to the existing road layout will be clearly sign-posted. We recommend that road-users allow extra time for journeys through the site of the works or choose an alternative route if possible.

Protecting our History

We anticipated that works to construct the new Swale Crossing would unearth artefacts of historical interest so a team of professional archaeologists were asked to assist on-site at the commencement of works. Several finds were made this summer dating back to the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. The area south of Cowstead Corner Roundabout showed activity relating to the ancient foreshore, revealing pits filled with pottery, shells and refuse. In addition a large number of cremation burials were found at three sites next to the existing A249 close to Neatscourt, where jewellery was found in an area that is believed to have been the edge of a settlement. Areas of interest have been fully excavated and the findings have been conserved, analysed and recorded. Although there is no central county store for archaeological materials in Kent, we hope that these findings will be displayed for public view at a suitable location on the Isle of Sheppey sometime in the future.

How Can I Find Out More Information

As the scheme develops, you will be kept informed by newsletter. The Highways Agency Information Line (HAIL) and Website will also provide up to date information during the works.

Contact Details

HAIL – **08457 50 40 30**

Scheme Website – www.highways.gov.uk/swalecrossing

If you would like to request additional copies of this newsletter, or to receive future issues by post, then please send a request to - "Newsletter Mailing List" at: -

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Driving through roadworks



If you do have to drive through roadworks, please take extra care.

- Keep to the speed limit – it's there for your safety
- Get into the correct lane in good time – don't keep switching
- Concentrate on the road ahead, not on the roadworks
- Be alert for works traffic leaving or entering roadworks
- Keep a safe distance – there could be queues in front
- Observe all signs – they're there to help you

Remember that tiredness can kill. Take regular breaks from driving.

For further information on the Highways Agency call our information line: 08457 50 40 30