

M40 CEG-News



The M40 Chilterns Environment Group (CEG) was formed in 2004 at the request of Parish Councils when it was realised that the Highways Agency (HA) strategy review of the M40 did not consider the needs of those who lived along the road. The Group persuaded the HA to study noise hot spots on the M40. Their 2005 study identified about twenty such locations along the 150km route, of which thirteen were concentrated along 'our' 35K stretch in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, (including Milton Common, Tetsworth and Postcombe.) Residents of Tetsworth will all be only too aware of the gradually increasing level of traffic noise, especially when carried by the prevailing south westerly wind.

Recent Noise Maps for England prepared for DEFRA confirm that traffic noise is excessive at many of these locations. For these First Priority Locations (FPL's), HA must prepare action plans to reduce traffic noise but has ruled out new quieter surfaces probably for a decade or more. HA has advised the Group that at 8 of these FPL's they will recommend improved noise barriers. However, implementation is 'subject to priority and availability of funding'. Key in the M40CEG's view is to make barriers more affordable.

We proposed placing photo – voltaic panels onto the barriers to provide a long term cost offset to their construction. Integrated solar/noise barriers (PVNB's) are now operational elsewhere in Europe. Thames Valley Energy, jointly funded by Wycombe and South Oxfordshire District Councils has already carried out a favourable feasibility study. The Group has consequently made a submission for funds for further study to the nationwide 'Co-operative Community Energy Challenge' and has been shortlisted.

A successful collaboration between local communities and the Highways Agency would deliver a significant contribution to targets for alternative energy and improve quality of life for local people.

The Group maintains regular contact with our local MP's, County and District Councillors and of course their sponsoring Parishes. The group's website www.m40-chilterns.org.uk provides access to major reports and studies including the largest ever study of the impact of traffic noise on rural populations. It is hoped that Dr Ken Edwards, Chairman of M40CEG, will speak at our annual village meeting on Monday 30th April.

D.Harris Member for Tetsworth