

Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council



1 Battens Farm Cottage
Ermin Street
Lambourn Woodlands
Hungerford
Berkshire
RG17 7TN

Whitchurch Bridge Company

1st March 2010

Dear Geoff

We are responding to your letter to the Parish Council of the 29th January 2010.

The Parish Council are profoundly disappointed by the content of your letter. Whilst you offer to respond to points raised with you by correspondence, and to arrange a meeting on a particular issue if necessary, the impression given is that you are no longer interested in listening to the views of the Parishes over the next few years when the plans for rebuilding the bridge are finalised and the village significantly disrupted by the closure of the bridge in 2013.

Your comments about the PCs failure to "take on board the information that [you] have presented to them in the past", and your interpretation of the outcome of the inquiry, are misguided and can only risk causing further resentment in the village. In fact the Whitchurch PC feels that it did take on board the information presented to us in the past, but the fact remains that you had no choice other than to request from the Secretary of State a large increase in the toll which was necessary only because the company had failed to put aside sufficient funds during the course of the last 100 years to fund the reconstruction of the bridge when it was needed. As you well know, the remit of the inquiry was tightly constrained and this Parish Council at least accepts the outcome, in preference to facing a situation where the bridge might have to be closed for the foreseeable future. However it remains a widespread view in the village that the sharp increase in tolls was the result of the mismanagement of WBC's finances. I think on reflection that you will agree that the Parish Council's representations to the inquiry were both responsible and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision.

Many in Whitchurch are concerned about what will happen when the bridge is closed and how you will maintain access to Pangbourne for the village. We think that good relations between the Parishes and the WBC is essential at this potentially difficult time for us all, and it is unfortunate that the impression given by your letter is that the WBC has no real interest in achieving these. There is a real risk that this attitude will engender more years of ill feeling towards the WBC from the village. The Parish Council have tried hard to rectify poor relations in the past by keeping a dialogue open with the WBC in recent years.

You say that you will continue to meet Pangbourne Parish Council as a constructive line of communication is essential for you with them as you need to use the Meadow, which is their land, on which to store building materials during the works. No doubt this is sensible. However your attitude appears to be that the other parishes are not worth meeting with as you have nothing further to gain from them.

Your decision not to hold regular meetings with the local Parishes is we feel very regrettable and indicates a disregard for the views of those whose lives are, and will be, much affected by the tolls they have to pay to cross the bridge and by the disruption that will take place when the reconstruction works take place.

Yours sincerely

H Butterworth

Harry Butterworth
Chairman of Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council

Copies to:

- Pangbourne Parish Council
- Goring Heath Parish Council
- Woodcote Parish Council