

Lord Adonis
Minister of State for Transport
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Dear Lord Adonis

A21 - Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling Scheme

Earlier this year, prompted by concerns that a refresh of the major schemes programme could adversely affect the timing of the proposal to dual two stretches of the A21 the attached letter was sent on behalf of the Borough Council to the South East of England Regional Assembly (SEERA). The interest of this Council was particularly focused on the Tonbridge to Pembury stretch and the letter emphasised just how crucial this scheme was to the economic well-being of this area and how essential it was that it remained on schedule.

During the summer months, the concerns that engendered those fears of slippage proved to be well founded because a paper released by the Highways Agency on 16 July indicated a potential start date for the scheme in 2012/13.

This immediately prompted local MPs and Council Leaders along the route to join together to express their view in concert that this rescheduling of the work was unacceptable and they made strong representations through SEERA to the Department for Transport that the previous programme should be reinstated.

The Borough Council in conjunction with Kent County Council considered the matter at the meeting of the Tonbridge and Malling Joint Transportation Board (JTB) that took place on 8 September. The Board resolved that we write to you, through the Regional Transport Board to express strongly the view that the dualling work on the A21 as contained in the Regional Transport Board's programme must not be allowed to slip.

It is fortuitous that the resolution of the JTB has been overtaken by the events of recent weeks when the former Minister for State for Transport, Rt Hon Rosie Winterton MP, wrote to Councillor Nick Skellett CBE, Chairman of the Regional Transport Board to let him know that the Tonbridge to Pembury section was timed to start in 2011/12, subject to caveats on funding and completion of statutory processes. This is a welcome position and we look forward to seeing this confirmed in the papers that will shortly be considered by the RTB when it meets to assess the refresh of the programme on 23 October. We urge you to ensure that all concerned, and particularly the Highways Agency, is well placed to guarantee that all technical and financial matters are confirmed and put in place to avoid any further delay.

In the meantime, notwithstanding the reinstatement of the scheme in the Highways Agency works programme, I feel it prudent to advise you of the Joint Transportation Board's resolution so that it is on record as demonstrating the clear commitment of the Borough and County Council Members to ensure that the A21 Dualling between Tonbridge and Pembury does not slip in the programme and remains as scheduled to start in 2011/12.

Yours sincerely

County Councillor Godfrey Horne
Chairman (Joint Transportation Board)

Councillor Matthew Balfour
Vice Chairman (Joint Transportation Board)

cc: Rt Hon Sir John Stanley MP
Paul Clark MP, (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport)
Greg Clark MP
Co Cllr Keith Ferrin
Cllr Nick Skellett (SEERA / Chairman RTB))
Martin Tugwell (SEERA)