**SAVE THE EDEN VALLEY**

**Letter to the Editor**

We write in response to your article “A66 route protest at a dead end?” in last week’s Herald. As leaders of an ever-growing campaign against Highways England so-called preferred route, we strongly refute the suggestion that our campaign is about to end. Far from it. This is exactly how Highways England works and wants us to go away and let them build what they want.

Let us be clear, we will continue to oppose their polluting, expensive, complex and unnecessary route at every turn; we will, if necessary, take it to the Planning Inspector and demand a public inquiry. Highways England have only tinkered with their own route and the impact on houses, business and local people will still be considerable.

It seems to us that they only pay lip-service to local consultation. They also hide behind legislation because they are unwilling to confront the MOD, whose training base may not exist in a few years’ time, and also Natural England. They way that the MOD and Natural England have allowed the landscape to be ruined on an AONB. is a disgrace, and they ought to be held to account. Our proposal in no way interferes with the training and security of the MOD’s activities.

Our proposed route goes slightly further north into the AONB and would improve part of the land they have spoilt. Highways England rejected alternative options on the grounds that they could not go through AONB land, something which they are now happy to do! There *are* exceptional circumstances which is human health and well-being; by choosing our route, all the noise, air and visual pollution will be removed. The A66 AONB boundary is a convenience and could be adjusted to take in the new road, or an application for extending the AONB southwards could be considered.

We have conducted an analysis by a retired engineer looking at all four Highways England suggestions compared with ours. Our route would be considerably cheaper and save the tax-payer millions of pounds. Surely this alone is a reason for considering our common-sense proposal?

Our campaign will not be deflected, and we will continue to make the case until those in authority listen and adjust the route. With the statutory local consultation being held in September and October, we hope as many local people as possible attend and let Highways England know exactly how we feel.

David Keetley – Chair Warcop Parish Council

Tim Wells – Chair Musgrave Parish Council

Mark Blackett-Ord – Campaign Organiser