

19th June 2024

Peter Simpson
Chief Executive
Anglian Water
Lancaster House
Lancaster Way
Ermine Business Park
Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 6XU

Proposed Shutlanger Road Closure – South Northamptonshire NN12 Replacement water main

This letter is from

- **Sandy Sawyer**, Chair of Paulerspury Parish Council
- **Peter Newson**, Chair of Shutlanger Parish Council
- **Kathryn Dodington**, Chair of Stoke Bruerne Parish Council

all three Parishes are contiguous:

- **Paulerspury Parish:** includes, at the western end of Shutlanger Road, the hamlet of Heathencote
- **Shutlanger Parish:** includes the village of Shutlanger
- **Stoke Bruerne Parish:** includes the village of Stoke Bruerne

All three Parishes are adversely affected by Anglian Water's proposal to close Shutlanger Road between Shutlanger and Heathencote for 5 months, on a 24x7 basis, starting the autumn of 2024 to replace the water main. We have debated this closure with Anglian Water since the autumn of 2023 but, sadly, not made any progress; neither have we had any acknowledgement of recent emails sent to Anglian Water.

We recognise and understand that Anglian Water has a statutory duty to supply water and sewerage facilities to all households and businesses in the area and, allied to this a statutory obligation, to repair water and sewerage pipelines. We also understand that the water main between Shutlanger and Heathencote has reached the end of its useful life. However, what we find very difficult, is the imposition of a blanket 5-month 24x7 closure of Shutlanger Road between the villages of Shutlanger and Stoke Bruerne and hamlet of Heathencote and the A5 which is our standard way of getting to our local market town of Towcester. All this without discussion with the three Parish Councils who are adversely affected.

Towcester provides:

- **Schooling**
 - children attending Sponne School who live in Heathencote, Shutlanger and Stoke Bruerne. There are 9 children who live in Roade, Stoke Bruerne, Heathencote and Shutlanger who attend Sponne School in Towcester. There is no bus service available.
 - children attending Stoke Bruerne Primary School who live west of Shutlanger; there are approximately 10 children from Heathencote and Towcester who currently attend Stoke Bruerne Primary School. There is no bus service available.
 - students attending Silverstone UTC (University Technical College) will be denied the bus service between Stoke Bruerne and Shutlanger and Silverstone UTC.
- Local Government – West Northants Council (WNC)
- Medical facilities – doctors and chemists
- Employment
- Emergency services
- Shopping
- Entertainment

Background

For the past two years or so the villages of Stoke Bruerne and Shutlanger and the hamlet of Heathencote have been subject to long and complicated roadworks due to the SEGRO related works at J15 of the M1 and in 2023 there has been non-related National Highways work on the A5 south of Towcester for the Towcester bypass. We have had lorries grounding on the canal bridge, fences broken, and roadways blocked by lorries trying to pass each other. We are now in the middle of a formal closure of Stoke Road (started in April-2024) which joins the three villages mentioned with Blisworth and the A43. There are other roads in desperate need of attention such as the broken inspection panel in Bridge Road Stoke Bruerne and a water leak in the same road and village which has been ongoing for 2 years.

During the past two years we have experienced overrun on all the roadworks in the area. What is unclear to us is if the 5-month requested closure includes or excludes a contingency for overrun. Please advise.

It now seems that the very minute the Stoke Road and Bridge Road repairs are complete Shutlanger Road will close for 5 months.

Diversions

Should Anglian Water enforce its right to close Shutlanger Road there are several diversions, all with challenges, available:

- **Showsley Road** – a ‘single track’ road which is almost impassable to most cars; we see no plan to address this issue.
- **Stoke Road** - whilst Stoke Road will have been repaired at the Blisworth end the remainder of Stoke Road is, at the time of writing, full of potholes; a situation unlikely to change as we approach harvest time, and large agricultural vehicles use the road. By the time harvest is finished the weather will not be suitable for repairing the road.
- **Pury Road** - this road through the village of Alderton is twisty and has issues with the right turn onto the A5 to Towcester in a 60mph zone with poor sight lines. This diversion is disliked by residents of Alderton; a village that this diversion uses.
- **A508 to Stony Stratford Roundabout** and then back up the A5 to Towcester. Very busy at peak times with long tailbacks to Yardley Gobion on a difficult roundabout. This route adds approximately 9 miles to a trip from Stoke Bruerne to Towcester, 10 miles for residents of Shutlanger and 12 miles for residents of Heathencote.

Tourism, Trade and Recreation

- We are aware of a business in Shutlanger which has advised it will last as a viable business for 4 weeks with this closure; it is a pub which is the centre of village community life.
- Stoke Bruerne is a tourist village with businesses that rely on the tourist trade, especially over Christmas. Closure of the main, sign-posted, route to Stoke Bruerne will have a hugely negative effect on trade.
- Stoke Bruerne Parish Council rents out football pitches to the very successful Towcester Town Football Club as overspill from Towcester and to Tove Valley Football Club. That income is now in jeopardy as is the ability of Towcester Town Football Club to run a full programme of matches during the winter.
- Delivery businesses: Post Office, Amazon, Evri and the like will also be adversely affected.

Farming

We are an agricultural community. This proposed closure will affect farmers. The harvest season may well run on into October and the lambing season is likely to begin prior to the end of February. Farmers, quite reasonably, always need access to their land and the ability to move large vehicles between sites.

Emergency Services

We are concerned about emergency services ability to reach Stoke Bruerne, Shutlanger and Heathencote without unreasonable delay. Emergency services may come from Northampton or Towcester – any emergency services from Towcester would take considerably longer to reach the villages; what arrangements have been made to mitigate that risk?

Signage

Whatever the outcome of this letter full and clear signage is imperative. That must extend from at least the A508 at Stoke Bruerne to the area around the Stony Stratford roundabout and extensively in and around Towcester including the A43.

Alternatives to a 24x7 closure

One of the writers of this document discussed this proposed project with Anglian Water in the Autumn of 2023 and what alternatives there were to a 24x7 closure. The following were offered at the time:

- Single line working using traffic lights and undertaking a short distance at a time thereby keeping the road open
- Drawing a new 'plastic' water main down inside the old one
- Using farmland adjacent to the Shutlanger Road for the new main

All options, we were told, would be considered. If they have been considered then there's been no communication with either Stoke Bruerne, Shutlanger or Paulerspury Parish Councils other than the fait accompli we are now seemingly faced with.

Comparison with previous substantial services replacement

We are aware of the following recent local works which did not require full closures as currently planned by Anglian Water:

- In approximately 2014-16 Anglian Water laid a water main approximately 48 inches diameter from Old Stratford to a new housing estate (6,000 properties) near Kiln Farm, Stony Stratford. The route was under farmland and boring under the River Ouse at Stony Stratford in addition to crossing the Calverton Road. No residents were affected.
- Cowpastures Lane remained open by using traffic lights when Western Power ran new mains cables from Deanshanger to Silverstone.
- British Gas kept Cowpastures Lane open when installing a new main into Silverstone and going under farmland also boring a hole under the road at the tee junction of Whittlebury Road and Cowpastures Lane.

Please would Anglian Water explain why they are unable to use farmland adjacent to the main road from Heathencote to Shutlanger inside the field boundary and not risk people's livelihoods and businesses by closing roads for 5 months.

Summary

In all sincerity we have had more than enough of imposed road closures and the residents' ability to accept such closures, and live a normal and reasonable life, is at an end. We are also most concerned about the beautiful oak trees which line the 'Shutlanger Straight' between Shutlanger and the sewerage works on each side and would look to Anglian Water to confirm they will be safeguarded.

We have no public transport in the villages, so it is up to each individual resident to face up to this issue, but we need to be able to do that in conjunction with, and the support of, WNC and Anglian Water but specifically with Anglian Water. We see it as the responsibility of the Parish Councils to stand up for, and be the voice of, their residents.

Please will you, or someone you appoint, (who has the authority to commit Anglian Water to an agreed process) make suitable arrangements to come and talk to the residents of Stoke Bruerne, Shutlanger and Heathencote at your earliest opportunity to discuss this proposed closure and how it can be made more palatable for residents and businesses. We can make a village hall available.

We also understand that West Northamptonshire Highways were probably in a position where they could not refuse the Anglian Water road closure request which is why we, who directly represent the residents and business of our Parishes in Northamptonshire, have written to you to seek a meeting in order to find a way to mitigate the huge impact this closure will have on those who live and work within the Parishes of Stoke Bruerne, Shutlanger

and Paulerspury. If this closure does go ahead, at the very least, the three Parishes would wish to see a robust and regular communications process between the Parishes, WNC Highways and Anglian Water.

The maps overleaf set out the proposed closure in context; it is the road between Shutlanger and Heathencote, annotated in blue, which Anglian Water is proposing to close for 5 months on a 24x7 basis.

Sandy Sawyer
Chair Paulerspury
Parish Council

|
|
|

Peter Newson
Chair Shutlanger
Parish Council

|
|
|

Kathryn Dodington
Chair Stoke Bruerne
Parish Council



The geographic locations of the three contiguous Parish Councils are shown below.

