**M40 CEG - 11th Annual Report 2015**

In January 2005 representatives of communities close to the M40 between Loudwater and Wheatley agreed to work together to address a shared long-standing problem - traffic noise. Over ten years on, many of them are still members of a cohesive committed and active team. Without their tenacity we would not be where we are today, working with Highways England to reduce noise at, potentially, 1150 noise affected locations across England during the next five years. Our section of the M40 will provide the locations for pilot trials of solar enabled noise barriers, an important part of this ambitious programme. Their application in England has been a direct result of the efforts of your committee.

Early in the year, a team from M40 CEG worked with Highways Agency (now Highways England) and our District Councils as assessors for Phase 1 of the programme, an international competition to select potential suppliers. Highways England has now completed Phase 2A of the programme, and all six of the winners of Phase 1 now have Approval in Principle for their products to be used on the Trunk Road Network. In Phase 2B, they will evaluate potential sites, undertake high level design and prepare their business cases for implementation. We expect to participate in the design activity and to work on consultations with our local communities. In Phase 3, subject to Government financial approval, barriers will be installed, prior to national roll-out in subsequent phases.

To prepare for these activities, we decided to engage our consultants (Sound Barrier Solutions) in a £12K project to prepare noise maps for every rural community along our stretch of the M40 included in the site selection process. Thanks to contributions from various Parishes, Bucks CC and Wycombe DC, we expect by this 31 December that we will have completed mapping for the Buckinghamshire communities. We are applying for a grant from South Oxfordshire DC to complete mapping for our communities in South Oxfordshire, of which two remain to be studied.

We greatly appreciate the financial support from local government and from our Parishes that is making this project happen. We also thank SBS, not only for their work, but for their willingness to schedule their activities to match the progress of our fund raising.

We have found noise maps difficult to explain at parish meetings - largely because they contain too much data. Accordingly we have worked to clarify them and have produced a simple method of comparing the performance of different barriers, which, we believe, can be useful in further phases of the programme. We are continuing to work with SBS to simplify the raw data obtained from mapping for presentation use. Highways England is interested in our approach.

This has all been very positive. However, we have been very disappointed at the failure to date of the efforts of local MP, John Howell, to have quiet surface installed on our South Oxfordshire section of the M40. UK Highways persist with the use of a surface treatment which increases noise levels at least for a period after its use! We believe the case for quiet surfacing can be strengthened by our method of data analysis and will continue to press Highways England on the issue.

Ken Edwards

Chairman, M40 CEG

17 November 2015