

THE FOLLOWING IS DETAIL OF THE CLOSURE OF TOWCESTER HIGH STREET FOR 18 WEEKS. INCLUDING THE CLOSURE OF THE BLISWORTH TURN OF THE A43. THIS IS A LONG PIECE BUT WELL WORTH READING IN FULL.

Today I met the representative of Forkers, who are the contractors for the Highways Agency (HA) to discuss the roadworks to the A5 through Towcester starting in July. Not U3A related other than it is going to affect all our members at some point. These will be undertaken in phases over a 18 week period and start just short of the Tove roundabout and go south as far as Marlow road. This will mean the A5 will be closed to through traffic for the entire period although limited access to the frontages will be provided. The laybys and market square will be closed to parking while the relevant phases are undertaken. Work is planned to start at 7am and finish at midnight during the week (2 shifts) then lesser hours over the weekend. The work is necessitated by the collapse of the gas pipe trench and drainage evidenced by the road damage that can be seen through town. The road surface will also be completely resurfaced. The first phase will be a closure of the road from the Tove roundabout to the traffic lights and will take 3 weeks. The next 15 weeks will start with work from Marlow road north to allow the bus companies to reroute services and then the remaining phases through the town centre back to the traffic lights at Brackley Rd/Northampton Rd. Buses will be rerouted but details will be provided by the bus companies. When necessary Chantry Lane and Moat Lane will become two way traffic so care will be needed on those narrow roads. Work is planned to start on July 23rd but if the Stony Stratford roundabout roadworks completion is delayed then the start date for these works be delayed so as not to compound traffic issues. The A5 will have a "soft" closure at the Stony roundabout where signs will divert all northbound traffic up the A508, then the M1 and if necessary back off at junction 15A and down the A43 towards the Tove roundabout. For safety reasons HA has decided to close the crossings at the Hulcote turn with Northampton Rd. So if you exit onto the A43 from here you will only be able to turn left . If you want to go to Northampton you will have to go around the Tove roundabout then back up the A43 towards the M1. More contentiously they are also temporarily closing the Blisworth crossing too for the period of the works. So if you're coming from Towcester to go to Blisworth you will not be able to turn right at the top of the hill instead you will have to go to the M1 then drive back towards Towcester to take the Blisworth exit. This is for safety reasons the HA say due to the extra diverted traffic. The Stony roundabout "soft closure" will be open for local traffic to Towcester and villages off of the A5 but the new roundabout at the racecourse will have a "hard closure" manned by a marshal who will turn anyone looking to try to get through Towcester back down the A5. Local diversions will not be signposted. The thinking is this will encourage "chancers" to ignore the Stony diversion signs and follow the back routes. Also we locals already know how to avoid the A5. There will be no roadworks planned for the A508 during this period. Hopefully there will be no emergency work either. If the M1 is closed diversions for that traffic will be out through Buckingham adding probably an hour to their journey. Contractor staff have been told they are not permitted to use Towcester car parks as parking and transport will be provided to and from the works compound. They really want to complete before the end of the 18 week period and hope there are no surprises when they start digging. This includes any archaeological finds as the works are being monitored accordingly. An exhibition and chance to ask any questions will be provided in the form of an exhibition vehicle in Tesco's car park on the 19th and Waitrose car park on the 20th June.