

People 'very weary' over Arundel A27 process, said county leader

Karen Dunn

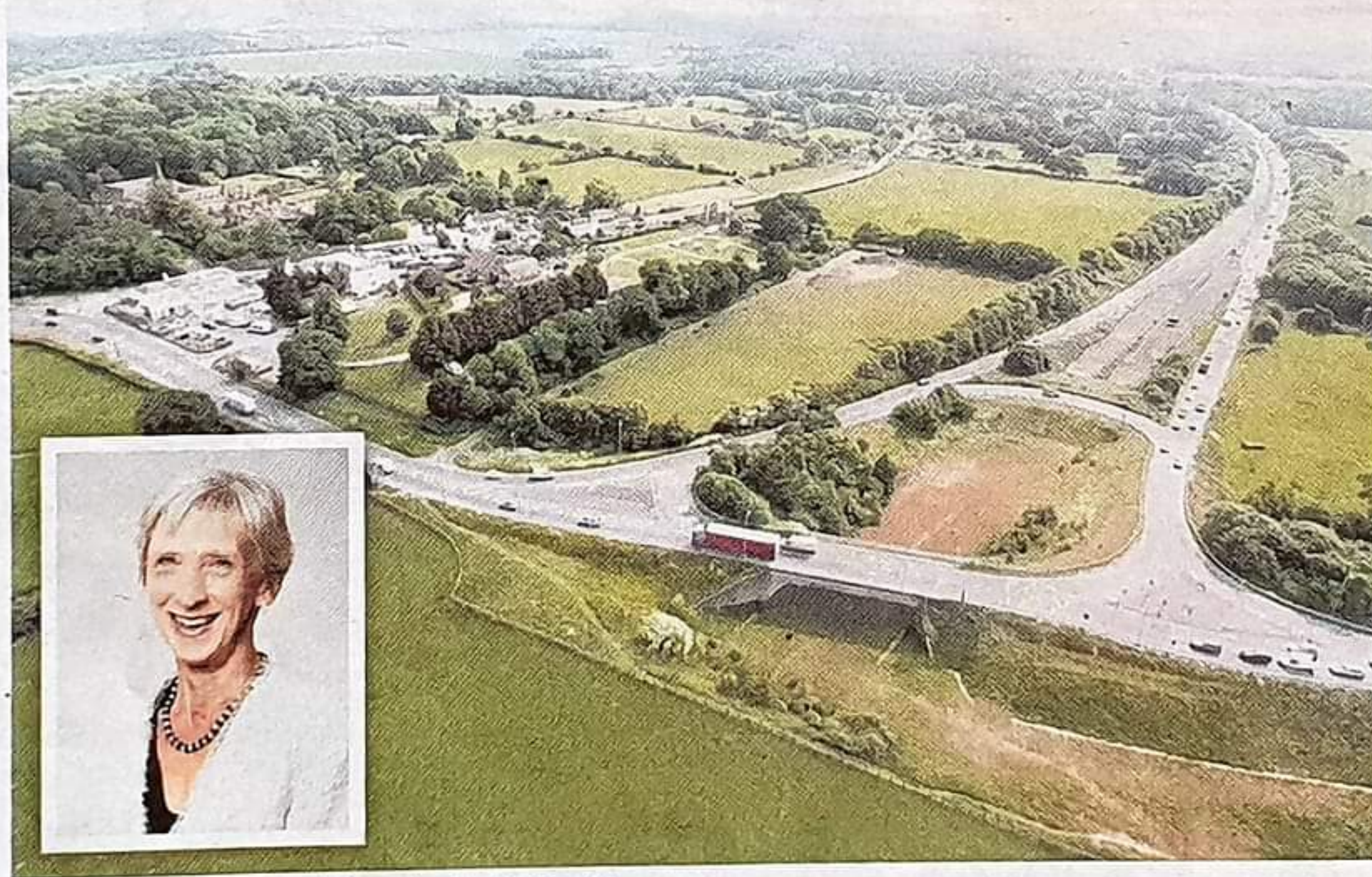
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Plans for another public consultation about the A27 Arundel bypass have been described as 'disappointing to say the least' by the leader of West Sussex County Council.

Louise Goldsmith said some people were getting 'very weary' with the ongoing improvement process, which was first proposed in the 1970s, and pleaded: "We need some action, please."

Mrs Goldsmith told fellow councillors she would call on Chichester MP Gillian Keegan to stress to Westminster and Highways England the need for a 'long-term and comprehensive solution' at Chichester as well.

At a meeting of the full council she said: "It is a little bit disappointing to say the least that we're going through yet another consultation, but we've been assured by Highways England of the commitment to the scheme."



The A27 at Crossbush and, inset, Louise Goldsmith

During last year's consultation, 48 per cent of people who took part voted for option 5a, which would take the bypass through ancient woodland at Binsted Woods, Binsted Park and the

South Downs National Park.

But Highways England announced this month another consultation would be held in the spring as 'important new evidence' had become available.

Dr James Walsh (Lib Dem, Littlehampton East) said: "I hope we will say loudly and clearly, in every forum possible, including through our MPs, that we will all continue to throw our

weight behind the preferred route for 5a for the Arundel bypass and do not run the risk of the £270m set aside by central government for the construction of this bypass."

Mrs Goldsmith said the council had spoken to all West Sussex MPs, adding: "Everybody is committed to doing their utmost to get this scheme delivered."

But Michael Jones (Lab, Southgate & Gossops Green) was not so convinced everyone was on the same page, referring to a legal challenge to the Arundel bypass scheme, recently agreed by the High Court.

Mr Jones said: "When granting this permission, the QC decided it could be argued that 'something went clearly and radically wrong with the consultation'. The news that Highways England are planning to re-run that consultation might lead some to conclude they are therefore acknowledging the original consultation process was flawed."