

Why the A38 Derby works must now be stopped.

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic there are even stronger reasons for current Road Infrastructure Schemes like this one to be halted and re-assessed. The Department for Transport and Highways England must take responsibility to *reduce* road traffic which is causing unnecessary air pollution and a threat to public health.

Air pollution exacerbates viral uptake because it inflames and lowers immunity. The World Health Organisation describes nitrogen dioxide as a gas that causes significant inflammation of the airways. Above 200 micrograms per cubic metre air polluting particles may also be a vector for pathogens for spreading viruses like COVID-19.

Paul Monks, professor of air pollution at the University of Leicester and former chair of the UK government's Science Advisory Committee on Air Quality recently stated:

'Although the UK is more than a week behind Italy in terms of the spread of the disease and the government's response, roadside monitors already show significantly reduced levels of pollution at hotspots...

'Road traffic accounts for about 80% of nitrogen dioxide emissions in the UK. For the average diesel car, each kilometre not driven avoids 52 milligrammes of the pollutant entering the air.

'What I think will come out of this [COVID-19 pandemic] is a realisation - because we are forced to - that there is **considerable potential to change working practices and lifestyles**. This challenges us in the future to think, do we really need to drive our car there... or burn fuel for that.'

According to a 2019 UN report – the world needs to cut emissions by 7.6% per year until 2030 to limit global warming to 1.5C by the end of the century. An enormous task requiring radical societal changes. Road transport reduction, more home working and fewer flights will play a critical part in that. The government's 'Road to Zero' plan to transition to electric vehicles seems like a naive tinkering at the edge of the problems we are facing as we experience repeated societal disruption due to climate and ecological breakdown-related crises, pandemics being just one of them. The *Cautionary Principal** must apply to UK transport - now more than ever before.

The Department for Transport ought to think responsibly about the serious implications of over investment in road infrastructure when the current times require health promoting infrastructure, low carbon transport investment and resilient, self sustaining local economies. Existing Benefit to Cost Ratio models and Green book recommendations need thorough overhaul.

Highways England responded that the A38 poses an *insignificant* amount of CO₂ in the overall UK carbon budget. At the same time I am aware that a disproportionate weighting is given to a perceived economic benefit to such road schemes, in spite of *insignificant* evidence that local economies have benefited from similar road schemes after their completion. (Campaign for Rural England).

In looking for economic benefits of schemes such as this, I am interested to know how you researched alternative options around economic and health benefits for Derby. Increased NO₂ pollution alone, released over the three-four years of its construction, will add significantly to Derby's already poor air quality and will detrimentally affect public health. Please explain what public transport modelling was employed in calculations for the scheme and how the benefits of that were weighted. Were tools such as the Propensity to Cycle Tool (PCT) - designed to assist transport planners and policy makers to prioritise investments and interventions to promote cycling - used as part of the A38 feasibility study? PCT shows *real* evidence of improvements to health and therefore fewer sick days with notable benefits to the local economy. Surely in 2020 this is the direction that transport investment ought to be heading.

Your sincerely

Joanna Watson, 26 March 2020
Local resident

* **Cautionary Principal** - enables decision-makers to adopt precautionary measures when scientific evidence about an environmental or human health hazard is uncertain and the stakes are high.