

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

From Councillor Jon Hubbard – Melksham South

To Councillor Bridget Wayman – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Question 20-07

Question i)

With the closure of Cleveland Bridge in Bath to vehicles weighing in excess of 18 tonnes and the subsequent diversion of this traffic onto the A350 what steps have been taken to measure and monitor the levels of air pollution in the communities affected by the significant increase in heavy vehicles, specifically in and around the Melksham Community Area?

Response

Levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) are being monitored using passive diffusion tubes in a number of locations along the A350 both in the Melksham and Westbury areas. This ongoing monitoring will assist the council to assess any impact from the introduction of the 18 tonne weight restriction on the Cleveland Bridge in Bath.

Question ii)

Is the Cabinet Member aware that members of the administration in Bath and North East Somerset council are campaigning for the closure to heavy traffic of the Cleveland Bridge to be made permanent? Does she support this campaign?

Response

Yes, I am aware of the campaign by some members of the Liberal Democrat administration in Bath for the permanent closure of Cleveland Bridge to heavy traffic. Of course, I do not support this campaign. It would mean that the banned vehicles would be diverted through Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council has not been consulted about this and I have written to the Leader of BaNES seeking a written assurance that it is not her intention to use the bridge reconstruction as a stepping stone towards a permanent weight restriction, and confirmation that the petition is a rogue exercise that does not have her Council's support. I know our Leader is meeting the Leader of BaNES to discuss this further.

As you know, Wiltshire Council has received funding to develop the business case for the Melksham bypass which will help alleviate congestion and pollution through Melksham, but the construction of the bypass is some years away. There is also the issue of Westbury and the A350 through the centre and I do not want to see any increase in HGVs through Westbury that might be due to a permanent closure of Cleveland Bridge. BaNES has a duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities on highway matters, hence our desire to open discussions rather than be dictated to by a petition organised by a BaNES councillor looking at an issue from their narrow perspective.