

AIR QUALITY IN BRADFORD ON AVON – PROPOSAL FOR AN ORIGIN AND DESTINATION SURVEY

Air Quality in BoA is a special problem because of vehicle emissions. Various palliatives have been suggested but discussions this summer have shown consensus that an effective remedy can be found only in reducing the volume of traffic in the town.

Measures to reduce the volume of traffic in the town depend on knowledge about the traffic, how much of its is locally generated, how much of it simply passing through.

An Origin and Destination (O&D) survey can answer these questions. O&D surveys come in two varieties. Some have argued that BoA needs a roadside interview (RSI) survey. But such a survey looks to be impracticable as well as costly:

- roads wide enough for traffic to be drawn aside and interviewed are few near BoA;
- the sample rate would not exceed 1 in 15 and would probably be even less at peak times when police would just wave traffic through;
- people who normally pass through BoA might take a different route on survey days to avoid the queues, etc.

An RSI survey, if practicable, would provide information on the ultimate origins and destinations of traffic but it is not clear why this information would be worth having.

The alternative form of O&D survey is a numberplate recognition survey (NPR). This should be quite practicable, and distinguish traffic:

- passing through the town,
- originating and finishing in the town and
- internal to the town.

It would allow more detailed observation of traffic in the town than an RSI survey. This proposal is for an NPR survey.

Wiltshire Council made an NPR survey of BoA in 2002. Why do we need another?

(1) The 2002 survey was technically flawed. It was made on one day only (because, the report said, of insufficient resources for more). A single day may be untypical; an NPR survey should be conducted on two weekdays and a weekend. It should also be held in a neutral month, whereas the 2002 survey was made in the peak month.

(2) Things have changed since 2002: eg parking enforcement and new car park charges have been introduced; train services have been increased; new developments will have changed travel patterns. We need up-to-date information.

The 2002 survey was flawed because insufficient resources were available. Volunteers should be able to help. Lorry Watch has shown how effectively BoA can mobilise volunteers on traffic matters. Planning the survey with experts would help to identify the best places for locating volunteers. Vehicle movements can be noted manually but more easily and reliably if video cameras were available (there should be plenty in the town that could be borrowed). Monitoring points on the exit/entry points from the town might require 16 volunteers at any one time (or half that if cameras were used); observation at key junctions in the town might take the number to 25 (or, say, 12 if cameras were used). Analysis would be possible if laborious on spreadsheets, much simpler if computer support were available.

The Area Board is asked to endorse this proposal for an NPR survey and to urge Wiltshire Council to take it on in co-operation with local volunteers. Wiltshire Council is clearly under pressure to find a solution to the exceedances in BoA of EU air pollution thresholds. This survey would provide hard information for planning traffic restraint, while involving local volunteer effort to limit Wiltshire's direct involvement to assisting in the planning and processing of the information collected.

The estimated cost for a volunteer-based numberplate recognition survey (over 3 days) is £ 5,500 (plus VAT). By way of comparison, estimates for the same sort of survey but done without volunteers or for a roadside interview survey are £50,000 or more.

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