

## **A36/A46 LINK ROAD IS NOT THE ANSWER**

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An A36/A46 link road is **NOT** the answer to traffic and air pollution problems in Bath.

*Firstly*, it has been firmly established that bypasses attract extra traffic. Rather than building an extremely expensive link road, thereby encouraging traffic to the Bath area, lower cost measures should be employed to discourage traffic from routing their journeys through our city in the first place.

Congestion and pollution in the city are tough challenges which all residents of our wider community have a shared interest in solving.

However, the number of north-south through-HGVs which would be removed by a link road is too small to justify the irreversible damage which would be done to the Avon & Limpley Stoke Valley and City of Bath World Heritage Site (WHS) landscape setting. It is also important to note that the recently approved development of the Deep Sea Marine Terminal at Avonmouth will significantly reduce the volume of HGV traffic between south coast ports, via the Bath A36/A46 corridor, and the M4/M5 interchange area.

The damaging impact of HGVs on the city can be tackled by other measures which would remove more HGVs than a link road. These measures, which are outlined in the B&NES draft Air Quality Action Plan, include the much-discussed and relatively low cost HGV ban on Cleveland Bridge or the A36 Warminster Road, as originally proposed by the Council in 2005. Such a ban is the only acceptable option to protect both the City of Bath WHS and its landscape setting/Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is considered that an effective and enforceable ban can be formulated and it is understood that B&NES Cabinet strongly supports such a scheme.

*Secondly*, the wider harm that a link road would bring outweighs any perceived benefits.

A link road would not solve Bath's traffic congestion problems because traffic is predominantly local, as has been highlighted by B&NES in their statement that -

*"In the Bath urban area, Government figures suggest that fewer than 1 in 20 cars represent through traffic during the morning rush hour, so a bypass would not tackle the thousands of cars whose destination is Bath"*

Would such a small advantage warrant the enormous cost of a link road?

*Thirdly*, it is very clear, from the many statements made in the B&NES draft WHS Management Plan and evolving West of England Partnership Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP3), that protection of both the WHS and its landscape setting constitutes, in planning parlance, "a very special circumstance".

This has been brought into sharp focus by **the 2009 Government Circular on protection of WHSs, the 2009 B&NES "Bath WHS Setting Study" and the 2008 City of Bath UNESCO report and Seville Convention in 2009**. In particular, UNESCO highlights the need for reinforced protection of both the surrounding landscape and of the views to and from the City of Bath.

The concerns and considerations outlined in these key reports reinforce previously expressed concerns about the dramatic impact which an A36/A46 link road would have on the Cotswolds AONB and WHS landscape setting, in particular those expressed at the 1990 public inquiry which rejected comprehensively a proposal for a link road as being *"..intolerable in its landscape impact and devastating to recreational amenity"* - unambiguous comments which remain wholly relevant.

Against a background of the objectives and policy statements in the emerging B&NES Core Strategy, and these recent international, national and local reports on the WHS and its landscape setting, it is very clear that no case can be made to justify the continued presence of an A36/A46 link road in West of England transport planning.

The fact that this highly controversial scheme has been removed from the draft West of England JLTP3 vision is welcomed. Looking towards 2026 and beyond, it is strongly recommended that B&NES abandon all aspirations for an A36/A46 link road through the City of Bath WHS landscape setting and Cotswolds AONB.

Let us all agree that our combined energies should be directed towards securing implementation of shorter term, lower cost traffic management measures, in particular an HGV ban on Cleveland Bridge or the Warminster Road. This is the one measure which will best serve all of us, both in the City of Bath and the rural environs.

We must all remember that the city and its landscape setting are indivisible and that anything which damages the one will surely diminish the other.

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