



Your ref: P-05-853
Our ref: KS/03420/18

David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions committee.

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

10 December 2018

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 26 November regarding Petition P-05-853 - No to any Closure of Junction 41.

The Welsh Ministers are the highway authority for the trunk road network, special roads provided by them, highways for which they are responsible under any enactment, highways transferred to them and highways constructed by them that have not been transferred to any local highway authority, in Wales. Where sections of the motorway and trunk road network currently exceed Ambient Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) and the Air Quality Standards (Wales) Regulations 2010 limit values for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations we have acted decisively to safeguard public health by the immediate implementation of temporary 50 mph speed limits as soon as our investigations indicated that such action would bring immediate improvements to air quality.

There are five locations throughout Wales that exceed the Directive limit level for NO₂. These include the M4 between Junctions 41 and 42 (Port Talbot) and the Welsh Government has a legal duty to ensure compliance with the Ambient Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) and the Air Quality Standards (Wales) Regulations 2010.

Detailed investigations, including traffic and air quality modelling using the approach set out in the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG), have recently been completed to establish the measures that will achieve compliance with the NO₂ limit values as soon as possible, in a way that reduces exposure to NO₂ as quickly as possible, and which mean it is likely, not just possible, that the limit values will be complied with.

At present, the potential M4 Junction 41 Westbound On-Slip Road Closure is a 'Precautionary Measure' arising from the Air Quality findings of the WelTAG Stage 3 appraisals. The public consultation exercise on this work finished on 2 November 2018 and a copy of the report summarising the responses can be viewed at the following webpage: <https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2018-11/tackling-roadside-nitrogen-dioxide-concentrations-in-wales-weltag-stage-3-summary-of-responses.pdf>.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In addition, we published our supplemental plan to the UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations 2017, which confirms the measures moving forward to address the air quality at the five locations. A copy of the plan can be viewed at: <https://gov.wales/docs/desh/policy/181129-final-supplemental-air-quality-plan-en.pdf>.

NO2 concentrations at each of the 5 locations are currently being monitored by diffusion tubes and the intention is to supplement these with continuous monitoring using reference method analysers by the New Year. As part of the monitoring exercise, the effect of speed limits on air quality is being reviewed and the results fed into the investigations and modelling to establish if further measures are required to achieve compliance in the shortest possible time. This is where the precautionary measures may be required.

I recognise the strong local desire to keep open Junction 41 of the M4. However the Welsh Ministers have to consider all measures that could reduce exposure to NO2 as quickly as possible and to present options as part of the consultation process in order to comply with the Ambient Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) and the Air Quality Standards (Wales) Regulations 2010. The consultation on the WelTAG Stage 3 appraisals was the most recent stage in the process and that consultation sought views on the proposed measures to reduce exposure to NO2 at five locations in Wales, one of which is Port Talbot.

While we have considered the measures against set criteria and objectives, we must take into consideration that exposure to heightened air pollution does pose a threat to life, and consider not just road users, but also the people who live and work near the motorway and trunk road network and the wider public. Therefore, the future closure of Junction 41 cannot be ruled out at this stage.

Should we establish that development of the relevant 'Precautionary Measure' or any other measures to reduce NO2 levels on this section of M4 are necessary, engagement with all stakeholders will then be undertaken.

Yours sincerely,



Ken Skates AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport