

PRESS RELEASE FROM ROAD SENSE

ROAD SENSE CRITICISM OF ABERDEEN BY-PASS SUPPORTED BY NEW REPORT

Criticisms from Road Sense aimed at Transport Minister Tavish Scott's proposals for the Aberdeen By-Pass, have received support from an independent report. The report, commissioned by the Countryside Agency and the Campaign to Protect Rural England, examines lessons learned from recent by-pass schemes in England. It concludes that far from learning from previous mistakes we are continuing to repeat them by building more by-passes.

The study shows that traffic growth on new by-pass routes is greater than forecast. Far from showing reductions in traffic levels, the towns concerned now show a considerable overall increase in traffic. The report also emphasises that the environmental effects of by-passes are much greater than forecast.

The report concludes that there should be a presumption against schemes that are likely to stimulate unsustainable, car-dependent development patterns and increased car use; and more attention should be paid to the development of alternative solutions in areas where traffic congestion is a problem. The process for appraising routes itself should be changed to require that road scheme promoters show that they have considered whether a smart choice transport programme, coupled with small-scale capital investment, might obviate the need for the road scheme altogether.

The press release accompanying the release of the report is attached.

Road Sense members have welcomed the publication of the report. Tony Hawkins of Maryculter believes that the report simply confirms what Road Sense has been saying. "We believe that the Aberdeen by-pass will simply generate more traffic. There is no chance of it ever solving traffic problems within the City. This independent report examines some of the biggest by-pass schemes to be built in recent years. Not one of them solved the problems of traffic congestion but all of them inflicted massive damage upon the environment. The Aberdeen by-pass will simply repeat those mistakes. We need to look at more intelligent ways of improving traffic flow in and around Aberdeen".

Sheona Warnock of Invercrynoch agreed "This new study confirms that an Aberdeen by-pass will not work. It will directly encourage the development of out-of-town shopping centres which will generate more car journeys and draw business away from the city centre. "

David Beeson of Netherley added "If Aberdeen wants more traffic congestion, a smaller green belt and a large bill to be paid off by our children then building the by-pass is the way to go. The Transport Minister is doing all the things that this new report has criticised. He seems determined to land Aberdeen with a huge bill for a road which will only make things worse."

Contact Names

Interviews with Road Sense members may be possible by contacting:

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Note to Editors

A new £400 Million route for the Aberdeen By-Pass (the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) was announced by Tavish Scott, the Transport Minister on December 1st, following a consultation on 5 other routes (which did not include the Tavish Scott route). The Tavish Scott route combines a road from the A90 at Charleston, splitting the community of Maryculter, with a separate 8 mile long fast link directly from Stonehaven, which goes through Netherley. The two routes merge south of the river Dee and the combined dual carriageway then passes over the Dee on a new bridge and then goes through the suburb of Milltimber, affecting a large number of houses, the International School Aberdeen with more than 300 students and Kippie Lodge, a long established family orientated sports and country club.

The previously preferred route, through Murtle, had already been surveyed at a cost of £11M. The analyses from the AWPR team show that both the Murtle and Pitfodels routes, closer to Aberdeen, would be much cheaper to build and bring greater benefits in terms of distributing traffic around the City. The new Tavish Scott by-pass will take traffic out as far as Peterculter.

The new route is longer, more expensive, further from Aberdeen and brings less benefit to the City than the other options, including the Murtle and Pitfodells routes. The route which has been selected affects many hundreds of families in several communities, including Charleston, Banchory Devenick, Blairs, Maryculter, Netherley, Peterculter and Silverburn. It is expected by the Scottish Executive to cost in the region of £395 Million, but independent estimates are that it will escalate to £750,000. The cost of the route is to be shared between the Scottish Executive, which will pay just over 80%, and the Councils of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. It was recently announced by the Treasury that VAT will be payable on the entire route, including the Councils' share. It is planned that road orders will be laid in December.

NEW ROADS: THE DAMAGE DONE AND THE LESSONS NOT LEARNED

Traffic on new roads is growing much faster than the Government forecast, according to a new study commissioned by CPRE [1] and the Countryside Agency. [2]

Researchers studied three controversial major schemes of recent years – the A27 Polegate Bypass near Eastbourne, East Sussex, the A34 Newbury Bypass in Berkshire and the M65 Blackburn Southern Bypass in Lancashire.

They found traffic on these roads had now reached *or exceeded* the levels forecast for the year 2010. [3] And extra traffic – over and above the gradual increase happening everywhere – had flowed onto local roads as a result of the schemes, undermining the claim that the bypasses would reduce congestion.

Their study [4] is one of the first to look at what actually happens once roads have been built. For all three schemes, there was above average traffic growth, increased development pressures on undeveloped land nearby and significant damage to landscapes.

Yet these important issues are not being picked up by the Highways Agency's own post-construction analysis for new road schemes. The study concludes that Government is failing to learn the lessons which could lead to better transport policies and decisions.

The researchers looked at what was claimed for the road schemes at the planning and justification stage and what actually happened once they were built – in terms of traffic flows, landscape and noise impacts and new development nearby.

At Newbury and Polegate the new bypasses did reduce town centre traffic. But the reductions were not as much as originally forecast, whilst traffic has increased on the bypassed roads and on the new bypasses.

Town centre shops in Polegate suffering from losses in trade have been campaigning for signs to be installed on the bypass directing traffic back into town!

Yet the study concludes, from Highways Agency traffic data, that the effect of the new Polegate bypass has been to generate 27 per cent additional traffic in the area one year after it opened. Newbury has also seen rapid traffic growth, with most of the freed-up space on the old, by-passed road being taken by new traffic attracted by new development.

The researchers found the three schemes caused serious and permanent damage to rural landscapes, including an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The money spent on evaluating road schemes is only 0.1 per cent of the money spent on building them, and many of the evaluations carried out have yet to be published.

CPRE Chief Executive Shaun Spiers said: 'New roads damage the countryside and the wider environment. They blight favourite views, and their noise can carry for miles. We must learn from past mistakes, but so far as road building is concerned this study shows we're continuing to repeat them.'

Graham Garbutt, Chief Executive of the Countryside Agency, said: 'We need to be sure that the effects of building new roads over the countryside are fully understood, learning from schemes already built and using the lessons. This report provides key recommendations for making this happen.'

Among those recommendations are:

- post-construction evaluation schemes for roads to have a stronger influence on transport policy and road investment decisions, by being published promptly, widely disseminated and discussed and clearly responded to;
- more weight given to landscape and environmental impacts in the decision-making process for road schemes;
- a major, strategic Government study of the extra traffic resulting from all road schemes completed in the past decade and the resulting environmental impacts, including greenhouse gas emissions;
- alternative approaches to be seriously investigated before new roads are built, such as improvements to public transport and facilities for walking and cycling;
- stricter rules governing bypasses to prevent infill development (between the bypass and the urban edge), new car-dependent development on greenfields and increased car use.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. CPRE, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, is a charity which promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England. We advocate positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside. Founded in 1926, we have 60,000 supporters and a branch in every county. President: Sir Max Hastings. Patron: Her Majesty The Queen.

2. The Countryside Agency is the statutory body working to make the quality of life better for people in the countryside and the quality of the countryside better for everyone. It is a non-departmental body sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

3. The Highways Agency forecast for the A34 Newbury Bypass, completed in 1998, was 30,000 to 36,000 vehicles per day (averaged throughout the year) by 2010. The actual level measured in 2004 was 43,800. Meanwhile peak-time congestion within the town is back to original levels. For the M65 Blackburn Southern Bypass, opened in 1997, the Department of Transport forecast 41,000 to 51,000 vehicles per day in 2010. The actual traffic level in 2004 was 52,452. As for the A27 Polegate Bypass, the average annual weekday traffic soon after the opening in 2002 was 23,500 per day but by April 2005 it had risen to 30,157 – a 27% increase, equivalent to 9% annual growth. The projection for 2010 for this bypass was that there would be 32,100 vehicles per day in 2010, but this was based on the assumption that another section of new road linked to the bypass would be open by then (which, in itself, would have added further traffic). In fact, in April 2005 there were 30,157 vehicles per day – so traffic is now approaching the forecast 2010 level, even without this section of adjoining road.

4. [Beyond Transport Infrastructure](#) (1.1MB PDF) by Lilli Matson, Ian Taylor, Lynn Sloman and John Elliott, published by CPRE and the Countryside Agency (CA). A [summary report](#) (648K PDF) is available from CPRE's press office and the Countryside Agency's. The full report is being posted on [CPRE's website, publications](#), and on the CA's website at [Countryside Agency: Recent Transport Research](#).