

The Canterbury Society

Richard Moore,
Head of Transportation
Canterbury City Council
Military Road
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Dear Mr Moore

Air pollution in Canterbury

The Canterbury Society is very concerned about the rapid rate in the growth of air pollution in the in and around the city. We are well aware that the situation is somewhat intractable but we are also aware that, after the first Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was declared in 2006, the Council informed the local population (via the Air Quality Strategy – 2007) that the situation regarding air quality would be corrected by 2008. Not only has this failed to materialise but the situation is now very much worse.

Our concern now is for the future. Given that the situation is getting worse we really wish to question whether the Council is approaching this issue with sufficient urgency. Whilst there was a recent consultation on whether there should be a number of small AQMA's declared or whether there should be a single large AQMA, this is doing very little to address the problem. Similarly, getting an Air Quality Action Plan finally approved in 2010, i.e. some 5 years after the pollution levels were found to be above the maximum permitted levels, again fails to project a sense of care or urgency. Additionally, despite the fact that most of the pollution is coming from vehicular traffic, it has taken the Council many years to undertake a proper traffic modelling assessment of the City – we believe that this is at last about to materialise.

Looking at the action plan itself, we have considerable doubts as to whether most of the actions will be effective. For instance, we cannot believe that the A2 slip roads will reduce the air pollution in the city and this fact was confirmed by a recent Bureau Veritas survey. Adding further Park and Rides simply displaces pollution and does nothing to move away from a culture of car usage. Most of the other proposed actions would appear to be of very minor significance.

We would like respectfully to suggest that this matter is attacked with rather more enthusiasm and imagination. We would like to suggest the following as the major policies to help address the situation:

- A series of concerted windscreen leaflet campaigns to inform all drivers of parked vehicles in Canterbury of the air pollution issue - encouraging them to use alternative travel means or to car share, etc.
- Hire a traffic specialist consultancy company to produce a rigorous traffic congestion and air pollution reduction plan.

- Carry out a more rigorous scheme/campaign to change public attitudes to car usage and to highlight the benefits of not using cars, e.g. in terms of exercise, health, pollution reduction.
- Strike a deal with bus providers to reduce fares in order to attract customers and to make bus services more viable.
- Talk to all leading businesses about their potential to encourage working at home. In a university city there must be plenty of scope for this.
- Urge the placing of prominent banners and/or signage along polluted roads informing drivers as to what they might do to reduce pollution, for example, by turning off the engine at level crossing gates, as is done in Wye.
- Talking with KCC, etc, about urging children to attend their nearest schools. (This is what used to happen and schools should all be encouraged to be of a “good” quality).
- As all main rail stations have car parks, then encourage a number of smaller “Park & Rides” to be located along/near major arterial road routes at locations near to bus stops.
- Setting up ‘sustainability forums’ involving local people in planning for AQMA solutions in their immediate localities
- Utilising better regional strategic locations for larger business and residential developments

We see no reason why these measures should not substantially boost those measures currently provided in the Council’s Air Quality Action Plan, and we would welcome discussing them further with your officers. The Canterbury Society sincerely believes that the Council has a duty to protect the health of local citizens and that, together with Kent County Council, far more could be done than is currently proposed.

Yours sincerely

Jan Pahl
Canterbury Society

Cc: John Gilbey, Leader – Canterbury City Council

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