

P-06-1211 Remove the average speed cameras and 50mph speed limit on the M4 between Newport and Cardiff, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 05.11.21

We, the signed in the petition, do not agree with the FM decision not to proceed with the M4 relief road. This should be reconsidered, especially when the UK Government has said they will deal with the issue of traffic on the M4 in this area by widening the Brynglas tunnels and they will pay for it! Frankly, we don't care if it's a desolved matter or not.

That "not to increase supply" decision has forced the use of average speed cameras on the M4.

The logic is clear - if you refuse to increase supply of available road or route alternative on a frequently congested space, then the only two options remaining to improve the flow of traffic are to:

1. Reduce the use of the road by vehicles; and/or
2. Reduce the speed on the road so the required stopping distance between cars is reduced and thus you can fit more cars on the road at the same time.

Mandating the enforced reduction of traffic on these roads would be political suicide and speaks to an assault on freedoms. Although, I note outrageous plans that will essentially have that affect are being considered by the Welsh Government (essentially charging people to use the M4).

Moreover, the only effectively way to enforce a reduction of speed over a prolonged period is the use of average speed cameras. Thus, we have ended up with average speed cameras.

You did not need to spend vast swaths of our money setting up an independent Commission to work this out; I could have told you in five minutes for free. How much was spent on this Commission out of interest?

Why does this Welsh Government not believe in providing more for the Welsh people and instead focus on policies that restrict, reduce and remove opportunity to thrive?

The money should have been spent on increasing capacity of the roads, making Wales a global leader in electric cars/ charging points and incentivising the purchase of electric vehicles. Does the Welsh Government not realise if you charge to use the M4 that the cost will not bother the rich but the poor, who more often than not cannot work from home, will be disproportionately affected. They will have less money in their pockets to aspire to purchase a green electric car and will be forced to extend the use of old, polluting models?

As for average speed cameras, it seems the driving force (pun intended) behind the roll out is not to reduce emissions as the FM has indicated but rather to reduce road

speeds for those who, now older, prefer and feel more comfortable in a slower environment. The Welsh government likes to talk about equality so how many people under 30 years old were part of the commission set up to look at this?

Regarding the environmental impact of average speed cameras on the environment, I have the following questions:

1. Do you have any data on the levels of nitrogen dioxide and other pollutants such as CO₂ on either side (directly next to and up to ten plus miles outside) of average speed camera zones both prior to and after the installation of average speed cameras? Has this been considered previously? If so, please provide full, specific evidence only relevant to the question. It seems to me that people accelerate hard out of average speed zones which may lead to higher levels of pollutant on either side of average speed zones. It also seems as though some people on longer journeys would increase their average speed on parts of their journey that takes place outside average speed zones in order to 'make back time'.
2. What data or research have you conducted into how travelling within an average speed zone affects the behaviour of drivers along the rest of their trip outside of average speed cameras? Has this been considered previously? If so, please provide full, specific evidence only relevant to the question. If this hasn't please justify why this data isn't required to prove average speed cameras are net positive for the environment.
3. What is the actual recorded average speed on average speed zones where the advertised limit is 50mph? Do you have this data and if not, why not? If not, how can you justify your choice of speed limit without this data?
4. Why do we use 50mph limits on average speed zones when numerous academics and NGOs, such as The Energy Saving Trust, suggest 55 - 65mph is the most efficient driving speed and CO₂ emissions are directly related to the amount of fuel burnt? Has this been considered previously? If so, please provide full, specific evidence only relevant to the question.
5. Why do we enforce 50mph limits on sections of downhill motorway where the potential energy of the vehicle location often means it can go faster than 50mph without the use of the accelerator? It would be more efficient to allow the vehicle to coast down the hill, thus removing the idling engine from the high nitrogen oxide area quicker and not wasting the additional fuel burnt to get the vehicle in a position where it has gained potential energy. Has this been considered previously? If so, please provide full, specific evidence only relevant to the question.
6. What is the environmental, financial and congestion implications of enforcing 50mph limits on sections of road where a vehicles potential energy would allow it to travel at a speed faster than 50mph? Have you collected any data on this? Has this been considered previously? If so, please provide full, specific evidence only relevant to the question.
7. What is the increase in time burden for someone travelling along the new

50mph section of the M4 between Newport and Cardiff verses travelling at the previous 70mph limit? If someone were to drive up and down this road every day, over a year how much additional time would they spend driving? What cost would this have on the Welsh economy?

8. How much time does the average Welsh commuter spend stuck in traffic compared to the rest of the UK, Europe and the rest of the World?

9. How many cars per day transited through the area of the M4 in question prior to and after the installation of the average speed cameras? Please justify dates quoted in order to minimise the impact of Covid restrictions.

10. If, as proposed, the average speed cameras improve the flow of cars on the M4 and (with the speed being lower there will be a reduced stopping distance required between cars) thus, more cars can drive on the road simultaneously, will the capacity of the M4 not theoretically be improved at congested times and so the environmental impact will not necessarily be positive? What studies have been done look at possible unexpected outcomes from this policy?

11. Why is banning combustions engine vehicles immediately not a quicker, more effective way to reduce NO2 levels? The letter states average speed cameras are the quickest way to reduce NO2 levels – it seems to just suit the narrative but not be factually true.

I note in the reply the "Three priorities" of the transport strategy were reference but it was not overly clear what these were. I wonder if the Welsh Government has ever heard of "SMART Objectives"? Because "reducing the need to travel" does not seem very smart. I assure you, others and I do not sit in hours of traffic on the M4 as a hobby, we do not do it to get out of the house', we make those trips because they are essential. The reply also states "we need fewer cars on our roads" - can you explain why? Perhaps Lee Waters, as Deputy Minister for Climate Change, would like to inform us if he owns any cars? And if so, will he be stopping by his local We Buy Any Car office in the near future to lead the charge on the reduction of cars? If not, why not? It seems to me we need better transport. Personal transport is by far the most time efficient of the infrastructure is there. The priority should be making that transport electric. The future will clearly be electric, self-driving cars - be that personal or shared. This will be a good future. The Welsh Government should be driving this agenda forward.

The reply talks about giving priority to walking, cycling or public transport ahead of private motor vehicles. Well, last time I checked I was not allowed to walk or cycle on the M4 and my experience of public transport has been slow, expensive and frankly not fit for purpose. Not to mention most of the buses seem to emit similar amounts of emissions from their rear as several burning coalfields combined.

In short, transport infrastructure is critical to a successful, thriving economy. It allows us all to get to work in a timely fashion, to make the most of our free time, gives us more free time, saves us money, allows for the quick response of emergency services and provides us with new opportunities. We should be striving to enhance and build

on existing transport links to maximise all the benefits it can offer, not limiting what we already have. Our focus should be on encouraging the swift transition to renewables and electric vehicles to tackle the threat of poor air quality and climate change. Average speed cameras is robbing Paul to pay Peter, a focus on renewables and electric cars is a win win.

This Welsh Government needs to stop focusing on policies that restrict, reduce and remove opportunity.

I would appreciate full, specific replies to all questions posed, the answers of which should only contain information specifically relevant to the questions asked.

Apologies for any typos etc., some of us work and don't really have time to do this. We're too busy stuck in traffic on the m4 normally in our 'free time' to give views for free, let alone to find enough time in the evening to spell check it