

Rebecca Pow MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

(via email)  
2nd March 2020

Dear Rebecca Pow MP,

Thank you for you and your department's work in helping Coventry clean up its toxic air. I was initially optimistic at Coventry City Council's announcement that their plans to reduce NO2 had been accepted by government and that there would be no chargeable CAZ.

As way of introduction, I am [Coventry's new Bicycle Mayor](#). I was born and raised in the city and helps coordinate between existing cyclists, the community, government, and nonprofits. Bicycle Mayors were pioneered in Amsterdam; they aren't part of local government, but volunteers who are recommended by local cycling groups and city stakeholders. I am also a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Cycling and Walking.

It is good to see some improved cycling and pedestrian facilities form part of the proposal. We have a golden opportunity now to reshape our transport habits in Coventry, but it concerns me that Coventry City Council's proposal and Defra's guidance to the council focuses heavily on "quick fix" measures to reduce NO2 **as fast as possible**, which will lead to increasing road capacity and simply 'optimising' the existing motor traffic. We need to take a long-term view for public health; the NO limits shouldn't be the arbitrary target to reach, we need to be reducing all forms of air pollution to as a low a figure as possible and this won't happen through trying to maintain existing travel habits.

Coventry is the fastest growing city in the UK in terms of congestion, according to the TomTom Traffic Index. In England in 2018, over 60% of journeys of 1–2 miles were made by motor vehicle, distances that can easily be covered by walking, cycling or public transport, if we provide the right infrastructure. We need to fundamentally change our relationship with the private motor vehicle and not simply replace diesel cars with electric ones.

While electric vehicles reduce zero emissions, they are not so neutral when it comes to the affects of PM2.5 through brake, tyre and road wear. We won't know the full extent of harm this causes people, especially children, for many years but, worryingly, this is unlikely to stop a large campaign from local and national government towards adoption of electric vehicles.

An e-traffic jam is still a traffic jam; electric vehicles will still clog up our compact city and make it harder for people to walk or cycle, whether that's to work, to school or just get around town. We also need to remember that electric vehicles are out of reach financially for many people.

The Council's original preferred option submitted to Defra included **four** high quality cycle routes, whereas the announcement details just one very short route linking Coundon with the city centre. I hope that more cycle routes are built as part of the plans to change the way we travel with low emissions in Coventry. Cycling infrastructure is a strong investment that delivers £5.50 back for every £1 spent, according to the government's own figures.

I write to you to ask that Defra, throughout the local consultation on measures, reminds Coventry City Council of the importance of high-quality cycling and walking routes. While their measures might get us out of this short-term problem, there is no way we can achieve long-term success through removing traffic lights, banning some right turns, optimising traffic flow through technology and widening roads - creating induced demand (more people drive when you make roads wider and driving easier).

I look forward to hearing from you and welcome the opportunity to discuss further.

Adam Tranter  
Bicycle Mayor for Coventry, [BYCS.org](http://BYCS.org)

