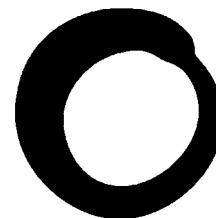


Briefing Note



**Friends of
the Earth
Cymru**

**Cyfeillion
y Ddaear
Cymru**

In December 2004 the Welsh Assembly Government announced its intention to build a 14 mile stretch of six lane motorway south of Newport in the south Wales. The motorway is being proposed to reduce predicted congestion on the existing M4 north of the city. It would cut through the beautiful Gwent Levels – a nationally important wildlife site and historic landscape. The Assembly Government claims it could be built for around £350 million which would be raised by charging people to use the new road.

Building major new roads leads to large increases of traffic which results in more emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) – the main gas responsible for global warming. More traffic also means more oil demand, air pollution and a decline in health, road safety and the fitness levels of adults and children.

New roads are also likely to cause congestion on the surrounding road network (the M4 Relief Road would cause more congestion in and around Cardiff and the Valleys). There are ways to resolve traffic congestion which also give people the choice to travel without a car.

What is climate change?

Top scientists agree - climate change is real, and it's happening. The world is getting warmer and the weather is getting more extreme. More droughts, storms and floods are on the way. It's a direct result of burning more and more fossil fuels for increasing energy use. The carbon dioxide (CO₂) released traps the heat from the Sun in the atmosphere causing a greenhouse effect. CO₂ levels are now about a third higher than they were before the industrial revolution.

Driving up emissions

Road transport is currently responsible for around 22 per cent of UK emissions of CO₂. There are now 28 million vehicles on UK roads. While emissions from industry and households are showing some reductions, emissions from road transport have been increasing noticeably.

Worse still, transport emissions are set to rise in the coming years as we make more journeys by car and aeroplane.

What is the answer?

There is a route out of our transport crisis: we need less traffic on our roads and less growth in aviation. People need real choices about how they travel so that they don't have to use their cars as much. This doesn't mean giving up cars – they will still be the sensible choice for some journeys. Providing real choices means investing more in improving public transport – making it safer, more efficient, more reliable and more affordable. Since 1997, the cost of motoring has fallen in real terms

Friends of the Earth Cymru inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people.

Friends of the Earth Cymru:

- is dedicated to protecting the environment and promoting a sustainable future for Wales**
- is part of the UK's most influential environmental campaigning organisation**
- is part of the most extensive environmental network in the world, with over 60 national organisations across five continents**
- supports a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in communities across Wales**
- is dependent upon individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

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by 6.6 per cent while rail fares have risen by nearly 4 per cent and bus fares by over 10 per cent.

People should also be able to buy and use cars that pollute less. This involves getting manufacturers to build fuel-efficient vehicles and giving car buyers more information and tax incentives. The use of alternative fuels, such as biofuels which can be produced from vegetable oils, should be investigated.

Road building is not the way forward

Rather than set clear targets to reduce the numbers of journeys made by car in Wales the Welsh Assembly Government is set to spend millions of pounds of taxpayers money on building new roads. The proposed motorway to the south of Newport is a good example of this, though big new roads are also planned for areas such as Ammanford, Bargoed, Port Talbot and the Rhondda.

Congestion problems around Newport should be solved by improvements to public transport and other measures to encourage people out of their cars. UK Government plans to charge drivers more for travelling on particularly congested stretches of road could help to persuade people to avoid travelling at busy times and remove the perceived need for more road building. These measures, among others, will help to solve Wales' transport problems.

Road building is often portrayed as being necessary to create jobs and boost the economy. In fact, road building can often harm local economies by making it easier for communities to receive services from far away. As more roads have been built, local shops, dairies and post offices have closed down. This destroys local jobs and makes it difficult for people without cars to access services. A third of people in Wales do not have access to a car – particularly the elderly and young people, women and those on low incomes.

Aviation

Aviation has become one of the fastest growing sources of climate-changing gases.

The Welsh Assembly Government has proposed an air link between north and south Wales, and is supporting the building of new runways and terminals to make this happen. It's a plane crazy idea which is happening all over the UK, leading to a huge growth in aviation that is only possible because airlines don't pay any tax on the fuel they use and pay no VAT on many aspects of their operations. Damage caused by the quantity of food and consumer products being flown around the world needs to be reduced. Buying locally supports the local economy and cuts down on pollution.

What can be done about it?

There is much that can be done to halt and reverse the increase in the emission of the gases that are changing the climate. Far more emphasis has to be given to energy saving measures, renewable energy systems (such as wind, solar and tidal power) and good public transport systems. The planning system has a role to play in ensuring that climate change is addressed by, for example, ensuring that people can work, shop and enjoy recreation facilities near to their homes – reducing the need for excessive travel.

Join the Big Ask

Friends of the Earth's new Big Ask campaign helps people who are concerned about climate change to press their MPs to pass a law that obliges the UK Government to make annual 3 per cent CO₂ emission cuts year on year.

- The UK government needs to act now to reduce carbon dioxide emissions – from electricity generation, from transport, and from industry. *Join the Big Ask Climate change campaign to ask the government to start acting on climate change www.thebigask.com.*
- You can also take action in your own home or office by saving energy and backing renewable energy initiatives, avoiding unnecessary flights and car trips and buying locally. *For further information visit our website on www.foecymru.co.uk.*



The climate is changing it's time to ask questions
Mae'r hinsawdd yn newid, mae'n bryd ofyn cwestiynau