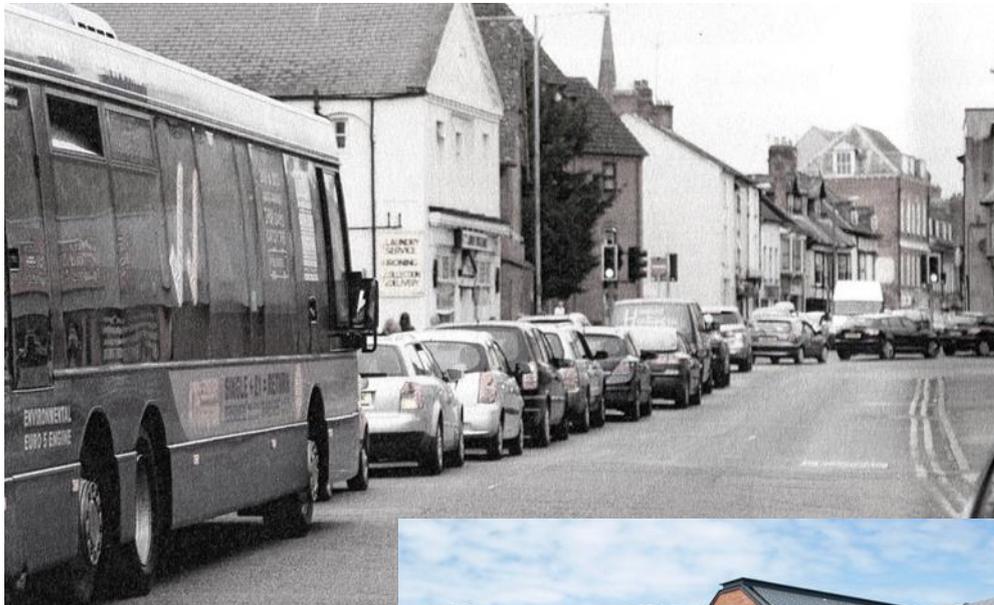


# Sustainable Transport Herefordshire

**Air Quality, Environment,  
Community & Transport**



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## The Air We Breath

*'Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues, because areas with poor air quality are also often the less affluent areas.'*

These are the opening words in Herefordshire Council's Air Quality Annual Status Report 2018. The Report goes on to say that the main pollutant of concern within Herefordshire is nitrogen dioxide and the major source of air pollutants in Herefordshire is vehicle emissions.

The seriousness of the health implications can not be overstated. Deaths from asthma rose 25% over a decade. For over 55s the increase was 45 %. Overall air pollution has been linked to an estimated 40.000 premature deaths in the UK and has been called a public health emergency by the World Health Organisation. Even babies in the womb may be affected as studies suggest sooty particles may be found in the placenta and exposure to air pollution may reduce birth weight. There are also signs that it may be linked to miscarriages Research also exposed that children are exposed to more than 60 % of air pollution they take in each day during school run and at school. Black carbon particles penetrate deep into lungs and bloodstream and can stunt lung and brain growth. The impact on health is truly cradle to grave as there is a growing body of evidence of links between air pollution and brain health, including dementia and Alzheimers disease , and indeed that air pollution may in general cause reduction in mental functioning in the entire population.

Although overall the air quality is good in Herefordshire there is no room for complacency. Traffic is increasing as new house building takes place in city, towns and villages. Nationally in 2018 emissions from surface transport were 6% higher than in 2013 and new car emissions rose for the first time since 2000, with SUVs accounting for 18.1% of new cars compared with 7.7 in 2010. (For those not familiar with the term an SUV is a powerful vehicle with four-wheel drive that can be driven over rough ground. SUV is an abbreviation for 'sport utility vehicle'.)

In Summer 2018 the UK Parliament passed legislation to commit the UK to net zero emissions by 2050. With road transport accounting for 90% of carbon emissions from transport and with it also being a major source of toxic air pollution, moves towards a zero-carbon future need to be started NOW.

We are delighted with Herefordshire Council's Declaration of a Climate Emergency. Now it is time to match fine words with actions. One big action will be to reduce dependence on the private car. The question is 'How do you reduce dependence on the car? **Is the answer to build new roads?**

Land use and transportation are interminably linked in a dynamic cause and effect

situation. Ameliorating and if possible negating the damaging effects of traffic generation is at last beginning to assume a major place in transportation planning. In our cities, towns and countryside, aspects such as air pollution, exhaust emissions, environmental damage and safety are raising greater concerns than ever before. That such aspects be taken into account in transportation planning is now certain and sustainable transport is a fundamental part of the planning for the future of our cities, towns and country.

Traffic and transportation studies in Hereford indicate that the proportion of through traffic is less than 20% and the proportion of heavy goods vehicles is a small 2-4%. Summary findings indicate 72% of trips start and end within the city. By far the largest proportion of trips access the city centre, hospital, railway and bus stations and Aylestone educational complex. It is difficult to see how these trips would make use of a bypass around the city, the inference being that car drivers would travel until they found the least congested radial route into the city. Far from reducing emissions this will increase emissions, possibly by up to 40%. In other words a new western bypass merely shifts emissions from one radial road to another with Whitecross Road suffering most.

But the argument continues that a bypass will free up road space in the city. This it may well marginally accomplish in the short term but as we all know from domestic experience ... create free space and the space soon gets filled ... so we are back to square one. In the case of transport, the freed up space will soon be occupied by increased traffic generation from new housing areas to south, west and north of the city.

In all the hype about a new road, the economic impact of directing cars around the city has been lost. Surely it is important to encourage people into the city to aid the development of its future as a vibrant Historic City of the Marches. We can all see that the economic, social and environmental fabric of the city is in need of urgent attention.

Elsewhere in the county the problem of emissions has now begun to raise its head in the market towns. At the main cross roads in the centre of Leominster air pollution is high enough to prompt the creation an Air Quality Management Area in fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 Local Air Quality Management. Leominster has a bypass! The same may yet become applicable to the High Street and Top Cross area of Ledbury which also has a bypass.

## **The Environment Around Us**

Electric cars are held up as the panacea to our traffic ills. Electric cars may well solve the emissions dilemma taking us to net zero emissions by 2050. But they cannot solve the problem of congestion. In fact they may well add to it with the mind set that without emissions, the problem has been solved. You may well be able to breath clean air but who wants to sit I in a traffic jam of electric cars watching the battery charge indicator slowly move towards zero.

Do we really want a twenty first century H.G.Wells scenario with city, town and country environments littered with electric cars. There is already mounting concern at the numbers of cars parked on pavements and greensward. The impediment to the elderly, disabled and mothers and young children is set to become a major safety issue of the twenty first century.

Hereford was one of the first cities to pedestrianize its city centre. What a pleasure it is to wander, sit, pause and converse, meet friends and family and window shop in a car free environment. Let us hope it remains car free and that the roads and business lobby do not start itching for Hightown to be reopened to traffic once we are in a zero emissions situation.

## **A Country of Automatons or Humans and Community**

So there we are in 2050, a country of zero emissions from road vehicles, everyone has an electric car or two or three and we can sit in traffic jams in glorious isolation. We even may be one of the lucky ones where the car drives itself which will allow us to play with our tablets, Nintendo games, electronic gambling or even engage in what by then is a rare habit of conversing with someone. This would be by satellite because the car we are driving will be satellite controlled. Definite shades of Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World' creeping in here.

Is this what we really want or do we want to travel into town and city in the company of other humans, to be able to chat and laugh and feel as if we are human. Humans thrive on interaction, so even a bus journey can be a community of people. All this is why we should be planning now for alternatives to using the private car.

Health wise there should be the option of walking and/or cycling in a safe healthy environment. Social and economic wise there should be the option of using public transport.

The Herefordshire Council campaign 'Choose How You Move' threw up some interesting results. The rather hidden report on the results of the campaign gave the following:

*'Analysis of the 2015 Hereford Travel Survey responses found that there has been a net change of 2.7% from car driver journeys to public transport and active travel modes over the last three years for main journey purpose. Taking into account a margin of error of +/-0.9% there is a potential mode shift range of 1.8% to 3.6% away from car journeys to public transport and active travel modes.'*

We are sure that this can be taken as a first indicator that people are looking for a change from having to use the car. Time will soon whizz by towards those target dates for net zero emissions. It is up to Herefordshire Council, Town and Parish Councils and public transport operators to rise to the occasion and start the ball rolling now and quickly. This could well add to the impetus of change pushed from the bottom up. Lets

face it we aren't going to get guidance and integrated transport policy from the top down. So, as Maria Machancoses, Director of Midlands Connect said in a recent paper:

## **‘Climate Change - Lets Gear up for a Zero Carbon Future’**

### **Sustainable Transport Herefordshire**

#### **Who Are We?**

We are a small group of professionals who embrace transport and land use planning, economics, the environment and who see into the future and learn from the past.

The realisation that future transport has to change led to the formation of the **Herefordshire Sustainable Transport Group** in 2017 (HSTG).

We publish under the title of **Sustainable Transport Herefordshire**.

Our principal aim is to examine and study innovative, environmental and economic changes in transport that can be applied to Herefordshire's current transport problems. We seek to work with the local transport authority, local MPs, the Department for Transport, transport operators and community groups in planning the future.

HSTG is an Independent Group allied to Rail & Bus for Herefordshire and the Herefordshire Transport Alliance.

**For a full list of our reports in PDF format contact:**

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