

P-05-853 No to any Closure of Junction 41, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 15.01.20

I have already sent my comprehensive list of my reasons for raising this petition last year. The response from the minister is disappointing due to the fact that junction closures are still possible. The chaos and disruption it caused in Port Talbot town centre and my ward of Baglan was horrendous during the last trial as mentioned in my previous correspondence. I would ask that if there are ongoing monitoring and closing the junction is still on the cards that full IIA's are completed on the impact on the town, it's commerce and effects on individuals and the same for the surrounding communities of Baglan, Port Talbot, Sandfields, Aberavon and the Afan Valley communities who have a very long way to travel to get to the onslip to attend work, school and medical appointments without extending their journeys further. It seems that someone is hell bent on closing this junction. The perception in the communities is that the WAG tried to close J41 using the excuse of delaying traffic the last time the issue came up and as this didn't work they are now trying it with a different excuse of air quality. Wether this is the case or not you will have a hard time trying to persuade our residents otherwise. The previous First Minister was always saying the the WAG needed to improve travel times to West Wales.

I would implore the committee to consider the upheaval and disruption to our communities in Port Talbot.e.g. traffic jams, earlier closure of shops because everyone goes home early to avoid the local traffic chaos. Loss of income to our town centre retail sector which will lead to loss of jobs and shop closures. The result of this will be to add to the already high deprivation that we have in our County Borough.

I would also ask that before any future closure of J41 is carried out that full and extensive monitoring is done on all of the surrounding roads to measure how the air quality is before and at the time of closure due to the increased exhaust emissions from the cars in the resulting congestion from traffic jams. J41 is on the elevated section of the M4 where emissions would rise and dissipate upwards. Moving traffic through the town passed a number of schools and densely populated areas which are all at a lower elevation and nearer to where people are walking and inhaling it directly into their lungs without the protection of a car limiting how much is directly inhaled. Also if you are travelling in a car you are not only protected by the car but are only travelling through it briefly. It doesn't sound like a win to me for residents of Port Talbot, just who is this scheme trying to protect?

I implore the committee and WAG to consider the whole picture here and with us also having to live with the emissions coming from the steel works you will be directly adding to the pollution in the areas where people living here will be inhaling the increased fumes on local roads. Please carry out a health impact assessment on the effects that closing J41 will have on the increased inhalation of fumes that will result that the local traffic jams will cause.

Regards

Carol

Cllr Carol Clement-Williams

Cabinet Member For Finance NPTCBC