

Councillor R Clewer  
The Leader of Wiltshire Council  
Wiltshire Council

Correspondence sent via Email

Date : 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Dear Cllr Clewer

Thank you for your letter of 7<sup>th</sup> November, which was carefully considered before cabinet agreed on 10<sup>th</sup> November to consult on varying the Bath CAZ Charging Order 2021 to introduce a charge for Euro VI diesel HGVs exceeding 12 tonnes.

I note also that your letter was appended to a press release which Wiltshire Council issued on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November.

I appreciate you setting out your perspective on the local interventions my authority is proposing to address the impact of HGVs on the heritage and amenity setting of our UNESCO World Heritage Site, and be ambitious in improving air quality. I am committed to putting the health and wellbeing of my residents at the forefront of all decision making within the city and wider areas.

Whilst I recognise that you may consider the progressive policy making of this council as challenging, I can assure you that feasibility based upon actual traffic data and modelling has been undertaken to understand the impacts. In line with the original Clean Air Zone, where you have not raised any evidence of increased HGV traffic beyond typical day-to-day variability from your traffic counts conducted on your network, we again suggest that the impact on your network will be low. However, this is part of our overall package of measures within our approved policies that affect all vehicle types. This includes increased parking charges, improved Park & Ride services, the introduction of Liveable Neighbourhoods, with associated road closures, and long-term plans to explore workplace parking levies and other demand management schemes, as set out in our published Journey to Net Zero policy.

We would like to continue to work with you and your officers to help you bring forward policies of a similar nature, sharing best practice and data, ensuring that we are working for the benefit of the region rather than just locally. For example, we need to work together to consider the impact of decisions, such as those in Colerne where HGVs were directed to use Bannerdown Road within B&NES. I am not aware that my officers were engaged or gave agreement before your authority placed signage along the A4 directing HGVs to use this route.

A number of other authorities have taken advantage of our offer to share with them how we are leading in the area of clean air zones, as an example with our innovative Financial Assistance Scheme. Our expertise is very much welcomed as councillors and officers do their best to protect the health and wellbeing of their residents. We would be willing to also help you create plans to protect your residents in a similar way, at costs which reflect the shared needs of our communities and the need for us to work together to ensure their health and wellbeing.

Regarding Cleveland Bridge, I am afraid that you are simply mistaken. We are currently analysing the data from the monitoring equipment that has been installed and as soon as we are in a position to provide the necessary levels of certainty regarding the structure, we will move to remove the temporary weight limit from the bridge. As I am sure your officers have informed you, safety on the highway is subject to a number of checks and balances and these will always take precedence over any calls for reopening.

I look forward to continuing to work together with you and our other regional partners on the wider strategic study that is currently underway with National Highways to consider the long-term plan for strategic north-south movements as part of the M4 to Dorset Coast Connectivity Study, which may provide long term certainty on the use of the A350 route for HGV traffic and provide the necessary investment. I also understand that my colleague, Cllr Manda Rigby, in her role as freight lead for Western Gateway is working extremely hard to explore the feasibility of moving more freight through our region on the rail network, and I trust you will be supporting her in this endeavour.

I also look forward to continuing to explore other opportunities with you to promote sustainable travel between Wiltshire and B&NES, including the next steps for the East of Bath Express study, which will help us both to reduce traffic and reach our net-zero aspirations and obligations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Guy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Kevin Guy  
Leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council