



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-853
Ein cyf/Our ref KS/08520/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair Petitions Committee

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|| December 2019

Dear Janet

Thank you for your letter of 21 November regarding Petition P-05-853 No to any Closure of Junction 41.

On 7 October we published our interim report that contained nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and speed data recorded at the 5 locations where NO₂ levels exceeded legal limits, including the M4 between Junction 41 and Junction 42, Port Talbot.

In the case of the M4 at Port Talbot, the data has indicated that since initial implementation of the 50mph speed limit in June 2018, NO₂ levels have reduced to 45g/m³ in comparison with the 6 month average of 52.2µg/m³ prior to implementation. However, the situation remains complicated as air quality is sensitive to a number of issues including the weather/seasonal effects, traffic flows (including volume), speeds and fleet mix. Consequently, further monitoring is being undertaken and our next report will be published in March 2020 containing the full set of data for NO₂ concentrations for the 2019 calendar year.

Although the reduction in NO₂ concentrations is positive news, as highlighted in our supplemental NO₂ plan, we are continuing with the goal of achieving compliance in the shortest time possible. This includes the continued development and the stakeholder engagement on the Precautionary Retained Measures. Development of the Junction 41 on-slip road closure and variable diversion measures on the M4 at Port Talbot have commenced and we will be looking to arrange a meeting with local Assembly Members and Neath Port Talbot Council in the coming weeks.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I appreciate that there are strong views regarding the potential closure of slip roads on the M4 at Port Talbot following the trial that was undertaken in 2015. However, the High Court ruling was to the effect, that the only lawful consideration was to identify and implement the package of measures that will achieve compliance with the NO2 limit values as soon as possible and will mean that achieving compliance is not just possible but likely. It was made clear in the ruling that the cost and the unpopularity of any given measure could not be lawfully taken into account.

We will provide further updates on the development of the Precautionary Retained Measures including the outcomes of dialogue with stakeholders within the report we will be publishing in March, 2020.

Yours ever,


Ken Skates AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy and Transport