

CPRE TYNE TUNNEL OBJECTION: SPEAKER'S NOTES

1. There appears to be an inconsistency in the justifications offered for this proposal, as to whether the PTA seeks to justify the second Tyne Tunnel as a means primarily of relieving local traffic congestion, or whether it is to be seen as a source of sub-regional economic regeneration, stimulating investment and job creation in North and South Tyneside, especially in the areas adjacent to the A19. Obviously these objectives are not contradictory but both give rise to major objections.
2. If the primary justification for the proposed tunnel is the relief of local congestion, then it is a regrettable regression to the discredited "predict and provide" transport methodology. On the PTA's own admission, 83% of the traffic passing through the present Tyne Tunnel is cars and motorcycles, which suggests that the bulk of the traffic is of local origin. The PTA speaks in their first volume of their evidence, of "natural" traffic growth. No traffic growth is natural; it is stimulated by the location or mislocation of developments and facilities that attract it, including extra road space. What we equally need to do as a matter of policy is to encourage people to use their cars in a more discriminating fashion. We cannot expect to stop people buying cars, nor should we seek to do so but we must persuade and induce them to minimise the social and environmental costs incurred by the way they use them. The Mayor of London has successfully found one way to do this.

3. Alternative solutions have not been adequately considered, including building a Metro line alongside the existing tunnel, or making it easier to use the North/South Shields ferry, including providing bus links to its terminals from the Metro stations and town centres of North and South Shields and Jarrow. The proposed bus links through the Tunnel are welcome but will they be sufficiently attractive to persuade commuters not to use their cars? Do we want to encourage cross-river commuting anyway, when we are supposed, according to approved national and regional policies, to be developing sustainable communities in which work, houses and leisure facilities will all be within walking distance of one another? National and regional strategies, including the North-East's RPG, now prioritise minimising car use, yet 83% of Tunnel users are car or motorbike borne and the second tunnel will encourage growth in this traffic, to the extent that eventually, congestion will become as bad as it is now.

4. I now turn to the economic development and regeneration arguments. If these are the true reasons for this proposal, there are more serious objections. National and regional spatial planning and transport policies, including PPG 11, the RPG 1 recently approved by the Secretary of State and the Regional Transport Strategy prepared by the North-East Regional Assembly, all advocate reducing the need to travel by the development of sustainable communities. In these communities housing, employment, shopping and leisure facilities, together with public services such as schools and libraries, are all expected, even required to be within

walking or cycling distance of one another. Hence, cars will not be needed for the journeys to and from work and school which are the major causes of traffic congestion. The plans for Newcastle Great Park offer a commendable earnest of such intentions, provided that the developments there are executed in line with current plans, including the S 106 Agreement.

5. More widely, RPG 1 and the North-East's Regional Transport Strategy provide that future development should reduce the need to travel and reduce also the need to use cars when travelling is still necessary. Properly executed, these policies should render the edge of town industrial estates beloved of planners and developers in the 1960s and 1970s anachronistic. However, if the proposed tunnel leads to further industrial development on the urban fringes of North and South Shields and Jarrow without the sustainable development required in present policies taking place, this will generate increased matutinal and eventide commuter traffic flows, to the detriment of the local environment and the quality of life of local people. People from South Shields and Jarrow will be encouraged to commute to work in North Tyneside and vice versa. It would be preferable to encourage sustainable development in all these communities instead, which would reduce the need for cross-river commuting. The present proposal is therefore anachronistic.

6. We also fear that this proposal will encourage the further industrial development on greenfields sites adjacent to the A19, again contrary to current policies – in this case the preference for brownfields as opposed to greenfields developments.

7. I conclude with some specific points:

- The Highways Agency has gone on the record as not designating the A19 as a national through route, hence presumably it does not want more long distance HGV traffic using it (A19 Route Management Strategy, Dishforth to Testo's Roundabout). The traffic generated by the proposed tunnel will increase congestion, wear and tear and danger for all users of the A19.
- Industrial development along the A19 North and South of the river will generate heavy goods deliveries to the new plants, again causing increased pollution and danger to other road users.
- There are other more local causes for concern. One is the loss of open space, to which local residents have already drawn attention. Another is the loss of the "Gaslight" public house, which the campaign for Real Ale has identified as probably the oldest pub in Jarrow and which was included in the 2000 Good Beer Guide.

8. Past policy statements have been called in evidence to support this proposal, including the 1979 Tyne and Wear Structure Plan. However, both public attitudes to transport and public policies relating to it have changed radically since then. Let me remind you that during the 1970s and Great London Council's Development Plan proposed the

construction of three concentric motorway rings around London. Thankfully, only one of them was built – the M25 – and this has turned into an unmitigated disaster for London and the South-East. From this lesson we should learn. Hence, Mr. Inspector, we urge you to advise the Secretary of State to reject this anachronistic and ill-conceived proposal.

HOWARD ELCOCK

March 2003.