

TyneBikes

PROPOSED RIVER TYNE (TUNNELS) ORDER - SUBMISSION TO PUBLIC INQUIRY

Please accept this letter as our submission of evidence to the inquiry. At the time of writing it is our intention to ask Mr John Turvey to speak for us.

Tynebikes is a voluntary, member led organisation whose stated purpose is to promote cycling in and around Tyneside and to support other campaigns or actions which would directly or indirectly benefit cyclists. We have about 130 paid-up members and many more supporters. The organisation was formed in 1983 and has participated in many planning processes since then, including work on RPG, the RTS and TAMMS and have always sought to make sure the legitimate interests of cyclists are adequately covered and protected.

We object to the plans for a new Tyne crossing in the form of a road only tunnel. Although we support the wider Tyne Crossings Alliance position, we comment here upon matters of particular interest to cyclists.

We object the scheme on two levels. Firstly we have grave misgivings about the principle of providing a major expansion in road capacity when we thought government policy was to move in the other direction. Secondly we are not happy with many details of the scheme and how, if it were built, it would affect our members' interests.

At the level of principle, we note that Planning Policy Guidance Note PPG13 Transport says that its key aims are to:

- promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight
- promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling, and
- reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

There are many other statements of government policy, but we understood their general drift was as per PPG13, i.e. not to do anything that would accelerate the use of the private car or moving freight by road. We note the publication of the draft Regional Transport Strategy last year, which supported the new river crossing. We trust that the inquiry will not give that document undue weight, as it suffers from the same lack of balance on assessing road based schemes as does the current river crossing proposal.

A road only tunnel with no particular features to benefit even bus movements seems to go against these central government principles, which we support. Thus, in terms of principle, we object as follows:

- The scheme would contribute significantly to an increase in road use in absolute terms
- Given that it is a road only tunnel, it would also contribute hugely to a shift in modal split away from more sustainable forms of transport towards car and lorry use

- We believe that the scheme does not represent the most cost effective way of addressing the strategic (and local) traffic problems pose by the River Tyne and if adopted it would close off opportunities for a truly multi-modal set of solutions
- We believe that the extra emissions created generally as a result of increase in vehicle use, with inevitable concentrations of effect locally, would pose a significant health threat and that these health impacts have not been addressed fully in the submissions
- Equally, the emissions produced as a result of extra vehicle use would contribute negatively to meeting our national obligations to the Rio and Kyoto agreements (and in terms of timing, it seems unfortunate to say the least that this unsustainable proposal came forward just as we were all preparing for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg).

In terms of implementation, should the scheme go ahead, we are not convinced that the interests of cyclists have been covered adequately and therefore must also object on the following grounds:

- All traffic, even if immediately on the trunks roads, must start and finish on local networks, where our members or others cycle; such impacts have not been addressed
- The local road networks near each end of the tunnel will suffer particularly from extra traffic, and as it happens, these have a concentration of officially designated cycle routes; cyclists seeking to access these routes will be coming along many of the local roads which would see increased traffic; again such impacts have not been addressed
- Although it is unclear whether or not such a road is to be built, it does seem likely in time that a new feeder route through the Hebburn/Pelaw riverside park might be needed; this is a quiet and very scenic area much used and appreciated by cyclists which should not be disturbed - the degree to which such a road might in time be needed should be addressed at a public inquiry alongside better known direct effects
- The construction will have a direct impact on a number of designated cycle routes and it is not clear how these will be affected or protected both during construction and on completion.