

TRAFFIC STRATEGY AND AIR POLLUTION

Professor Donald Thomas - Greenway Residents Association, whose reply to the questionnaire urged a focus on pollution of both homes and city centre sites. I am happy to respond to any questions that are permitted on this contribution

A defining event in traffic pollution was the 2013 EC report on Exposure to Vehicle Exhaust, under the acronym "ESCAPE."

This covered a third of a million people in 22 European sites. Oxford represented the UK, more polluted than Bath in the 1990s.

ESCAPE examined diesel particulates and the invisible killer of petrol exhaust. Bath has 51 Air Quality Monitoring Zones for fumes. 37 remain persistently above the legal - and lethal — limit. That is 40 parts of nitrogen dioxide in each cubic metre of air. 40 is the key to what follows.

ESCAPE's small-town Sweden has the lowest level, 8 parts. The highest is 60 parts in industrial Turin. Nationally Bath's Dorchester Street hit 96 parts by August 2012, over twice the limit for protection of human health. It sounds like an environmental Dunkirk.

Not all offending sites are city centred. Add Lansdown Crescent, Combe Down, St Mark's Road, Widcombe School and Widcombe High Street. Add ESCAPE's 100-metre zone affected each side of the roads which, for example, brings a refurbished Widcombe Parade well within range of fumes from the new A36.

Even the 40-part figure is now in question. ESCAPE concludes, "Significant adverse health effects occur at concentrations well below currently accepted limits."

Cleaner city centre air alone will not do. Residential roads and pavements are blighted by through traffic, thousands of exhaust pipes daily, some a few feet from doors and windows of our homes.

Our council must be commended on its new initiative. Given the resolve, we are not without answers. Marlowe, with considerable success, campaigned simply to persuade those who could to leave the car at home one day a week, taking to two wheels, feet and buses. Boston tried this and failed but Durham did well. Bath, might consider radical prioritisation of selected access routes in favour of school and public transport, pedestrians and cyclists, using signage, improved pavements, safe crossings and cycle paths, to replace a free-for-all motorcade.

And publicity is your ally. Childhood asthma or adult onset can now be seen as a consequence of such pollution. So can brain and kidney damage, says Lancaster University. Worse respiratory damage can be done

to children and adults in rush-hour cars than to walkers or cyclists outside. Cleaner cars cease to be cleaner when they leave the test-bed and encounter “real life” driving conditions.

The House of Commons 2010 audit records 51,000 deaths annually from this blight. Twenty times more than road accidents. Such truths have been starved of publicity. Let them now be as well-established in our media as weather forecasts or football results.