



# Light Rail (UK)

Warrington Business Park.  
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30th October 2017

## An open letter to Warrington Borough Council, Action on air quality now!

It seems that the UK's air quality is far worse than any of us thought. In my comment piece in the Warrington Guardian dated 5th October 2017, I made reference to the Oslo Effect – not the first time I have done so – and the serious effect of the degradation of rubber tyres and brake linings on urban air quality.

It seems that I have seriously under-estimated the severity of the issue.

In 2012 the World Health Organisation and the University of Bath identified 16 355 premature deaths in the UK as a result of air-borne pollution. The latest UK figures from the Royal College of Physicians show that this could be more like 40 000 deaths related to particulate pollution and NO2 emissions.

Professor Frank Kelly, Chair of the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants and a highly respected environmental scientist, said in October that the current UK Government's strategy of banning new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2040 "does not nearly go far enough".

Writing in The Guardian, Professor Kelly said: "Even zero-emission vehicles are not the complete answer to poor air quality," also calling for investment in mass transit in the capital.

It is clear that the UK Government's plan for tackling air quality is inadequate and lacks direction. The latest scrappage schemes and financial incentives to 'go electric' are purely lip service to the issue and would be a drop in the ocean in cutting harmful pollutants – 2040 is simply too far away and it begs the question of how many will suffer chronic ill health and death in that time.



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Paris has said it is to ban all petrol and diesel-fuelled vehicles from the city by 2030, a decade ahead of national targets, while Copenhagen plans to ban diesels from 2019. Even Oxford is proposing non-electric vehicles from central areas from 2020. Is it any coincidence that all of these cities have either invested substantially in, or have plans to invest in, light rail and tramway schemes? I think not. But what about the UK's other growing towns and cities? In my adopted hometown of Warrington, there are proposals to build hundreds of new homes and the council's solution is to spend millions on yesterday's solutions with new roads to serve them.

There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that new road schemes do not solve the congestion already seen – let alone coping with the area's future growth. Clearly if this trend continues the new Western Link Road will become almost obsolete by the time it is finally built

I have asked the question with no response from the powers that be "Where is the environmental impact study, (non tail pipe emissions) results - it would appear that this has not been done yet! And from the feel of the "Consultation," this project will go ahead - wrong! Let us see the impact study first!

In short, a lack of investment in mass transit is holding Warrington and District back especially as there is a "City Status" aspiration in the near future with poor green and sustainable credentials.

We now have the Mersey Gateway toll bridge open and already there is significant "rat running" from the West.

All west Mersey crossings are now tolled. Almost weekly the M6/Thelwall Viaduct is jammed with a "rat run" from the East of the town

For the £196 million +, proposed for the Western Link road and other new road schemes, a low-cost, lightweight tramway scheme along the lines of that proposed for Coventry (developed, designed and manufactured in the UK) would far better serve the needs of this town by careful route planning to keep the "rat running" out of the town, a town that has aspirations for city status.



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£196 million will buy 28 kilometre of tramway with road space re allocation (see chart used for Melbourne) and Park & Ride at the tram termini with local Park & Ride where appropriate along the routes.

Suitable signage on the roads approaching our town advising the "Rat Runners" of road re-allocation and to keep out accordingly

The secret is to keep the "Rat Runners" pollution out with alternatives modal switch for local traffic

Given the competing challenges of air quality and of economic growth, surely a lightweight tramway – with an eventual link into a tram-train service to Metrolink – that could be implemented relatively and quickly is far better value for money in future-proofing the community?

And all this less than 15 miles from the boundary Greater Manchester, the home of one of the UK's greatest light rail success stories...

Warrington Borough Council, you have the money from the DfT and there are other Green funds available to do the business case, your new road business case over time does not stack up

Yours aye,

Jim Harkins FCILT, MTPS  
Chairman,  
LRTA External Relations Group,  
TramForward.  
Warrington



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## The trams that ate Melbourne

Tram patronage is on the up and up, and plans are afoot to put jumbo trams into action to handle the growth



**14.59 metres**

**W-Class** (1920s-1950s)



**23.5 metres**

**B-Class** (1980s-1990s)



**32.52 metres**

**C2 Bumblebees** (2000s)



**33.42 metres**

**E-Class** (2010s) **32.52m**



**Next generation**

**45 metres**



**Ten Toyota Corollas**

Graphic: Jamie Brown