

Petition notes and response: Stop Poisoning the People of Chester

Primarily, we propose that drivers should be required to turn off their engines immediately when stationary at Chester Bus Interchange (at all times of day and night). There should be an on-the-spot fine for bus companies and drivers who fail to comply with an Order to switch off engines while stationary at Chester Bus Interchange. In order to achieve this, the Council would need to employ a Traffic Marshall/s to patrol the Bus Interchange. (This could result in an income stream for the Council which could then be spent on other local environmental issues).

Response:

Bus drivers are required to switch off engines unless a departure is imminent as part of the operators' contract to use the interchange. There is regular engagement with individual drivers on site and the Council's Strategic Transport team has written to the bus operators to remind them of the requirement on a number of occasions.

Monitoring has taken place on site, most recently in September. This will continue until the end of October. The recent monitoring has shown that most drivers comply with the requirement to switch off their engines unless a departure is imminent, although some exceptions have been noted.

The next stage will be enforcement to tackle any residual non-compliance – this is expected to start in November 2018 following the Council's adoption of the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices. Please note that an FPN may only be issued following the refusal by the driver of the request of an authorised officer to switch the engine off.

The relevant CBI operation manual conditions are reproduced below. The conditions are due for review and an update on this will be provided in due course.

Operator's conditions of use:

5.1 Air quality will be monitored continuously with monitors located at three points along the entrance and exit of the bus interchange. Access to equipment will be required routinely but there will be no interference with bus or pedestrian movements, nor will there be any need to access any buildings.

5.3 Drivers must switch off engines unless a departure is imminent. No vehicle must be left on any stand with the engine running. Failure to comply will result in the driver of the vehicle being reported to their company. The Council would reserve the right to impose a Fixed Penalty Notice and /or Penalty Charge Notice.

We propose that Cheshire West and Chester Council meet with representatives of each bus and coach company who use Chester Bus Interchange, including those companies which sub-lease franchises owned by the service provider (such as the companies working under the National Express banner). The Council should remind these companies and their drivers of the need to respect the health of residents who are being adversely affected by their business. The Council should instruct the companies to ensure that their drivers comply with an Order to switch off vehicle engines immediately they are stationary, anywhere within the Bus Interchange. Any vehicles which cannot for any reason be switched off while stationary should not be allowed to enter the terminal at any time.

Response:

There is regular liaison with the operators and the Council's Strategic Transport team and the matter is raised accordingly.

Clear and visible signs should be placed on the glass front of each parking bay at Chester Bus Interchange, reminding drivers to respect the local environment and the health of local residents by switching off their engines when stationary.

Response:

Although this has been done in some other locations, signs have not been erected at the CBI. This will now be actioned at the CBI.

A sign should be clearly posted nearby the entrance to Trinity Hall and the rear of Oulton Place (next to the Bus Interchange) reminding taxi drivers to switch off their engines while waiting to pick-up or drop-off passengers, and that failure to do so will result in a fine

Response:

Signage

This can be explored. Initially we need to check whether this land is in the Council's control and if not seek permission to erect signage. In the Low Emission Strategy approved by Cabinet in September there is reference to the Council's intention to increase the uptake of electric taxis which are both silent and zero emission. A feasibility study on the installation of electric vehicle charge points commissioned by the Council is almost complete.

Enforcement

Licensed drivers will be subject to the same enforcement measures as other motorists. (As explained above, enforcement for non-compliance is expected to start in November 2018 following the adoption of the power to issue FPNs).

In addition, it may be possible to include this as a licence condition. This would require consultation and an amendment to Policy.

Low Emission Strategy

One of the recommended measures to consider is the use of a Low Emission Zone to prevent older taxis and buses accessing the Air Quality Management Area in Chester; this will by default reduce older noisier more polluting vehicles.

Bus and coach companies should have all of their vehicles regularly checked to ensure that their vehicles comply with current environment and emissions regulations. Any vehicles which do not should be immediately removed from service until such time as their emissions can be shown to comply.

Response:

There is an annual MOT requirement relating to exhaust emissions and the Council is making enquiries about the possibility of a joint exercise in the near future with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

Bus and coach companies should also be required to take all reasonable steps to improve and lower the noise levels produced by their vehicles, and that all new vehicles comply with both noise and emissions guidelines.

Response:

We will need to take advice on this point.

On the Council's website under Air and Pollution there is a link to a map of automatic/real-time monitoring stations. However, there has been a note on the website for too long that states, 'we are currently unable to display all the data from the monitoring stations because of a communications fault, however, all analysers continue to operate as normal'.

At last year's Public Meeting we asked the Council for access to real-time data from the monitoring station at the Bus Interchange. We still cannot access data in relation to this. We want the Council to fix this problem and to allow members of the public easy access to air and pollution data monitoring on the Council's website.

Response:

This is an ongoing problem due to a significant software fault. The Council has identified funding to purchase a new and improved (more interactive) solution and this is being progressed.

The Council is actively monitoring NO₂ and particulate matter at the Chester Bus Interchange, and this is being carried out for at least three years from the date of opening. The most recent full year results for the CBI and all other monitoring sites in the borough are published in the Council's 2018 Annual Status Report that can be seen at the following link:

- <https://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/pests-pollution-food-safety/pollution-and-air-quality/air-quality-review-and-assessm.aspx>