

TREES NOT TRAFFIC

On Saturday November 20th, Just Transition Wakefield were joined by local residents from the Newton Bar area, Wakefield NEU and Leeds and Wakefield Unite Community, to call on West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and Wakefield Council to cancel the junction scheme at Newton Bar.

The group hung a banner saying “Trees not traffic” and tied ribbons to the trees to highlight the scheme and the ecological damage it will cause.



Stuart Boothman from Just Transition Wakefield explained “The plan is to double the size of the roundabout, to put in a slip road onto the dual carriageway and a short cut through the middle of the roundabout. The scheme is clearly designed to get traffic between the city and the motorway network. To do this, the contractors will destroy at least 107 trees and move tons of soil.”

Stuart asked “How is this compatible with the Climate and Ecological Emergencies? How can we still be increasing traffic volumes and

killing trees when the UN have declared ‘Code Red for humanity’ because of the climate crisis?”

One group member, Yvette said “I can’t believe what they are going to do to these trees – it absolutely beggars belief... ..I just don’t understand it.”

Local resident, Andy said “I’m here because I’m appalled that the plan is to cut these trees down.” Andy went on to talk about the recent COP26 talks, saying “It has made us more aware of the risks to the environment.”

Andrew Johnson from Wakefield Friends of the Earth said “Wakefield Council and the Combined Authority really need to think again – they’ve got this badly wrong.”

Andrew went on to say “The investment that the West Yorkshire Combined Authority are putting in is wasted money... ..we need, across West Yorkshire, to reduce levels of traffic.”

Ruth Love from Wakefield Green Party said “Wakefield Council’s Climate Action Plan is really pretty good, but then they go and make a decision like this – they really need some joined up thinking.” She went on to talk about the Combined Authority and the Mayor, saying “it’s just proving that it’s just the same old same old.”



Stuart finished by saying “We have written to WYCA and Mayor Tracy Brabin demanding that they cancel the scheme and redirect the remaining budget to a new design that focuses on buses, pedestrians and cyclist – we have to be the change we want to see. This year has seen the climate crisis become an emergency and we need our politicians to step up, work with us and act now. This cannot be the last autumn for all these trees.”

ENDS

Notes to the Editor

- In the past 30 years, global emissions have doubled, and are still rising. Despite COP26, the world is currently on track for 2.4°C of warming and more by the end of the century. This would be a humanitarian and ecological catastrophe and must be avoided at all costs.
- The road scheme at Newton Bar was first conceived in 2012 to 2014 – well before 2019 when Wakefield and West Yorkshire declared climate emergencies. Despite these declarations, and despite the WYCA Carbon Emissions Reduction Pathways study, this scheme, along with many others around the region, have not been re-assessed to see which ones are compatible with the transition to zero carbon by 2038 for West Yorkshire.
- As well as Just Transition Wakefield, Wakefield Friends of the Earth and local residents, regional transport groups such as Action for Yorkshire Transport are making the same calls to cancel the scheme.
- There is more detail about the scheme and our objections to it on our website.
- Just Transition Wakefield was created in May 2019, following the With Banners Held High festival that year. See <https://justtransitionwakefield.org.uk/>
- Just Transition Wakefield started as an alliance between Wakefield and District TUC and Wakefield Friends of the Earth, but now counts many organisations and individuals as active members (as well as the thousands of trade union members represented by Trades Council).
- Just Transition Wakefield is pushing for the transition to a zero carbon economy to be socially and economically just – so that no-one is left behind as green jobs become the norm.
- Just Transition Wakefield also works with similar groups across the region, specifically through the Yorkshire and Humber

COP26 Coalition, through the West Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils and through the regional Friends of the Earth network.

Contact for further comment and detail:

Stuart Boothman

jtw@justtransitionwakefield.org.uk

or sboothman@posteo.net

or 07736 718108.