



**Campaign to
Protect
Rural England**

West Midlands Region

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Immediate Release

Don't widen the M42 find alternatives, say Countryside Campaigners

The Campaign to Protect Rural England in the West Midlands reacted strongly to calls to widen the M42 by the Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership as part of their bid for an Enterprise Zone in that corridor.

This would come in the wake of the successful introduction of managed motorway controls which were designed to avoid the need for widening. The M42 between M40 and M6 can already be operated with 4 lanes each way in the peak hours under the current system.

And CPRE warns that increasing development in the Green Belt along the motorway, the so-called Meriden Gap, as part of an Enterprise Zone at the expense of brownfield alternatives will make traffic problems worse whatever happens on the motorway.

They are also concerned that the unaccountable and unelected LEP lacks the broad base to undertake such lobbying. Unless it engages with social and environmental groups on issues like this they say it is unlikely to gain wide public support.

They say the urgent need is to develop the alternatives to car travel in the area by investing more in rail, bus and metro services and they want the LEP to instead lobby Centro and the local authorities to see a step change in public transport provision.

Jerry Birkbeck, Chair of West Midlands CPRE, said: 'Widening motorways has always been the knee-jerk reaction. It's expensive, environmentally damaging and often creates worse problems in the long term. If the West Midlands region is to prosper in a sustainable way we need to rethink how we travel about in the future.'

End

Notes to Editors

1. Local Transport Today 29 July: 'Boost M42 Capacity say LEP'

'Commenting on the Enterprise Belt plans, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council says: "The main barrier to growth [in the M42 corridor] is the capacity of the transport network to sustain increased traffic generated by development, combined with rising through traffic - in particular, capacity constraints on the M42 between junctions 3 and 7."

The LEP wants to keep business rate revenue generated by the Enterprise Zone and Enterprise Belt for improving infrastructure. "Overcoming major infrastructure pressures and barriers to growth, such as those along the M42 corridor, would be a key priority for those revenues," says Solihull.

CPRE, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, is a charity which promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England. We advocate positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside. Founded in 1926, we have 60,000 supporters and a branch in every county. President: Bill Bryson. Patron: Her Majesty The Queen. www.cpre.org.uk

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