

22.02.08

10 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding pedestrians using the Tunnel (OQ.27/2022):

Will the Minister advise what additional health and safety warnings have been issued to pedestrians using the Tunnel during the ongoing roadworks at Havre des Pas in terms of the quality of air they can expect and is it the Minister's assessment that it is safe for pedestrians, including children and pregnant women, to use the Tunnel during peak times?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):

The Tunnel operates at capacity or close to capacity throughout the day in normal operation. But this situation has not been changed by the essential works at Havre des Pas. The short period, approximately 3 minutes, it typically takes a pedestrian to walk through the Tunnel is not captured within the European or World Health Organization advice on exposure to poor air quality. There is no requirement under British standards for internal ventilation for the Tunnel because of the length it allows to be naturally ventilated at each end. However, signage is provided to pedestrians that the air quality is poor, so an informed decision as to whether to use the route can be made.

3.10.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister ever use the Tunnel to walk to work and back and, if not, why not?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I do; not very often, possibly 3 or 4 times a year I have walked that way, not something I would recommend. The air quality is not good, no one is saying it is. But I believe originally the walkways on the left and right were for emergency use only but the States mandated there should be a walkway for pedestrians to go through. I am not an engineer but I would estimate that if the Tunnel was half as long again as it is, it would possibly need mechanical extraction of the air. But if one looks at the Tunnel or even cycles through the Tunnel you will see there is a marked rise in the Tunnel coming from west to east, with the usual prevailing south-westerly winds that does ventilate the Tunnel to some extent. The angle of the Tunnel is not apparent unless you are cycling but in fact going from west to east you are cycling uphill. As I say, if it was twice as long or half as long again there would be a case for mechanical extraction but at the moment it is perfectly adequate. I would not recommend people to walk through it but if they wish to do so then that would be their choice.

3.10.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

May I ask the Minister what air-quality monitoring is undertaken in the Tunnel?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

A public health position, a study of the air quality within the Tunnel was undertaken in 2017, focusing on exposure to pedestrians and cyclists and those in vehicles. It found elevated levels of NO₂ and particulate matter during the hours of elevated traffic, obviously 0800 to 1900 and it takes a fit pedestrian approximately 3 minutes to walk through the Tunnel. The short length of time means it is not captured within European Organisation advice. As I say, it is borderline. It is not a perfect solution, which is illustrated by the fact that the Tunnel is closed several times a year for cleaning, so it does illustrate that it is not perfect quality. That will get better in time obviously with the introduction of more electric cars but that is way down the road. At the moment it is not perfect and we do not recommend that people walk through the Tunnel.

3.10.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

The question really was about live-air monitoring, so I will ask that question: is there live-air monitoring, time-dependent air monitoring so that the Minister could take a decision to give advice to the public to say the air quality is so poor I advise you that you do not walk down it at particular times, particular seasons, et cetera? Is there any facility to do that and would the Minister issue that guidance for the safety of pedestrians?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

That would be down to our public health service but there is no live-air monitoring. There have been several static monitorings over the years, the last one being 2017. As I say, it is not perfect and it is signed to that effect, that we will try and get people through there as soon as possible.

3.10.4 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

I think the Minister has just answered my question. I believe that on many occasions I have noticed that there is quite clear signage about the poor quality of air within the Tunnel. Therefore, will the Minister confirm that that signage is there quite clearly for members of the public and that there are alternative routes via a car park as an alternative?

[11:15]

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Indeed, I believe it says members of the public or pedestrians are warned that at certain times of the day the air quality is poor in the Tunnel; I believe that is at both ends. There is a one-way system left and right so one did not have to come past other people coming the other way. But it is clearly signposted and there are alternate routes. But I do use it myself, not often, it is not a perfect route for pedestrians but that would be my choice. I am reasonably fit, I have got long legs, so I can get through there quite quickly. I do, whenever possible, put a handkerchief over my mouth because it is not perfect to walk through. But it is clearly signed to that effect and I thank the Deputy for the question.

3.10.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Just to contextualise, while there is signage, which I had asked to be put back when it was removed, which does say that during peak time air quality in this Tunnel is poor. Does the Minister accept that the roadworks at Havre des Pas have meant that the peak time in the Tunnel is now virtually constant throughout the daytime when previously it might not have been peak and it is important that pedestrians, in particular, are made aware that there will be poor air quality in the Tunnel at probably most times during the day where there was not before because of these roadworks?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I would accept that, yes. Instead of having the rush hour it is a permanent congestion point there. As I say, luckily the fault that stopped the Havre des Pas works going has been rectified and, hopefully, we will be catching up with works at Havre des Pas, so we can reopen as soon as possible. But there will be a slight delay in reopening but, hopefully, fingers crossed not too big a delay, but I accept the point.