

Be Bold!

On behalf of the growing membership of Nidd Gorge Community Action I would like to take this opportunity to urge the councillors to be bold and radical in their vision; to leave a lasting mark on our towns that they will be remembered and praised for, by future generations.

The relatively new town of Harrogate, which emerged from the ancient settlement of Bilton, was founded on health tourism: People with the means to travel, came from all over the industrial world to escape the grime, pollution and stresses of lives lived in towns and cities that put economics before human health and the environment.

Harrogate was once an enlightened place; a town that recognised the importance of human health, well-being and the quality of life, and realised there was a good living to be made from supplying a place of retreat and recovery. A place that put humanity before industry and built a successful local economy around it. Health as a source of prosperity and well-being for citizens and visitors alike.

If the town's leaders of 2017 were bold enough to match the ambitious 40% CO2 reduction, by 2020, target that they have committed to, with actions that lead the country in progressive planning and sustainable development, Harrogate and Knaresborough could again become the model town for health and well-being that would attract visitors from far and wide and boost its economy far more than a relief road could ever do.

Road building to solve congestion is a 20th century solution to a problem that is the legacy of 20th century planning and technology. More roads equals more traffic. The follies of the 20th Century teach us that, but our leaders in Harrogate don't seem to be learning from it.

Why else would they propose to build roads through vital green spaces? It can only be out of ignorance or pressure from developers, because road building does not solve congestion.

At this time in our history, we don't need a road that all the evidence says will soon fill up. A road that will encourage more people into their cars to pollute the environment; that will help us fail to meet our 2020 CO2 reduction targets; and fail to respond to global warming at a time when short-termist thinking poses a very real threat to our future. This is when we need leaders of vision who can think beyond the next election.

So I urge you today, to be those leaders of vision that we need; to drop this ridiculous proposal to desecrate and destroy our precious natural environment and instead start to take a truly sustainable path that will again put our town on the map for all the right reasons and boost our economy, our environment and our health long into the future.

Nidd Gorge and the Nidderdale Greenway can then stay the magical place it is; and it can become the famous edge-land that it is promising to be, that draws visitors from far and wide in to our green and pleasant towns; rather than the blighted relief road corridor that some councillors have planned for it.

A place that the parents of children, in our uncertain future, will say, was once somewhere magical to visit, but is now a lasting testament to the ignorance and short-sightedness of our leaders ... back in 2017.