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PRESS RELEASE

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M6 hard shoulder running is a step in the right direction

Cheshire's Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)[1] has welcomed the recent [2] announcement by Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly that measures including hard shoulder running could be used to manage congestion on the M6. However, the countryside campaigners say they will also want to look closely at the specific proposals that come forward for the M6 to ensure they deliver the best environmental option, and warned that the measures do not offer a long-term solution to traffic misery.

Following trials using hard shoulders to ease traffic jams on the M42, the scheme is to be rolled out to other locations, with the Birmingham to Knutsford stretch of the M6 among the first. The anti-congestion measures include a 50mph speed limit in all four lanes when the hard shoulder is in use, and the possibility that the hard shoulder could be used as a 'High Occupancy Vehicle' lane, out of bounds to drivers not carrying passengers.

Cheshire CPRE's Clare Lewis said 'We hoped any plan to operate peak-time hard shoulder running would be part of a package including lower speed limits while the extra lane is in use to smooth traffic flow, reduce CO₂ emissions and increase safety [3], and a 'High Occupancy Vehicle' lane to encourage use of buses, coaches and car sharing[4]. Ruth Kelly's announcement has gone some way towards these, so it's a step in the right direction.

'But hard shoulder running can only provide an interim solution. The long-term challenge of reducing traffic rather than encouraging its growth by providing more capacity still needs to be met. Ruth Kelly's announcement buys some time, and CPRE thinks the Government should spend it working on ways to reduce the need to travel, and to get real alternatives to car use in place before the temporary relief on the M6 attracts even more traffic and it all snarls up again, [5]' Mrs Lewis continued.

Cheshire CPRE says it will continue to press the Government to abandon expensive and land-hungry road schemes and invest in reliable, affordable and convenient public transport.

'These measures are less damaging than the proposed widening of the M6 through Cheshire and Staffordshire, with an estimated bill of £3 billion and a huge environmental cost. However, the Government must realize that providing more and more capacity cannot solve our traffic problems,

and will defeat our climate change commitments,' Mrs Lewis concluded.

For more information on Cheshire CPRE's campaigns, see the charity's website at www.cprecheshire.org.uk, or call 01606 835046.

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Notes for editors overleaf

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[1] The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. For more information and archive of press releases see the CPRE Cheshire website at www.cprecheshire.org.uk and the national CPRE website at www.cpre.org.uk

[2] Ruth Kelly's announcement was made on 4th March, accompanied by the DfT's publication of the feasibility study into rolling out the scheme piloted on the M42: *Advanced motorway signalling and traffic management feasibility study report*

[3] The M42 pilot scheme for hard shoulder running with a 50mph speed limit resulted in a 10% reduction in CO₂, a reduction in personal injury accidents from 5.2/ month to 1.5 / month, and a fuel consumption saving to motorists of 4%. (Published in above DfT report)

[4] The pilot scheme on the M42 demonstrated more predictable journey times, an attractive feature for timetabled bus and coach services and their passengers. 'The first HOV provision on the English motorway network will be an HOV bypass lane which will open soon at the junction of the M606 and M62, south of Bradford. This will provide a dedicated inside lane for HOVs allowing them priority access to the eastbound M62 and rewarding them with considerable journey time savings of around 8 minutes per vehicle.' (DfT report cited above, p 65).

[5] *Beyond Transport Infrastructure*, a study by CPRE and the Countryside Agency published in 2006, showed that increasing road capacity actually generates more traffic, and the DfT report published 4th March 2008 acknowledges that 'The increase in highway capacity may attract travellers from other modes and may, by making some remote destinations more accessible, result in an increase in the length of some car trips. Any additional and longer trips made by road will add to total emissions by road traffic.' *Advanced motorway signalling and traffic management feasibility study report, p 29)*

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