

How do we keep hungry cities satisfied? Get your kicks on the A66

The A66 is a major road in Northern England, which runs for 115 miles between the east coast at Middlesbrough, and the west coast at Workington in Cumbria.

It varies between single and dual carriageway, with some motorway stretches near the A1 at Scotch Corner.

The road is of major importance to haulage companies and other road users as it provides one of the few Trans-Pennine routes. The Pennine Hills form a geographical barrier for those wanting to cross the country between the east and west, between the Peak District and the Scottish border. They rise to a height of over 400m, and create steep gradients in places, which in turn produces more extreme weather conditions for road-users. The exposed nature of the road leads to problems for high-sided vehicles particularly in windy weather. [During Storm Isha in 2024, several high-sided vehicles were blown over](#), causing the road to close and the road is sometimes closed as a precaution to high sided vehicles in high winds.

Haulage companies operate along the A66, as it provides a convenient route to Glasgow and the west, from the port areas of Teesside.

This lesson explores the logistical issues that might occur along the stretch of the A66 between Scotch Corner (the junction with the A1) and Penrith (where the road meets the M6), particularly with respect to haulage companies operating along the route, but also other road users.

Hint – Why not use Google Streetview™ imagery to explore the more open and exposed stretches of the road. This allows you to see the nature of the road and its surroundings. This can be used to get a sense for the traffic volume at the time when the imagery was captured.



Starter

Drop students off at a location on the A66 such as <https://goo.gl/maps/rlhxU> (or provide your own start point(s)) and tell them to make their way across the road for a short distance using Google Streetview. Click further along the road to move along it, or follow the arrows.

Students can click the settings icon at the bottom right to share or embed the images in each location if required.

This can be used to identify the names of haulage companies using the route and potentially the products that are being transported along the A66.

Download: [Treasure hunt challenge sheet](#) (3 to an A4 page) (Doc)

Play a quick Treasure Hunt challenge with students. Who can be the first to answer the following:

- Identify five companies that you can see through their vehicles appearing on the road.
- Can you identify two specific products being transported?
- Identify three features of the A66 that might cause problems for drivers of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) – think about things that you can't see, but you can work out would happen at particular times of year perhaps.

Extension for those who are quick: can you find three of the following:

- A horse-box, a caravan, a tractor, a motorcyclist, a wind turbine, a coach, a public house, a brown tourist sign or an emergency services vehicle.

Main activity

Place the following resources on the desk before students arrive, or hand out in an envelope:

- Map of the A66 between Penrith & Scotch Corner ([PDF download](#))
- Letter from Danby Haulage Company ([PDF download](#))
- Images from the route (from [Geograph](#) or an alternative source)
- A66 factors card set ([PDF download](#))

You will need to provide students with a map of the route to use in their work.

An example map can be created using [Edina's Digimap for Schools](#) subscription service for schools (a free trial is available)

You could also provide some images from the [Geograph website](#) if required.

Students are going to identify some of the possible factors that could impact on the work of a haulage company that regularly uses the A66 to transport goods between Cumbria and Teesside.

Hand out the [mocked-up letter](#) which sets out the context for the activity.

Cut out the [card set](#) in advance. Cards could be laminated for durability.

Ask students to organise the cards in a number of different ways. Listen carefully to the discussions that they are having as this takes place.

1. Classify them into factors which could be classed as: Environmental or Economic (you could also add in an extra Meteorological category)
2. Identify which would have the greatest effect on the ability of a haulage firms to stick to delivery deadlines by affecting the speed of the vehicle or causing delays

3. Classify the factors from the most to least impact, or arrange them into a Diamond, with the most important factors towards the top

Students should research some of the problems that have affected the route over time, and through the seasons. You could use the live updates on the [Traffic England](#) website to show what conditions are currently like.

Students will be asked to produce a response to the questions asked in the letter from Danby Haulage. These can be produced in a format of your choice.

Plenary

Questions for discussion:

1. Why do haulage firms continue to use the A66 despite the problems along the road?
2. Identify three changes that could be made to the route which might make things easier for firms to use the A66. Why is it important that these are done for the local economy?
3. Look at the road map and suggest whether there are any alternative routes that the company could use. How much would the additional journey cost?

Extension

X (formerly known as Twitter) is often used to track real-time events. Sample posts could be provided to show real stories of people being affected by events.

[The Simitator](#) allows for the creation of mocked-up X and Facebook posts which might prove to be engaging for learners.

There are also data downloads of traffic volumes for survey points around the country's major road networks which can be accessed from the [Department for Transport website](#), and then graphed or analysed using spreadsheet software.

Download the [guidance sheet](#) (PDF) for how to access and make use of these data downloads has also been created as part of this unit, and may be of use more generally across the whole resource.

Creative outcomes

Rewrite the lyrics to the classic song 'Route 66', recorded by Chuck Berry amongst others to set it in its UK setting... e.g. instead of it "winding from Chicago to LA, two thousand miles all the way" it will need to take in the UK context instead.

[Access Geograph](#) and use the search 'A66' to access relevant images. Choose to download and view images in Google Earth as a KML file to get a better sense of the terrain over which the road passes.