

Written Response by the Welsh Government to the report of the Petitions Committee Report on Petition P-05-886 Stop the Red Route (A55/A494 corridor).

On 22 June, I provided an oral statement to the Senedd announcing a pause on all new road schemes while we review our existing commitments in Wales.

The world's scientists are telling us in very clear terms that we urgently need to cut our greenhouse gas emissions. Since 1990, Welsh emissions have fallen by 31 per cent, but to reach our statutory target of net zero by 2050 we need to do much more. As the UK Climate Change Committee reminded us last week, if we're going to keep temperature rises within safe limits, in the next 10 years we need to more than double all the cuts we've managed over the last 30 years.

Transport makes up some 17 per cent of our total emissions and so must play its part. Earlier this year I published the Welsh Government's new [Wales transport strategy, 'Llwybr Newydd'](#). It sets out a bold vision for transport in Wales over the next two decades. It included, for the first time, a modal shift target, which requires us to aim for 45 per cent of journeys to be by sustainable forms of transport by 2045, up from 32 per cent currently. To achieve these targets we need a shift away from spending money on projects that encourage more people to drive, and invest in real alternatives that give people a meaningful choice.

Officials are in the final stages of establishing a roads review panel, which will include some of the UK's leading experts on transport and climate change. The panel will consider setting tests for when new roads are the right solutions for transport problems, in line with the new Wales transport strategy. And I want the review to consider how we can shift spending towards better maintaining our existing roads, rather than building new ones, as was recommended by the cross-party Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee in the last Senedd.

We'll publish the full terms of reference for the review and the full membership in due course. It'll be for the panel to review all of our proposed road investments, whether funded directly by the Welsh Government on the strategic road network, or indirectly, by grants, on the local road network, so that all future projects align with the three priorities of the new transport strategy: to reduce the need to travel, to allow people and goods to move more easily from door to door by sustainable forms of transport, and to encourage people to make the change.

The review will provide an initial report to Ministers within three months of appointment, setting out how it'll go about its task, and the final report shall be provided within nine months of that, setting out the findings of the review.

Recommendation 1

That detailed design work and further impact assessments in relation to the proposed scheme do not take place until the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on traffic patterns has been fully assessed. This evidence should be available for consideration as part of any public inquiry the proposed scheme is subject to.

Response: Accept

We have paused all new road schemes in Wales. The Roads Review Panel will consider setting tests for when new roads are the right solutions for transport problems, in line with the new Wales transport strategy. Their findings will be published once they have completed their review.

Should the review panel recommend that the scheme is progressed then during the next stage of the preliminary design development work, the traffic model for the scheme will be updated and developed in more detail to take account of the current traffic patterns including any effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. This information will feed into the economic appraisal and the environmental impact assessment for the scheme which will be published as evidence and considered as part of any public inquiry that may be required.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 2

That the proposed scheme is assessed in accordance with the latest Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (2017) at the next stage of its development.

Response: Accept

The new Wales Transport Strategy embeds the use of sustainable transport planning hierarchy, and the panel will use this to make sure we are encouraging travelling by walking, cycling and public transport ahead of private motor vehicles. To make sure this approach is fully embedded in our investment decisions and those taken by other delivery partners, we're also reviewing Welsh Transport Appraisal guidance, our decision-making framework for transport projects, so that it is consistent with 'Llwybr Newydd' and uses the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Should the review recommend that the scheme proceed then WeITAG Stages 1 and 2 have already been completed for this scheme which led to the preferred route (Red Option) being selected in September 2017.

As part of the next stage of development work, a Stage 3 WeITAG (Full Business Case) will be undertaken in accordance with the latest version of WeITAG.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 3

That a detailed re-assessment of the costs associated with the scheme is undertaken and published. This should include accounting for any additional costs associated with related works such as those associated with the 'Red Route Plus' option and upgrades required to the Flintshire Bridge, including wind proofing.

Response: Accept

We have paused all new road schemes in Wales. The Roads Review Panel will consider setting tests for when new roads are the right solutions for transport problems, in line with the new Wales transport strategy. Their findings will be published once they have completed their review. The Roads Review Panel will take into consideration all relevant costs.

Should the review panel recommend the scheme proceed then the budget will continue to be updated and assessed throughout the next stage as the design is developed and additional information gathered. The cost of any required upgrades to the Flintshire Bridge, including wind proofing, will form part of the overall scheme budget.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Government should ensure that any road scheme which is implemented is part of a wider package of public transport improvements in the area and that schemes such as the North Wales Metro are delivered effectively.

Response: Accept

We have paused all new road schemes in Wales. The Roads Review Panel will consider setting tests for when new roads are the right solutions for transport problems, in line with the new Wales transport strategy. Their findings will be published once they have completed their review.

Should the review panel recommend the scheme proceed then the Flintshire Corridor improvements have an important part to play in achieving Welsh Government's long-term ambitions for transport in Wales as set out in its strategy, 'Llwybr Newydd – New Path'. The strategy recognises that more local services and more opportunities for active travel and public transport can mean fewer people needing to use their cars.

The scheme will reduce congestion on other routes in the area, enabling opportunities for sustainable travel options to be developed and implemented as part

of the wider package of transport improvements which are integrated effectively with the delivery of the North Wales Metro.

The scheme is therefore part of a range of complimentary transport improvement projects currently being developed to deliver a multi modal transport system in the area.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 5

The Welsh Government must ensure that adequate consultation is undertaken with organisations including the Woodland Trust and Natural Resources Wales during the detailed design stage of the scheme to mitigate and minimise any impacts on areas of ancient woodland.

Response: Accept

We have paused all new road schemes in Wales. The Roads Review Panel will consider setting tests for when new roads are the right solutions for transport problems, in line with the new Wales transport strategy. Their findings will be published once they have completed their review.

Significant stakeholder consultation has already been undertaken throughout the scheme development to date and this will continue through the next stages. This included consultation with representatives from Natural Resources Wales, Flintshire County Council and the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency through the Environmental Liaison Group where the scope of the initial environmental surveys and assessments were discussed and agreed. A 12 week public consultation was also held during 2017 where all stakeholders were invited to comment on the routes options.

My officials will ensure that the Environmental Liaison Group meetings continue through the next stages of scheme development and organisations including Natural Resources Wales and the Woodlands Trust are consulted on the development of the environmental impact assessment and the detailed design stage to minimise the impacts on the environment including the areas of ancient woodland.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 6

Any public inquiry held following the publication of the draft Orders should be highly publicised and accessible to all residents in areas which may be affected by the route or construction of any new road.

Response: Accept

We have paused all new road schemes in Wales. The Roads Review Panel will consider setting tests for when new roads are the right solutions for transport problems, in line with the new Wales transport strategy. Their findings will be published once they have completed their review.

Should the review panel recommend that the scheme proceed, as with any public inquiry, the required legislative procedures for advertising will be followed.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Lee Waters
Deputy Minister for Climate Change