

Petition: Newtown Brimmon Oak Bypass

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 17 Gorffennaf 2018

Petitions Committee | 17 July 2018

Research Briefing:

Petition Number: P-05-824

Petition title: Newtown Brimmon Oak Bypass

Text of petition:

We the undersigned call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to consider our proposal to officially name the much needed, & historic, new road section of the A483, the 'Newtown Brimmon Oak bypass'.

In recognition of the enormously positive publicity and attention that one of the most significant 'Natural Monuments' of Montgomeryshire, namely the Brimmon Oak, has brought to Newtown, to the region and to Wales.

Firstly becoming 'Welsh Tree of the year', followed by winning the title of 'UK Tree of the year' shown on national TV, and ultimately, in being awarded second place in the highly prestigious European Tree of the year contest (2017) in a much reported ceremony in the EU Parliament Brussels. We feel that this culturally significant ancient Welsh Oak tree that has now become known throughout Wales, the UK & indeed around the globe be honoured in this ultimately fitting manner.

Background

The Welsh Government is currently constructing a new 6.53km [bypass to the south of Newtown](#). The bypass will connect the A489 and A483 while avoiding Newtown and forms part of the Welsh trunk road network.

Newtown Bypass

Work began to build the new bypass in 2016 with the project expected to be completed in early 2019. Several route options for the bypass were explored with a public consultation exhibition being held in September 2009 in Newtown.

Following this, proposals incorporating the 2010 preferred route plus alternative options were displayed at a public information exhibition in July 2013, which resulted in a modified preferred route being announced in March 2014. This route was also displayed at another public information exhibition on 8 April 2014.

In June/July 2015 there was a public local inquiry before Welsh Government announced it would proceed with building the bypass in February 2016.

Route numbering and classification

The Department for Transport has [produced guidance on Road Classification and the Primary Route Network \(PRN\)](#) (PDF,268KB).

Road classification uses a common system of route numbering, which is centrally administered for England and Wales by the Department for Transport (for example, Motorways, A-roads, B-roads etc.). Common design guidelines for signage are used for each classification of road to provide clarity to road users. In all other respects roads classification is a devolved matter outside of England.

The PRN designates roads between places of traffic importance across the UK, with the aim of providing easily identifiable routes to access the whole of the country. Newtown is included as a destination on the PRN.

The guidance states that:

The PRN is a devolved matter. Several primary routes run between England and Scotland or England and Wales, meaning cooperation between highways bodies across borders is required.

Although roads are numbered in accordance with the system, sections of trunk roads in Wales have also been named in relation to locally significant issues. For example in 2012 [a section of the A470 between Llandudno and Llandudno Junction was named 'The Royal Welsh Way'](#).

The Brimmon Oak

The Brimmon Oak is an English oak tree located to the East of Newtown which is over 500 years old.

In 2016 the tree won the [Welsh Tree of the Year awards](#) and in December of that year was selected by judges as the [United Kingdom's tree of the year](#) beating the winners of the national awards for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The prize was a £1,000 care grant and entry into the [European Tree of the Year](#) awards.

In March 2017 it was announced that the tree had finished second in the European awards, determined by popular vote. The tree was second to the Józef Oak in Poland and the result was the best placed finish for a British tree in the award's history.

Welsh Government and National Assembly Action

The tree was the subject of [a previous petition to the National Assembly for Wales](#) when the earlier preferred route for the bypass would have been constructed within 3.5 metres of the tree's trunk. Petitioners raised concerns on the impact this would have on the tree's roots.

The issue was also discussed at the public local inquiry held and following this alterations to the route were made to protect the tree. [Responding to the fourth assembly's Petitions Committee](#) (PDF,158KB), the then Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, Edwina Hart wrote:

The Inspector considered the veteran tree would not be under threat from the construction of the scheme but care in the detail of design and supervision of the works near the veteran oak is essential.

The Inspector accepted the Welsh Government's proposal to adjust the carriageway away from the tree and only carry out minimal work within the 15 metre tree root protection zone, as recommended by arboricultural specialists and British Standards.

In relation to the naming of trunk roads in Wales, previous petitions have been brought to the National Assembly. In 2012 [a petition to name the A470 'Prif Ffordd Tywysog Owain Glyndwr'](#) was considered by the fourth assembly's Petitions Committee. The then [Minister for Local Government and Communities, Carl Sargeant responded](#) (PDF,171KB) stating that:

trunk roads in Wales are numbered rather than named in accordance with a strict convention in order to ensure the continuity of routes across the UK.

A similar response was also given to another petition in 2012 calling for [Welsh names for new trunk roads in Wales](#). The petitioner highlighted that the Welsh Government had previously agreed to the naming of the 'Royal Welsh Way' section of the A470.

With regards to the naming of the new Newtown Bypass, in his letter to the Petitions Committee, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates suggests that the naming of the road 'would not be the most appropriate way to recognise the tree'.

The Cabinet Secretary has outlined that he will ask Newtown Town Council to consult with local people on how the area can be recognised and suggests options such as the naming of junctions on the bypass and including information boards at lay-bys along the new road.