

Petition: Include the alternative 3rd Menai Crossing proposal 'Pont Bendigeidfran' in the formal assessment process.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 23 Hydref 2018
Petitions Committee | 23 October 2018

Research Briefing:

Petition Number: P-05-841

Petition title: Include the alternative 3rd Menai Crossing proposal 'Pont Bendigeidfran' in the formal assessment process.

Text of petition:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to formally consider the alternative proposal for the 3rd Menai Crossing known as 'Pont Bendigeidfran' (as described in the video found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ty2q-ctJZKM>).

This proposal provides increased benefits in terms of whole life cost, its ability to enhance the spectacular landscape, traffic benefits (both traffic flows and network resilience), environmental mitigation, promoting tourism, promoting Welsh culture, and is a better fit in terms of current legislation, for example the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. This proposal appears to be achievable from an engineering perspective, and will be a more fitting addition to the two world famous bridges already present at this location.

We therefore call for this alternative proposal to be fully assessed alongside the original options presented in the recent Welsh Government 3rd Menai Crossing Public Consultation.

Background

The Welsh Government is the highway authority for the Welsh trunk road and motorway network in Wales and is responsible for maintenance and improvement of the network, including the A55.

The A55 [Britannia Bridge](#) over the Menai Strait provides a link between the mainland and Anglesey. The bridge carries both rail and road traffic and is the only section of the A55 route which is single carriageway. The [Menai Suspension Bridge](#) provides another link between the mainland and Anglesey along the A55 route.

The [Welsh Government states that](#):

The A55 is important locally, nationally and internationally. It provides the main economic artery for North Wales and forms part of the route Euro 22 on the Trans European Road network. [The] Britannia Bridge is the only section within the UK that is not [a] dual carriageway.

This results in congestion at the crossing and the Welsh Government now plans to build a third Menai crossing.

Third Menai crossing

The Welsh Government's [National Transport Finance Plan 2015](#) (the NTFP) sets out how the Welsh Government proposes to deliver the outcomes identified in the [Wales Transport Strategy](#) between April 2015 to March 2020 (short term) and beyond (medium term). The Plan provides timescales for the financing and delivery of schemes to be undertaken by the Welsh Government. The 2015 plan listed 'improvements to the A55 crossing of the Menai' as one of the Welsh Government's new road infrastructure schemes.

The [Welsh Government states](#) that a:

...study concluded that improving capacity on the existing Britannia Bridge did not meet the required safety standards.

A strategic outline business case was therefore completed in Spring 2016 which confirmed the need for a third Menai Crossing. This was reflected in the [2017 NTFP update](#) which included the 'third Menai bridge crossing' as a new scheme.

Route proposals

The Welsh Government appointed consultants to undertake a route selection study with a view to selecting a preferred route for the crossing, and [consulted on a number of options](#) between December 2017 and March 2018.

Each option has been appraised using the [Welsh Transport Planning and Appraisal Guidance](#) (WelTAG) and the results of this appraisal for each route were [included in the consultation document](#) (PDF, 36.4MB). Along with suggesting new routes, the consultation outlines different options for the structure and design of a new bridge.

'Pont Bendigeidfran' proposal

The petition provides an alternative option to those set out in the Welsh Government's consultation and calls for this to be fully assessed alongside the other options.

The petitioner's option is [set out in this video](#) and suggests that a new bridge is designed to depict Bendigeidfran, from the [Mabinogion tales](#) holding up the bridge. The proposal outlines a suggested design for the bridge which would use the 'purple route' as set out in [the consultation document](#) (PDF,36.4MB). The petitioner suggests that the bridge should be named 'Pont Bendigeidfran'.

Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales action

In his letter to the Chair of the Petitions Committee, dated 24 September 2018, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates, highlights that the petitioner's proposal has:

...been assessed along with the other consultation responses...[and the Welsh Government] will be announcing the preferred route shortly.

The Cabinet Secretary also highlights in his letter that once a preferred route has been identified:

...further analysis will need to be undertaken to develop a suitable form of structure...as part of the next stage of design development. [The petitioner's] proposals can therefore be further assessed and considered during this next stage.

The announcement of the preferred route was made on 11 October 2018 and [a summary of consultation responses](#) (PDF,1MB) was published. [The First Minister, Carwyn Jones, announced](#) that the Welsh Government has chosen the 'purple route' as the preferred route. Further work will now be undertaken in relation to the design of the bridge and scheme.

In April 2018, during a [Plaid Cymru debate on the renaming of the Second Severn Crossing](#), the [Cabinet Secretary stated](#) that he is:

keen to conduct a local consultation over the naming of the third Menai crossing...[and that] these will be local consultations, giving the people of their communities they provide identity for the say over their names.

The Cabinet Secretary has been asked for an update in relation to the project in Plenary on several occasions. Most recently discussions have focused on the potential for the bridge to house National Grid infrastructure in order to cross the Menai Strait.

In April 2018, the Welsh Government [announced that a feasibility study will be carried out](#) to investigate whether an electricity connection could be carried on the proposed third Menai crossing.