

P-06-1299 Welsh Government 'Freeze on road building" to include a clause for cases that pose a danger to life.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 17 Hydref 2020
Petitions Committee | 17 October 2020

Reference: SR22/3945

Petition Number: P-06-1299

Petition title: Welsh Government 'Freeze on road building" to include a clause for cases that pose a danger to life.

Text of petition: The recent fire at Tylorstown Working Mens' Club proved that the infrastructure in the Rhondda Fach needs urgent updating. With the main road blocked for several days, all traffic was diverted through side streets causing blockages and congestion. Schools had to be shut, public transport halted, school transport cancelled, people were unable to get to work and there was no accessible route for emergency vehicles.

The relief road from Tylorstown to Maerdy has been in the Local Authority's Local Development Plan for years, it's time the people of the Fach see some swift action. This can't happen with the Welsh Government's "freeze" on new roads as stands.



1. Background

In June 2021 the Deputy Minister for Climate Change announced a “roads review” in Plenary. He highlighted that 17% of Welsh greenhouse gas emissions are from transport, and said he was establishing a panel of “some of the UK's leading experts on transport and climate change” which would:

....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.

He drew attention to modal shift targets set out in Llwybr Newydd – the Wales Transport Strategy (WTS) – which require 45% of Welsh journeys to be made by sustainable modes by 2045. He said:

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.

Details of the panel were announced in September 2021. In February 2022 a statement by the Deputy Minister confirmed that the panel had submitted an interim report, and that 55 schemes would be looked at in more detail. These would “provide a basis for the panel to provide future looking recommendations on road building in Wales”.

Details, including the panel's terms of reference and the list of schemes reviewed, are published on the Welsh Government website. The panel's terms of reference page identifies five areas which will be “the priority and focus for road investment” in future “in accordance with the WTS”. These include:

investment which maintains the safety and serviceability of the existing road network in compliance with statutory duties.

On 21 September 2022 the Deputy Minister made a statement to say the panel has submitted its final report, with findings on the 55 schemes and “recommendations and tests on the conditions where building new roads is the right thing to do”.

The Deputy Minister said he would consider the report, and publish it with a Welsh Government response "later in the autumn".

2. Welsh Government response to the petition

The Deputy Minister's letter to the Chair highlights, as discussed above, that the terms of reference for the panel includes reference to safety as a future focus for road investment.

He reiterates that the response to the report will be announced once the Welsh Government has considered the recommendations.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The roads review has been discussed extensively in the Senedd since it was announced. Discussion has focused on a wide range of areas, including safety. For example in Plenary in June 2021, Paul Davies MS asked the First Minister about safety considerations in relation to diversion of the road at Newgale to mitigate flood risk. The First Minister explained:

The fact we have a roads review does not mean that where there are clear safety considerations, for example, that investment in new road facilities will not go ahead. It's simply that the bar has to be higher than it was in the past to make a new road the answer to a problem.

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