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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA/P/KS/0111/19

Mike Hedges AM
Chair
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

SeneddCCERA@assembly.wales

1 October 2019

Dear Mike

Further to my formal response on the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee's report on the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2019-2020, I am writing with the updates that I agreed to provide a number of the recommendations. The updates are attached at Annex 1.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy and Transport

Update by the Welsh Government on recommendations to the report of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2019-2020**Recommendation 3**

The Committee recommends that the Cabinet Secretary should report back to this Committee within the next six months on the uptake of funding under the decarbonisation Call to Action. This should include information on any steps that have been taken to encourage uptake.

Response: Accept

I will provide Committee with updates summarising the overall numbers of projects supported and funding awarded under each of the Calls to Action. I will provide those updates at six monthly intervals at the end and mid-year point of each financial year.

Update: Below are the project approvals for the Economy Futures Fund from its launch in May 2018 - to date, broken down into the individual Calls to Action.

Call To Action	Number	Investment
Decarbonisation	6	£ 22,447,000
Exports and Trade	6	£ 1,288,560
High Quality Employment, Skills Development and Fair Work	24	£ 25,335,776
Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Headquarters	34	£ 2,695,386
R&D, Automation and Digitalisation	63	£ 5,708,153

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should report back to this Committee within the next six months on progress of the development of an electric vehicle charging point network and its plans for further development in this area.

Response: Accept

The Minister for Economy and Transport's Written Statement of 11 October 2018 referred to the aim that Transport for Wales would go out to procurement in Spring 2019, when Assembly Members would be updated further.

Update: Discussions with chargepoint operators are informing our approach and charging strategy to be published in 2020. Transport for Wales is engaged in the detailed development of the roll out of the rapid charging network. The number of publicly accessible chargepoints is now 830, up from 670 at April 2019. This includes the addition of rapid charging points in Mid Wales. We will update the committee on progress with this issue within the next 6 months.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should report back to this Committee within 6 months on progress in addressing Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations. This should include an assessment of the impact of 50mph limits in specified locations.

Response: Accept in Principle

Whilst data is being collected on a monthly basis, the full effects of the 50mph speed limits will not be known until full 12-months' worth of data has been obtained and analysed. This will not be available until September 2019 at the earliest. However, updates in respect of progress on the 'Action Plan' and 'Precautionary Retained Measures' as outlined in the supplemental plan to the UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations will be available when required.

Update: The full effects of the 50mph speed limits on reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide are not yet known. However, the data for the 12-month period since their initial implementation in June 2018 has now been obtained and is currently being reviewed alongside the associated traffic speed and volume data for each of the 5 locations on the motorway and trunk road network. The report outlining the results of this review will be completed by the end of September and published shortly afterwards.

In respect of the 'Action Plan measures', the following is confirmed:

- A494 Deeside – 50mph speed limit retained via traffic regulation order made under Section 84 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act (RTRA) 1984 that came into force on 16 August 2019. Detailed traffic sign layouts and average speed camera enforcement equipment were installed during July and August;
- A483 Wrexham – 50mph speed limit retained via traffic regulation order made under Section 84 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act (RTRA) 1984 that came into force on 16 August 2019. Detailed traffic sign layouts and average speed camera enforcement equipment were installed during July and August;
- A470 Upper Boat to Pontypridd – 50mph speed limit retained via traffic regulation order made under Section 84 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act (RTRA) 1984 that came into force on 17 June 2019. Detailed traffic sign layouts and average speed camera enforcement equipment is being installed during August and September;
- M4 Port Talbot - 50mph speed limit retained via traffic regulation order made under Section 17 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act (RTRA) 1984 that came into force on 24 July 2019. Detailed traffic sign layouts and average speed camera enforcement equipment is being installed during August and September;
- M4 Newport – Setting of a maximum 50mph speed limit via the existing variable speed limit system came into operation in February 2019. No changes to the existing speed limit signs and spot speed camera enforcement are necessary. Design development of the Variable Diversion measure is ongoing, due to the need to continue dialogue with the Police and Newport City Council over the possible effects of diverting of traffic onto the local road network.

In respect of the Precautionary Retained Measures, development has recently commenced and will include discussion with the relevant Local Authorities, as several of the proposals are likely to result in traffic diverting away from the motorway and trunk road network. A recommendation on whether some or all of these Precautionary Retained Measures should be implemented will be included with the report to be released in September.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should report back to this Committee within the next 6 months on its plans in relation to 20mph limits.

Response: Accept

We are continuing to work with partners to explore the options offered by the devolution of powers relating to national speed limits in Wales. We will work with Public Health Wales and Cardiff Council to understand the impact of the implementation of 20mph zones across large parts of Cardiff, and if the implementation of 20mph limits, investments in active travel including the funding of on street cycle hire and strategic cycle routes together have the potential to deliver improvements in road safety, air quality and increased take up of active travel modes. Using the lessons learnt from developments in Cardiff we will also review our guidance on setting local speed limits to assess if it is still fit for purpose in light of the devolution of powers to set speed limits.

As part of the forthcoming work, the costs that would arise from changing national speed limits will be assessed.

We will update the committee on progress with this issue within the next 6 months.

Update: The First Minister announced on 7 May that 20mph should be the default speed limit for residential areas. Officials have worked with the Welsh Local Government Association to establish a multi-disciplinary Task and Finish Group to consider how best to implement a default 20mph speed limit in built areas across Wales. The Task and Finish Group has begun its work and has been asked to provide recommendations to Ministers by the summer of 2020.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should report back to this Committee within the next six months on the progress of the “Green Corridors on the Welsh Trunk Road Network” initiative.

Response: Accept

Regular reporting on the progress of this initiative is already planned.

Some of the initiative’s original proposals require further investigation and more detailed planning which might require additional resources and would be subject to further Ministerial submissions and approval.

Update: Since my approval and announcement of the Green Corridors Initiative in July 2018, my officials in Transport’s Network Management division have been developing plans and started to deliver improvements on the ground to meet the initiative’s objectives. Please see Annex 2 for further details.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should report back to this Committee within 6 months on the status of any reviews relating to WelTAG 2017.

Response: Accept

WelTAG 2017 was published in December 2017. It replaced WelTAG 2008 and should be applied to all transport interventions that require Welsh Government support. Any schemes that were being developed using WelTAG 2008 at the time were expected to move over to WelTAG 2017 at the earliest convenient point. Welsh Government has recently hosted workshop sessions across Wales to discuss WelTAG user's experiences and examples of best practice. Key themes have been identified where users require further support and guidance and this requirement is being addressed. The intention is to convene similar sessions at a later stage.

Some of the recommendations of the review may require additional resources and would be subject to further Ministerial submissions and approval.

We will update the committee on progress within the next 6 months.

Update: Welsh Government has recently hosted workshop sessions across Wales to discuss WelTAG user's experiences and examples of best practice. Key themes have been identified where users require further support and guidance and this requirement is being addressed.

Update by the Welsh Government on accepted recommendations to the report of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2019-2020

Recommendation 8

The objectives of the initiative are;

- Place building and landscape improvements. Including targeted tree planting, wildflower verges and other appropriate landscape improvements.
- Identifying other improvements to the environmental quality of urban and rural transport networks (for example, boundary treatments such as provision of hedges or slate fences appropriate to the area) and seeking opportunities to include in existing work programmes or planned infrastructure renewals and upgrades.
- Enhancing habitats and improving connectivity (resilience of ecosystems). Including opportunities to improve connectivity of habitats, both within the existing soft estate and to the wider landscape and taking action to protect and conserve protected species.
- Nature Based Solutions. As part of improving and operating a safe, efficient and sustainable transport network, developing the principles of nature based solutions, embedding them into the design and planning processes.
- Appropriate maintenance. Review our maintenance standards, making sure they are both appropriate and meeting our aims for a safe and sustainable transport network and the aspirations for making Wales a world class tourist destination and provide multiple benefits.
- There are also cross-cutting objectives for Communication, Collaborating and Partnering, contributing to the Wales Transport Strategy, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Progress Reporting.

1. Delivery

The approach to delivering the initiative seeks to identify 'Quick Wins' alongside developing longer term plans and proposals. Work is being funded through Transport's capital programme.

a) 'Quick Wins'

Starting in the summer of 2018 officials worked with the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent (NMWTRA) and South Wales Trunk Road Agent (SWTRA) to identify potential 'Quick Win' opportunities for the initiative. As a result the following examples have been completed or are near completion;

- 50,000 daffodils were planted by NMWTRA at 'gateway' locations on the A55, A494 and A483; and 75,000 daffodils were planted by SWTRA on the M4 Cardiff Gate Area. Further bulb planting is planned in the autumn of 2019.
- Over 13Ha of road verges in mid Wales have been added to areas being actively managed for wildflowers; where maintenance operations have been

improved to create conditions where wildflower communities can thrive and spread. Other road verge sites across Wales are now being routinely assessed and identified for managing as wildflower areas.

- 6000 Primroses and Cowslips are being planted along the A40 at Johnstown, Carmarthen.
- In support to National Eisteddfod at Llanrwst this year; wildflower enhancement work was carried out on verges along the A470 on the approaches to the town.
- Landscape restoration projects including native tree and shrub planting was carried out along the following routes during the winter 2018-19. A465 Hereford Road, A449, A40 (east) and the A483. A total of 9,265 trees and shrubs were planted as part of these projects.
- Nature based engineering solutions – Natural planting techniques to replace unsightly pvc webbing snow fencing in Brecon Beacons National Park on the A470 at Storey Arms. Planting trials have been established to determine best method and most appropriate plant species.



'Camelot' Daffodils, M4 South Wales

Identifying and delivering 'Quick Wins' will be an on-going part of the initiative for its duration.

b) Longer term planning and proposals

Officials also commissioned the Trunk Road Agents to prepare detailed proposals for the priority areas identified under the initiative and deliver a range of measures to improve the landscape quality, enhance habitats and improve connectivity, action on protected species and nature based solutions. This work involves the assessment of gateway sites and other priority areas against the objectives, followed by the design and implementation of measures on the ground. Where possible looking to utilise (or in the longer term, develop) local supply chains. This work will start to be delivered in 2019 and will be on-going for the duration of the initiative with more sites being added in subsequent years.

Sites being taken forward with delivery starting during current financial year 2019/2020 .	Description of works and improvements currently planned – other opportunities will be identified, assessed and developed for these sites .	Delivering against Green Corridor Initiative objectives	Timetable
North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent Area			
A494 Deeside (Gateway)	<p>Landscape restoration works including tree thinning and coppicing, tidying existing planted areas, opening views where appropriate and rejuvenating existing ponds.</p> <p>New tree planting at several locations e.g. Deeside Park junction.</p> <p>Bulb planting at Shotwick interchange and other locations.</p> <p>Creation of wildflower areas at Deeside Park junction with other areas currently being considered.</p> <p>New shrub and tree planting along edge of carriageway at Aston Mead to improve screening.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place Building and landscape improvements. 2. Enhancing habitats and improving connectivity (resilience of ecosystems) and Action on Species. 3. Nature based solutions. 	<p>Starting – Late summer / autumn 2019.</p> <p>Main period of delivery – autumn 2019 to spring 2020.</p> <p>Some work may be on-going into following year or further opportunities identified and developed.</p>
A55 Broughton (Gateway & The Wales Way)	Bulb planting at several locations.		

	<p>Landscape restoration works around Junctions 36A, 35A and other areas including tree thinning and coppicing and strengthening existing planting.</p> <p>Creation of wildflower areas nr. Drury Lane.</p> <p>New tree planting at several locations.</p>		
<p>A483 Gresford (Gateway) – including Wrexham bypass</p>	<p>Additional bulb planting with native species.</p> <p>New shrub and tree planting at Rossett interchange.</p> <p>Further opportunities for tree and shrub planting and wildflower areas are currently being investigated along the Wrexham bypass.</p>		
<p>A5/A483 Chirk (Gateway)</p>	<p>Bulb planting at several locations.</p> <p>Landscape restoration works including tree thinning and coppicing, strengthening planting, tidying existing planted areas, opening views of wider landscape where appropriate e.g. nr. Green Lane.</p>		

	<p>Creation of wildflower areas at several locations.</p> <p>New tree planting.</p>		
A483 Llanymynech (Gateway)	<p>Bulb planting and creation of wildflower areas at several locations through Four Crosses.</p> <p>Strengthening existing planting and extending hedgerows.</p> <p>Pond restoration to improve ecology.</p>		
South Wales Trunk Road Agent Area			
M4 Second Severn Crossing (Gateway) – From Prince of Wales Bridge to decommissioned Toll Booth Plaza	<p>Open up views of historic landscape and iconic views across designated sites of high landscape and ecological value through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape restoration and, removal of undesirable species and scrub control. • Reclaiming grassland areas. • Tree planting with appropriate species to link with surrounding landscape. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place Building and landscape improvements. 2. Enhancing habitats and improving connectivity (resilience of ecosystems) and Action on Species. 3. Nature based solutions. 	<p>Starting – Late summer / autumn 2019.</p> <p>Main period of delivery – autumn 2019 to spring 2020.</p> <p>Some work may be on-going into following year or further opportunities</p>

	Further enhancements through planting native bulb species and wildflowers into grassland areas.		identified and developed.
M48 / A466 Chepstow (Gateway)	Provide better visibility and visual connection with surrounding landscape through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape restoration and, removal of undesirable species and scrub control. • Planting to improve the connectivity of habitats. 		
A40 Monmouth (Gateway)			
A470 nr. Cefn Coed (Wales Way) – approach to Brecon Beacons national Park from the south.		Improving visual appearance to enhance a sense of place through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening existing planting. • Tree planting with appropriate species to link with surrounding landscape. • Additional bulb planting and other seasonal colour. • Creating wildflower areas. 	

c) Other areas of work

- The Wales Way - Transport officials are engaging with Visit Wales colleagues to determine how Green Corridors can support the Wales Way tourism initiative. An initial pilot audit and assessment of the A487 from Cardigan to Machynlleth was jointly carried out in July 2019 to determine practical measures such as opening and maintaining iconic seascape and landscape views. This work will now move forward into a detailed planning phase.
- Embedding the principles of green corridors in the design and delivery of new road infrastructure projects. This will form part of the on-going dialogue between officials and project teams in delivering sustainable design solutions, supported by guidance documents in how to apply green corridors principles (currently being developed).
- As part of the Green Corridors initiative I asked officials to keep our maintenance standards under review, making sure they are both appropriate and meeting our aims for a safe and sustainable transport network. I also challenged them to explore opportunities for collaborating with others.

As a result Transport officials have been working with Plantlife (the British conservation charity working nationally and internationally to save threatened wild flowers, plants and fungi), taking part in a UK wide working group looking at improving road verge maintenance. Other group members include Highways England, Transport Scotland, the South Wales Trunk Road Agent, local authority representation, principle highways contractors and other stakeholders. The purpose of the working group was to produce comprehensive best practice guidance for those who manage road verges such as local authorities and others.

This work has now concluded, with the guidance due to be published and launched by Plantlife in September.

The guidance's target audience is all those authorities and organisations that have responsibility for the management of roadside verges in the UK. It is a practical guide for highways managers, road engineers, operations managers, landscape architects and all those engaged with verge management and creation.

The publication complements safety considerations and focuses on those areas where there are no safety constraints restricting management. Its aim is to shift the balance so that over time species-rich habitat becomes the predominant asset across the network. The management approaches set out represent cost effectiveness in terms of the benefits to be realised, in some cases identifying opportunities for cost savings by reducing cutting frequencies when it is appropriate to do so.