P-03-261 Local Solutions to Newtown Traffic Congestion - Further Information Provided by the Petitioner

Two thirds of the traffic on the A483/A489 corridor in Newtown is local.

The measures to address traffic congestion on the A483/A489 should include those designed to make better use of road space, such as:

- traffic management measures to reduce conflicting movements at junctions
- dedicated lanes in Pool Road and Llanidloes Road for traffic turning right to industrial and retail premises
- co-ordination of traffic lights

They should also include measures designed to promote alternatives to car travel, such as:

- a redesigned town bus network serving supermarkets & industrial estates, and avoiding the A483/A489 where possible
- a 15 minute interval town bus service
- a footbridge across the River Severn connecting the Llanllwchaiarn river path to Pool Road
- promotion of cycling and walking

We recognise that there is currently a problem caused by high vehicles diverting through residential areas in order to avoid the low railway bridges on Dolfor Road and Llanidloes Road. This can be solved by the following measures:

- raising the railway bridge on the Llanidloes Road
- construction of a link road from Dolfor Road to Heol Ashley in the Mochdre Industrial Estate

NEWTOWN TRAFFIC SOLUTIONS

EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF PETITION P-03-261 – LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO NEWTOWN TRAFFIC CONGESTION

INTRODUCTION

NB. A map of Newtown is provided at the end of this document.

The petition calls on National Assembly for Wales "to urge the Welsh Government to defer a decision on the proposed bypass of Newtown until it has developed and trialled a set of sustainable measures in the town itself to address traffic congestion."

In September 2009 the Welsh Assembly Government held a Public Consultation Exhibition on its A483/A489 Newtown Study, which looked at ways to relieve congestion and improve transport in and around Newtown. The exhibition displayed six options for achieving these objectives, all of them involving a new bypass. When the exhibitors were asked why the consultation did not include a suite of non-bypass measures for improving traffic flow in Newtown itself and encouraging modal shift away from the private car, they explained that these did not achieve the desired Transport Planning Objectives (TPO's) in the Stage 1 WelTAG Appraisal. In a subsequent written response the Assembly's Consultant, Parsons Brinkerhoff, stated "Local Transport Improvement measures were considered as a stand-alone option during the appraisal process, but were found not to be sufficient to achieve the Transport Planning Objectives of the study, for example the problem of low headroom at the Dolfor and Nant Oer Bridges, and also journey time reliability through Newtown were not met." (Jason Collins, 12.10.09).

The Public Consultation Exhibition made clear that two thirds of the traffic on the roads comprising the main A483/A489 corridor was either internal to Newtown or had an origin or destination in Newtown – a situation which would be expected to focus attention on alleviating local traffic rather than constructing a bypass. After examination of the Stage 1 WelTAG Appraisal, Newtown Traffic Solutions concluded that the non-bypass measures have not been investigated in sufficient depth to enable them to be ruled out. **Part 1** of this document sets out the reasons for this conclusion by examining:

A. The rejection of the non-bypass options put forward in the Stage 1 WelTAG Appraisal (Sections 2 & 3)
B. The limited effort expended to develop soft measures to promote modal shift in lieu of a bypass (Section 4).
C. The failure to consider a Dolfor Road – Heol Ashley link road to allow high vehicles to avoid the 4 metre headroom Dolfor Road railway bridge (Section 5).
D. The neglect of the potential of the Cambrian Railway line to relieve the road corridor

Newtown Traffic Solutions have also investigated the extent to which a new bypass would satisfy the study Transport Planning Objectives, and have concluded that it fails in the case of three of them. **Part 2** of this document sets out the basis for this conclusion.

PART 1: VIABILITY OF LOCAL TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENT MEASURES ON THEIR OWN

1.1 THE STAGE 1 WELTAG NON-BYPASS OPTIONS

The non-bypass measures explored in the Stage 1 WelTAG Appraisal were grouped together and considered as two alternative options:

- Option 4 - Trunk Road on-line improvements: Improvements to the existing trunk road, A483 and A489 only, including raising or lowering of the Nant Oer and Dolfor Road railway bridges, linking of all existing traffic signals in Newtown, provision of new traffic signals at the Kerry Road roundabout and Morrison's junction, and improvements to right turn facilities at existing industrial estate accesses.
- Option 6 - Trunk Road on-line improvements plus local transport measures: As Option 4 plus improvements to public transport, cycling, non-motorised user provision, bus priority, public transport connectivity and safe routes to schools/college.

This document focuses on Option 6 as it is the more comprehensive.

1.2 TRANSPORT PLANNING OBJECTIVES

The seven Transport Planning Objectives developed in the Stage 1 WelTAG Appraisal were as follows:

TPO 1: Maintain economic base
TPO 2: Meeting relevant environmental targets
TPO 3: Removing through traffic from local roads
TPO 4: Increasing level of usage of non-car forms of transport
TPO 5: Integration of public transport
TPO 6: Improve journey time reliability (North-South, East-West)
TPO 7: Reduction in accidents

Non-bypass Option 6 was judged to be inferior to the bypass options in relation to TPO's 2, 3, 6 and 7, so these are discussed here in detail.

TPO 2: Meeting relevant environmental targets

The detailed wording of TPO 2 is as follows:

Within Newtown settlement boundary limit and within 200 m of any new transportation option:

- Meet targets and comply with appropriate environmental legislation by 2015
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 3% from 2008 levels by 2011 (in accordance with Wales Transport Strategy)

According to the Appraisal Summary Table, Option 6 has neutral effect in relation to TPO 2. However, this appears to be at odds with the entry against TPO 4, where a beneficial effect is reported in relation to the twin objectives of achieving a 10% modal shift for journeys within Newtown and a 2% modal shift for journeys with an origin or destination in Newtown (see below). A 10% modal shift for local journeys would be expected to achieve a similar reduction in greenhouse gas emissions attributed to local journeys, so it is not understood why Option 6 would not meet the TPO 2 objectives.

TPO 3: Removing through traffic from local roads

The detailed wording of TPO 3 is as follows:

- Reduce through traffic on Heol Treowen, Plantation Lane and Milford Road by 50% over 2008 levels by 2015
- Reduce HGV's on Heol Treowen, Plantation Lane by 90% from 2008 levels, by 2015

Heol Treowen and Plantation Lane provide a continuous route parallel to the A483/A489 to the South of the railway line which allows high vehicles to avoid the low railway bridges on Dolfor Road (part of the A483 to Llandrindod Wells) and at Nant Oer on the Llanidloes Road (part of the A489 to the West). Unfortunately the roads concerned are essentially residential and are unsuited to HGV's – hence the objectives of TPO 3.

Although Option 6 ostensibly includes the raising of the Dolfor Road and Nant Oer bridges, it is clear from the Appraisal Summary Table (AST) that this is considered difficult to achieve. On technical and operational feasibility, the AST records "Raising/lowering of railway bridges technically difficult", while the concluding comment states that the railway bridge works are "unlikely to be acceptable to Network Rail". An alternative means of satisfying the TPO 3 objective is considered in Section 4 "An alternative route for high vehicles" below.

TPO 6: Improve journey time consistency (North-South, East West)

The detailed wording of TPO 6 is as follows:

- Reduce journey times during morning and evening peak hours (0800-0900 and 1615-1715) on A489/A483 between A470/A489 junction (Caersws) and A483/B4389 junction (Aberbechan junction) by 10% by 2015
- Reduce journey times during morning and evening peak hours (0800-0900 and 1615-1715) on A489/A483 between A483/unnamed C class Road at "The Dingle") and A483/B4389 junction (Aberbechan junction) by 10% by 2015
- Reduce journey times during morning and evening peak hours (0800-0900 and 1615-1715) on A489/A483 between A483/unnamed C class Road at "The Dingle") and A470/A489 junction (Caersws) by 10% by 2015

Note that reduced journey times are used as a proxy for improved journey time consistency. The study records that current peak hour journey times between Caersws and Aberbechan junction are 17 and 15 minutes in the morning and evening peaks respectively, so the 10% journey time reduction sought is equivalent to 1.5 minutes.

The Appraisal Summary Table states that Option 6 has neutral effect in relation to TPO 6. It seemed very odd that the Option 6 combination of new traffic signals, traffic signal co-ordination, dedicated lanes for right-turning traffic, public transport improvements and cycle facilities would not produce any discernible reduction in journey times, so we contacted the Assembly's Consultant, Parsons Brinkerhoff, to ascertain how the journey time reductions were determined. Their reply made clear that no quantitative assessment of journey time reductions was carried out in the Stage 1 Appraisal: "..the options within the Stage 1 Appraisal were not assessed to the same level of detail as Stage 2. Within Stage 1, the options were reviewed qualitatively against Transport Planning Objectives set for the study. If an option fails to meet these objectives then the option is not progressed to Stage 2, and further, more quantitative and more evidence-based appraisal assessment is not undertaken. Therefore as Option 6 did not meet the Transport Planning Objectives, a detailed quantitative assessment was not undertaken."

This reply begs the question of how the qualitative assessment of journey time savings was carried out and how it could conclude that the Option 6 measures would have neutral benefit. In other contexts, such

measures would be expected to achieve real time benefits. Why not in Newtown? In questioning the conclusion, we are, effectively in a Catch 22 situation. We cannot contest the conclusion, because there is no evidence supporting it that can be contested. There is no supporting evidence because, given that the Option 6 measures are deemed to yield no time savings, it is not worth collecting it!

TPO 7: Reduction in accidents

The detailed wording of TPO 7 is as follows:

Within Newtown settlement boundary limit, reduce road traffic accidents on A483(T), A489(T), Heol Treowen, Plantation Lane and Milford Road by 25% by 2015.

This TPO does not seem to be concerned about road traffic accidents on the bypass itself, which is outside the Newtown settlement boundary limit, so is of questionable value. It is not at all clear that the construction of a bypass would reduce accidents on this stretch of the Severn Valley corridor as a whole more than modal shift brought about by the Option 6 measures.

1.3 INVESTIGATION OF SOFT MEASURES TO PROMOTE MODAL SHIFT

With the UK government's and WAG's ambitious targets to cut CO_2 emissions, the priority in tackling congestion must be the promotion of modal shift, rather than the construction of new roads, because, as the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) concluded in its 1994 report "Trunk Roads and the generation of traffic", new roads generate new traffic growth.

Given its relatively small size, bus travel, walking and cycling should all be attractive options for the journey to work, school and college. However, bus services in Newtown are infrequent, circuitous and fail to adequately serve the industrial estates, providing the opportunity for major improvement. Despite this, the Newtown Study appears to have devoted little serious effort to investigating how the town bus service could be upgraded. No study was carried out to determine the optimum route network or the modal shift that would be induced by doubling or quadrupling the frequency. Rather, "The study team consulted the local public transport operators within Newtown regarding the expansion of existing services or the introduction of new routes. The response was that they were happy with the existing level of service, but an improvement would be to provide a link between Lon Cerddyn and Park Lane to allow a loop through the housing estates via a bus gate." (Jason Collins, 12.10.09).

Newtown Traffic Solutions do not consider that the consultation described above is sufficient as the objectives of local public transport operators do not coincide with the public interest. The optimum bus network for Newtown needs to be worked out starting from scratch – ie without preconceptions – and this task should have formed an integral part of the Newtown Study.

Similarly, Newtown Traffic Solutions consider that the Newtown Study paid insufficient attention to the potential for walking and cycling to reduce car travel for short journeys. It is a sad indictment that the majority of Newtown's populace drive distances of less than 2 kilometres, both to deliver their children to school by car and to get to work themselves, when Newtown lends itself so well to sustainable travel options.

In addition to a safe cycle route paralleling the A483/A489 and strategic pedestrian/cycle links across the river and the railway, there is a need for proactive initiatives to encourage cycling in the town[1]. These

[1] Groningen in Holland, for example, spends only 10% of its transport budget on cycling provision yet 60% of all journeys are made by bicycle.

should be targeted at commuters and schoolchildren through work-based Travel Plans and school-based cycle training respectively.

Given the dominance of local traffic and the great potential to reduce it by encouraging a switch to cycling and walking, it is alarming that the Newtown Study did not focus on means of promoting such a switch,

1.4 AN ALTERNATIVE ROUTE FOR HIGH VEHICLES

Dolfor Road and Nant Oer railway bridges

As noted above, the Option 6 AST characterised the raising of the two railway bridges as technically difficult.

On examining each bridge separately, it is immediately apparent that there is a real difficulty with raising the Dolfor Road railway bridge, because it is only about 400 metres from Newtown station and the railway line already climbs from the station to the bridge at a gradient of 1 in 130. The bridge headroom is currently 4.0 metres, so the bridge would need to be raised 1.3 metres to achieve the 5.3 metre standard laid down for new construction. This would require an increase in the gradient from the station to the bridge to about 1 in 90, which would be quite steep for accelerating Westbound trains, unless the track was raised at the station itself.

The Nant Oer bridge, on the other hand, has a much more generous headroom of 4.65 metres, so would only need to be raised 0.65 metres to bring it up to the 5.3 metre headroom standard. Moreover, it is on level track and lies 1.2 km West of the Dolfor Road bridge, so raising it should not have any negative impact on subsequent train operation. Like Dolfor Road bridge, Nant Oer bridge carries a single railway track, but the formation is wide enough for double track, so raising the formation for the single track would not require any widening of the embankment. It is expected that the volume of new embankment fill required to raise the track 0.65 m at Nant Oer would be less than a quarter of that required to raise the track 1.3 m at Dolfor Road.

Dolfor Road to Heol Ashley link road

As set out above, raising the Nant Oer railway bridge on the Llanidloes Road is relatively straightforward and smaller scale operation when compared with the operation required at Dolfor Road. Accordingly an attractive compromise solution to the routing of high vehicles through Newtown would be to raise only the Nant Oer bridge and construct a short link road between Dolfor Road and Heol Ashley cul-de-sac, which has a junction with the Llanidloes Road to the West of Nant Oer bridge. This link road would be about 300 metres long and would be along a section of the route of the Brown bypass option.

High vehicles approaching Newtown on the A483 (Dolfor Road) would be required to turn left along the new link road and Heol Ashley to the Llanidloes Road. There, Eastbound traffic would turn right and enter Newtown via the raised Nant Oer bridge.

1.5 REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF THE CAMBRIAN RAILWAY LINE

Based on the traffic counts on the A483 Dolfor Road and A489 Llanidloes Road outside the built-up area, over two thirds of the through traffic is East-West and less than one third North-South. While there is no realistic alternative to the road network for North-South traffic, there is an opportunity to exploit the Cambrian line more fully to relieve the pressure on the A483/A489 corridor for East-West traffic.

The National Transport Plan contains a commitment to upgrade the current two-hourly service on the Cambrian line to hourly before the end of 2010. This development may be expected to have a significant effect on long-distance car travel in the corridor, because the train service will be frequent enough to

make it both suitable for commuters and attractive to business and leisure travellers. Currently, the prospect of a two hour wait at Birmingham or Shrewsbury in the event of a missed connection on the return journey is a major disincentive to use the railway.

It is accepted that the prediction of the modal-shift on the A483/A489 corridor induced by the hourly train service is challenging in the absence of comparable experience elsewhere. In view of this, it would seem prudent to wait for the introduction of the hourly service and monitor its effect closely.

No freight is carried on the Cambrian line at present, despite the existing parallel flows of timber, fuel and supermarket traffic. Transfer of freight to rail has benefits all round, so it is important that WAG ensures that the right incentives are in place to enable this transfer to take place. The construction of a road bypass to remove HGV's from the streets of Newtown is an extravagance when a rail bypass already exists.

PART 2: FAILURE OF THE BYPASS OPTIONS IN RELATION TO THE TPOs

It is the view of Newtown Traffic Solutions that a new bypass would fail to satisfy Transport Planning Objectives 2, 4 and 5. The reasons for this conclusion are considered in relation to each of these TPO's below.

2.1 TPO 2: ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS

The WelTAG Appraisal Summary Table states that the bypass options will all be "Moderately Beneficial" in meeting relevant environmental targets. While it is accepted that a reduction of traffic on the existing corridor would benefit air quality in New Road, this improvement would be small, as only a third of existing traffic is through traffic, and there is every danger that local traffic would grow to fill the space vacated.

A 2006 report for the CPRE and Countryside Agency "Beyond Transport Infrastructure – Lessons for the future from recent road projects" looked at the accuracy of traffic forecasts for three major bypasses in England and reported as follows:

> In towns with bypasses, such a Newbury and Polegate, the new roads did significanty reduce town centre traffic levels. However, these reductions are not as great as originally forecast and there has subsequently been re-growth in traffic levels on the bypassed roads.

Looking at the Severn Valley corridor in total, the construction of a bypass would seem to be the best route to *increasing* CO_2 emissions from transport rather than reducing them. The landmark report by the Standing Advisory Committee for Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) "Trunk roads and the generation of traffic" (HMSO, 1994) concluded that new roads generate new traffic growth. This is because shorter journey times enable people to make longer journeys and commute further to work – ie they release suppressed demand.

The SACTRA conclusion has subsequently been confirmed by the CPRE report referred to above. In particular, it found that the 2004 traffic levels on the Newbury and Blackburn bypasses were 33% and 14% higher, respectively than the mid-range predictions for 2010, as set out in the table below.

Bypass	Highways Agency forecast for 2010 (vehicles per day)	Mid-range forecast for 2010 (vehicles per day)	Actual traffic in 2004 (vehicles per day)	Percentage increase
Newbury	30,000-36,000	33,000	43,800	33%
Blackburn	41,000-51,000	46,000	52,452	14%

Table 1: Traffic flows on Newbury and Blackburn bypasses compared with predictions

Based on the findings of the SACTRA and CPRE reports, there must be every expectation that construction of a Newtown bypass would induce significant new traffic growth as has been experienced elsewhere, and therefore result in increased CO_2 emissions.

Climate change is now viewed as the biggest threat faced by mankind. In view of the over-riding importance now attached to the *reduction* of CO_2 emissions, and road transport's dominant share of UK CO_2 emissions (24%), Newtown Traffic Solutions believe that construction of the bypass should be rejected as inimical to this central plank of WAG and UK government policy.

Inadequacy of TPO 2

It should be pointed out that the **greenhouse gas emission target** in TPO 2 of reducing emissions by 3% from 2008 levels by 2011 is quite inadequate. First of all it is too low in relation to current UK targets, which imply *annual* reductions of 3%, and secondly it does not extend beyond next year, well before any bypass could be opened! As a minimum, the target should cover a 20 year period after the opening of the bypass.

Another serious shortcoming of TPO 2 is that it makes no mention of **noise** and, in any case, it restricts consideration of environmental impacts to within 200 metres of the bypass! The fast speeds of traffic on a well-engineered bypass would mean that noise levels would be much higher than that of traffic on the existing road. The findings of the CPRE study are also relevant here, for it states that "traffic on the M65 near Blackburn is audible as a continuous noise from the surrounding high moorlands some miles distant. ….. The wider noise impacts are not considered in the appraisal or the evaluation process, yet noise has a major impact on the character of the countryside."

The impact of the noise of high speed traffic on the valley as a whole does not seem to have been taken into account in the Environment section of the Appraisal Summary Table, where the bypass noise impact is described, inaccurately, as "large beneficial" or "moderate beneficial".

2.2 TPO 4: INCREASING USAGE OF NON-CAR MODES

The detailed wording of TPO 4 is as follows:

- For travel with origin and destination within Newtown, achieve modal shift of 10% from car to non-car forms of transport (cycling, walking and public transport), over 2008 levels by 2015
- For travel with origin or destination within Newtown, achieve modal shift of 2% from car to public transport, over 2008 levels by, 2015

As already discussed above, the construction of a bypass will generate induced traffic and thus encourage more car journeys rather than achieve modal shift. Besides releasing suppressed demand for long distance journeys by road, the road space released by the reduction in through traffic through Newtown will encourage *more* local journeys to be made by car, not less. The bypass option is thus "moderately adverse", rather than "neutral" in relation to TPO 4.

It is noted that TPO 4 restricts modal shift targets to traffic with origin and/or destination in Newtown. The omission of a modal shift target for through traffic appears to be a deliberate subterfuge in order to

avoid confronting the issue of the damaging modal shift that the bypass would induce, as far as long distance journeys are concerned.

It is also noted that, in the case of the target for travel with origin or destination within Newtown, the TPO does not envisage that cycling could play a part, even though commuting by cycling is common for journeys up to 7 or 8 miles. Omitting cycling from this target automatically means that solutions such as a dedicated cycle path from Caersws to Newtown are not considered in the Study at all.

2.3 TPO 5: INTEGRATION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The detailed wording of TPO 5 is as follows:

- Within Newtown limit interchange penalty linking bus services and train services to 20 minutes, by 2015
- Within Newtown, during morning and evening peak hours (0700-0900 and 1600-1800) limit interchange penalty linking bus services to 10 minutes, by 2015

Clearly the bypass does nothing to satisfy these objectives.

2.4 LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

There is no TPO relating to localised environmental impact, however Newtown currently enjoys unspoilt views from a peaceful and unique settings. The elevated placement of the bypass would ensure that its visual and auditory impact would be felt over a considerable area - most of its residential areas in fact. Indeed, it is pointed out that the proposed route is 'all high quality with strong coherence and rural character; the southern scarp slope is exceptional with long views and dramatic topography', and 'introduction of a road would have considerable adverse impact'. This begs the question of whether a road should be considered in landscape of this quality

3. CONCLUSION

Scrutiny of the Stage 1 WelTAG appraisal leads to two principal conclusions. Firstly, that the appraisal did not investigate transport measures within Newtown to the depth required, leading to erroneous conclusions in relation to the meeting of transport planning objectives.

In particular:

- there was no quantitative assessment of the journey time savings arising from dedicated lanes for right-turning traffic, new traffic signals, signal co-ordination and modal-shift
- there was no independent study of how the bus network and service level could be better tailored to the needs of the population
- there was no consideration of a low-cost route avoiding residential areas enabling high vehicles to bypass the low Dolfor Road railway bridge.

The second conclusion is that the bypass fails to satisfy the transport planning objectives relating to environmental targets and modal shift. In particular, it fails to take account of the way shorter journey times release suppressed demand, thus leading to increased traffic overall.

It is much to be regretted that the Newtown Study preceded major transport improvements already in progress[2] or under consideration[3] in and around Newtown. Indeed the study findings must now necessarily be viewed as dated and inaccurate.

Given the burgeoning evidence that building more roads creates more traffic whilst giving limited benefit[4], that 'soft measures' are significantly lower cost whilst being highly beneficial to public health[5], WAGs wider environmental responsibilities and supposed commitment to walking and cycling[6] and the

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[2] Improvements in progress:

- Synchronised traffic lights and the Tesco SCOOT traffic management system. A huge improvement in traffic flow has already occurred as a result of this work
- New signals/removal of the New Bridge roundabout
- Hourly Cambrian line train service
- Abermule - Newtown cycle path
- Vaynor and Trehafren estate cycle path

[3] Improvements under consideration:

- Bus services and Lon Cerddyn - Park Lane bus gate (under review: Council Regeneration and Development Board Sub-committee)
- Newtown - Llanidloes cycle path. (Subject to a PCC study)
- Pedestrian route: railway - town centre
- Newtown Traffic Solutions have compiled a further list of suggestions (too extensive to include here, but available upon request). PCC Transport Policy Office have lauded these as both practical and cost effective.

[4] Atkins meta-study of Highways Agency Post-Opening Project Evaluation reports reports (POPE, 2008) states, "Forecasting of economic benefits is generally not accurate". The report found that time savings, which make up a sizeable proportion of the economic benefits, were generally very small: often just a couple of minutes off a morning commute which might take half an hour or more." Use of public transport generally decreased, due to the increased ease of car journeys and cycling decreased due to faster driving on freed-up smaller roads.

[5] A report published in medical journal *The Lancet* (5.12.09) shows walking and cycling to reduce greenhouse gas emissions also has major health benefits, including reduced cardiovascular disease, depression and dementia. The authors, led by James Woodcock from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, wrote: **"Policy makers should divert investment from roads for motorists towards provision of infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists."**

[6] WAG walking and cycling action plan, 2009 - 2013 states, "Our key objectives here are to: *Improve the health and well being of Wales through increased physical activity; *Improve the local environment for walkers and cyclists; *Encourage sustainable travel to combat climate change; *Increase levels of walking and cycling through promotion of facilities and * Ensure that walking and cycling are prioritised in policies, guidance and funding."

inevitable damage that local trade would suffer, Newtown Traffic Solutions find it surprising that a bypass should even be considered until all other possibilities have been exhausted.

Section 2.2.4 of the WelTAG Guidance states:

The Planning Stage requires practitioners to adopt an objective-led approach. This means that planning starts by identifying problems and opportunities and defining what is to be achieved – the ultimate outcomes expressed as transport planning objectives (TPO's), rather than focusing on the means to achieve the outcomes i.e. the projects, schemes, plans or strategies themselves.

Despite this, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the A483/A489 Newtown Study has started from the premise that the long discussed bypass is the solution to Newtown traffic congestion and then merely sought to justify this outcome. Correct application of the WelTAG Guidance, informed by the Welsh Assembly Government's overarching sustainability objective, would have led to an in-depth assessment from scratch of all the options.

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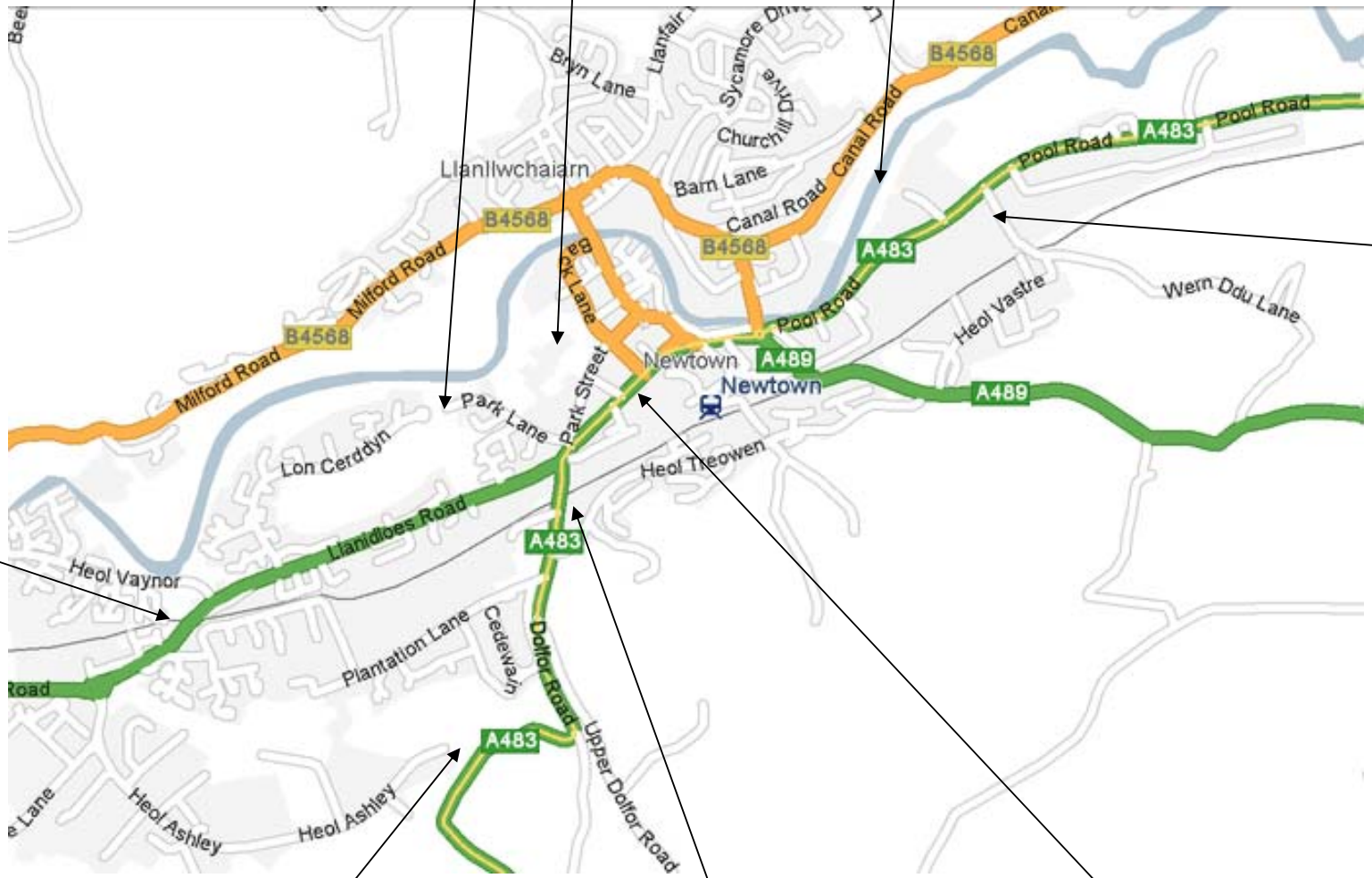
Proposed bus and police gate
Bus station
Proposed pedestrian and cycle bridge
A483 Pool Road to Welshpool
Morrisons
A489 Kerry Road to Craven Arms
Nant Oer railway bridge (4.65m)
A489 Llanidloes Road to Llanidloes
Proposed Heol Ashley Link
A483 Dolfor Road to Llandrindod Wells
Dolfor Road railway Bridge (4.00m)
New Road
Llanllwchaiarn
Barn Lane
Canal Road
Pool Road
Heol Vastre
Wern Ddu Lane
Newtown
Park Lane
Park Street
Lon Cerddyn
Heol Treowen
Llanidloes Road
Heol Vaynor
Plantation Lane
Cedewain
Dolfor Road
Upper Dolfor Road
Heol Ashley
Milford Road
B4568
A483
A489

Response from the Deputy First Minister #1

Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-261
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/00102/10

Val Lloyd AM
Chair of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

29 January 2010

Dear Val

Thank you for your letter of 11 January 2010, on behalf of the Petitions Committee, regarding a petition received in connection with the A483/A489 Newtown Public Consultation.

The petition is currently being considered as part of the consultation process, which ended on the 24 November 2009.

I will be announcing the results of the public consultation exercise later this year .

Yours

Ieuan

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
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Enterprise and Learning Committee
Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Christine Chapman
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

3 February 2010

Dear Chris

PETITION: LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO NEWTOWN TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Thank you for your letter dated 29 January 2010 concerning the above petition.

The Enterprise and Learning Committee did consider Regional Transport Planning during our recent inquiry on the Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales, but in a rail, not road, capacity. The Committee would not normally examine the detail of any individual road scheme, such as the Newtown by-pass.

I understand that the Finance Committee looked at the Trunk Road programme last year, so there may be some merit in asking similar questions of the clerks of that Committee.

Yours sincerely

Gareth Jones AM
Committee Chair

Dr Siân Phipps
Clerc y Pwyllgor / Committee Clerk
Tel: 029 20 898582
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Y Pwyllgor Cyllid
Finance Committee

Christine Chapman AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1NA

National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

1 April 2010

Dear Christine,

Petition: Local Solutions to Newtown Traffic Congestion

Thank you for your letter of 31 March in relation to the above petition which your Committee is considering.

The Finance Committee did recently undertake an inquiry into the funding of the road infrastructure in Wales and considered a large amount of evidence. However, the focus of the inquiry was the allocation of funding for the development of Wales' road infrastructure and it did not look in any detail at individual schemes within the trunk road programme.

The petitioner raises some interesting issues but, I am sorry. I do not think our inquiry can throw any light on them.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Burns
Chair, Finance Committee

Ffon/Tel: 029 2089 8384
Ebost/Email: angela.burns@wales.gov.uk

Letter from Deputy First Minister #2

Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-261
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/00878/10

Christine Chapman AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

26 May 2010

Dear Christine

Thank you for your letter of 31 March regarding the Petition: Local Solutions to Newtown traffic congestion and enclosing a summary of the key questions raised by the petitioner's submission. Enclosed is a response to the questions raised.

The appraisal of options for a bypass of Newtown is nearing completion and I plan to announce my decision for a preferred solution later this year.

Yours Ieuan

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

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DFM/00878/10

Petition: Local Solutions to Newtown Traffic Congestion

The paragraph numbering and references used match those in the petition evidence as far as possible.

General

The principles underlying the work looking at traffic congestion in Newtown are those in the Welsh Assembly Government's appraisal tool – WelTAG (Welsh Transport Planning and Appraisal Guidance). This creates a platform for looking broadly at the issues and potential solutions and a process to sift out those that would not perform well.

At Newtown we started by identifying the issues and defining the objectives. To do this we held a local planning workshop with key stakeholders, including representatives from Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), Powys County Council (PCC), TraCC, TrawsCambria Development and the Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (MWTRA). The group identified the issues and opportunities within the study area and identified seven broad transport planning objectives (TPO).

We then looked at a variety of potential interventions that would deliver against the planning objectives and appraised them against the key Welsh impact areas within WelTAG:

- The economy - reflecting the importance of a strong and developing economy for Wales and particularly European Union Objective 1 and Objective 2 areas;
- The environment - reflecting the legal requirements and desire to protect and enhance the condition of the built and natural environment; and
- Society - reflecting the desire to address issues of social exclusion and to promote social justice and a high quality of life for people in Wales.

Appraisal started with a WelTAG Stage 1 workshop attended by key stakeholders from the planning workshop, plus representatives from the following bodies:

Ambulance Service
British Waterways Board
Cadw
Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
Countryside Council for Wales
Dyfed Powys Police
Environment Agency
Freight Transport Association
Mid Wales Fire Service
Mid Wales Manufacturing Group
National Public Health Service Wales
Network Rail
Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn Community Council
Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
Powys County Council
Road Haulage Association
Sustrans Cymru
Welsh Health Impact Assessment Service

The workshop developed a Stage 1 Appraisal Summary Table (AST) for all twenty-one options, later refined into final Stage 1 ASTs. The team then compared the ASTs for all options and sifted them down to those that performed best and met all seven TPOs. All six options taken forward for WelTAG stage 2 appraisal included local transport measures and three included on-line improvement of the existing A483/A489 trunk road through the study area.

The Deputy First Minister will decide on the final package of measures following the outcome of Public Consultation. Should we take forward a new bypass, we would need to develop the case for this in detail and this would be scrutinised as part of the statutory process. For a scheme of this size, a Public Inquiry would be quite normal, but this would depend upon the level and nature of objections.

Argument A – Insufficient Investigation of Transport Measures

TPO 2: Meeting relevant environmental targets

Question 1 How can Option 6 be assessed as having a neutral effect on TPO 2 given that this option when assessed against TPO 4 indicated a likely modal shift away from car usage within and outside the town?

The key issue is the potential impact of Option 6 on the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). As this option does not take the main traffic out of Newtown there is the potential for impacting on the AQMA which is potentially in breach of national and EU legislation. Even if there is the potential of a modal shift there is a requirement to improve air quality in the AQMA which cannot be guaranteed. Improvement in local air quality would require significant modal shift.

TPO 3: Removing through traffic from local roads

Question 2 Why is raising the Nant Oer bridge not a reasonable option?

Raising Nant Oer Bridge to allow high sided heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) under the railway line would address part of TPO 3 by removing HGVs from Plantation Lane. However, this would not address TPO 2. Providing a link from Dolfor Road to Heol Ashley to allow high-sided HGVs approaching northwards from the A483 to avoid Plantation Lane would address TPO 3, but again would not address TPO 2.

TPO 6: Improve journey time consistency (north-south, east-west)

Question 3: Why was a quantitative assessment not undertaken?

WelTAG does not require quantitative assessment of journey times at Stage 1. This is part of Stage 2, when we have sifted down the options.

Question 4: How was a qualitative assessment of journey time savings possible and a basis for reliable conclusions?

We assessed journey time savings for all options based on engineering judgement and input from stakeholders and comparison with similar completed schemes.

The conclusion drawn was that online improvements combined with modest modal shift from local transport measures would not be sufficient to reduce journey times throughout the town. Many of the online improvements would improve safety, but would not necessarily improve capacity.

Question 5: How did the consultants conclude the effect of option 6 was neutral, when traffic flow measures would generally be expected to achieve benefits?

Because the proposed online improvements would mainly improve road safety and access, not increase capacity.

Linking traffic signals could reduce journey times through the town to some extent, but with the predicted traffic growth, many of the junctions within the town would be significantly over capacity and delays would still occur. Consequently, key stakeholders determined that Option 6 would not meet the requirements for TPO 6

TPO 7: Reduction in accidents

Question 6: Why is it reasonable to contend that accidents within the Newtown settlement boundary limit will reduce because of the by-pass rather than modal shift?

This is mainly because of the quantity of traffic that would transfer from the town centre route onto a safer new road. We would design a by-pass to modern safety requirements detailed in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. It would have fewer junctions, reducing the potential for conflict.

Removing a significant element of traffic travelling through the town would improve the environment for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.

Forecast traffic growth indicates that there will be more traffic on the roads in the future. Greater levels of traffic would result in more accidents. Modal shift is unlikely to reduce a reduction in traffic beyond that of the predicted growth; therefore, without a bypass there would be more accidents in the future.

Removing long-distance traffic from the town would facilitate de-trunking. PCC could then introduce improve safety further by introducing physical measures along the route (e.g. speed limits, gateways/build outs, cycle lanes etc).

OTHER ISSUES

Investigation of soft measures to promote modal shift

Question 7: Was consultation sufficient in this area given that the objectives of local public transport operators do not necessarily coincide with the public interest?

The main issue resulting from the WelTAG Stage 1 workshop was that we should remove through traffic from Newtown and that on-line and local transport measures should be provided to ensure a comprehensive response to the traffic issues in Newtown. We would develop the local transport measures with PCC and TraCC through Key Stage 3 of the highway process.

We contacted local public transport operators as part of the study process together with the regional transport planning body TraCC and PCC to determine any proposed improvements to local transport services in the study area. The public transport operators develop a local plan for their operations based on feasibility studies. Due to low demand, public transport operators deemed that expansions of the services would not be financially viable.

Question 8: Why have sustainable travel options not been considered given that Newtown lends itself so well to sustainable travel options?

The potential for sustainable travel options have been considered

- Encouragement of private companies to adopt travel plans,

- Public transport time tables in offices,
- Staggered school opening times,
- Car clubs and car pools,
- Relocation or reduction of on-street car parking along A483 / A489 and more parking at the railway station
- Consideration of flexible working hours.

All proposed options include local transport measures, which incorporate sustainable travel options. The on-line and local transport measures (Option 6) were assessed as a stand alone option, as were the proposed bypasses. These were deemed not to meet the required TPOs set out for the WelTAG study, therefore a combination of the two has been presented as proposed options for the study.

Realising the Potential of the Cambrian Railway Line

Question 8* (sic)*: Is it not prudent to wait for the introduction of the hourly service and monitor its effect closely before a decision is made in relation to the construction of the by-pass?

The hourly service will come in before the DFM takes the decision whether to proceed with the construction of a bypass. At this stage, it is unrealistic to expect that this will induce sufficient modal shift to reduce car usage on the A483/A489 through Newtown. Also, the hourly passenger service will not address the objective to reduce HGV traffic through the town.

Question 9: Why will a properly incentivised rail freight service not achieve an equivalent reduction in HGV traffic to that of the bypass?

Transfer of freight from road to rail can achieve economic, environmental and social benefits; this is a key objective in the Wales Transport Strategy. To serve freight customers effectively freight trains need to use routes with capacity which provides time-tabled pathways for predictable, consistent and reliable train operation. To achieve this on the Cambrian line would require very significant investment, to allow freight paths to be incorporated within the proposed hourly timetable.

Also, to be effective, terminals to be served by rail freight must:

- Be on the existing network since building of new routes is extremely expensive.
- Have good road access suitable for HGVs. 16.5m articulated lorries would need to serve the railheads safely and with minimal impact on other road users, residents etc.
- Be large enough – today's freight trains are up to and sometimes over 500 metres in length, and safe working areas and storage need sufficient space.
- Be capable of 24 hour operation, often requiring transhipment from train to lorry and vice versa at all hours, with potential disturbance to residents and others.

These issues are capable of resolution but only with very significant investment, as former goods yards at the stations on the line have been lost to car parking and other development

Road transport currently accounts for over 64% of goods moved and upwards of 83% of goods lifted in the UK. The apparent disparity of these figures is accounted for by the average haul length of goods by road being (generally) shorter than other modes. Rail freight in small wagonloads is uneconomic because of the additional handling costs, although there may be scope for improving the cost-effectiveness of this type of operation.

The majority of new rail freight movements will generate additional HGV trips to get goods to their final destination.

Argument B – The Bypass Option does not satisfy some of the TPOs

TPO2: Meeting relevant environmental targets

Question 10: How can substantial reductions be achieved given that any improvement would be limited, since only a third of existing traffic is through traffic, and there is every danger that local traffic would grow to fill the space vacated?

The first part of the TPO 2 relates to all environmental legislation and policies. Besides the TPOs, the WelTAG process appraises the impacts of options against a number of environmental criteria, which are contained within the ASTs to include:

- Noise
- Air quality
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Landscape and townscape
- Biodiversity
- Heritage
- Water environment and
- Soils

In addition to these specific environmental criteria, we also addressed the following WelTAG "social" criteria:

- Transport safety
- Personal security
- Permeability
- Physical fitness
- Social inclusion

The issue of air quality is particularly important and we incorporated it into the TPO because of the AQMA along New Road. A reduction in traffic of 1/3 is a substantial reduction in the context of the extent of the traffic contribution to local air quality issues and the current exceedence of the air quality standards.

A bypass would form part of the Trunk Road network. Consequently, the A483/A489 through Newtown would be de-trunked and responsibility would pass to PCC. With a new strategic route in place, PCC would be more able to impose capacity restraints on the highway network throughout the town to ensure that traffic does not simply grow to fill the space. PCC could implement gateways/build outs, speed restrictions and reallocate road space.

Similarly, although only about one third of the traffic in Newtown is through traffic, the bypass would also carry some local traffic, for example via Dolfor Road (A483) and Kerry Road (A489) junctions. Through traffic does not have either an origin or destination in Newtown. Whilst many of the internal trips would continue to use the existing highway network, detailed modelling indicates that many inbound and outbound trips would make use of the bypass, reducing traffic within the town centre.

Question 11: Will the trunk road itself not simply generate extra traffic?

Because of the rural nature of Newtown and the local nature of the proposed bypass, it is unlikely to attract much new long-distance traffic.

Question 12: How can the assessment of the bypass option as being moderately beneficial in relation to TPO 2 be adequate given that the greenhouse gas emission reduction target is a fraction of UK targets, no mention is made of noise pollution, and consideration of environmental impacts is limited to within 200 metres of the bypass (the petitioners suggest trunk road noise pollution has much wider effect)?

The key issue in terms of air quality is to improve local air quality and the reduce impact on AQMA. The changes in greenhouse gas emissions with the bypass elements are not significant on the regional scale, whatever metric is considered i.e. total emissions or the required reductions to hit targets etc.

We carried out the assessments according with WelTAG. This refers to detailed assessment methodology in Transport Appraisal Guidance (WebTAG) and the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB).

Assessments on environmental impact include:

- 300m for noise and vibration;
- 200m for air quality as any impacts at 200m from a road is negligible
- 500m for cultural heritage and the wider context is reviewed
- Generally 250m for specific ecological surveys but these are species dependant (in accordance with DMRB guidance and good practice) although the wider context and records are reviewed
- The area of Landscape Effects assessment relates to the visual envelope or limit of visibility
- The proposed scheme corridor affected for Land Use/Agriculture
- The water environment: the assessment area is dependant upon the location and is undertaken in accordance with DMRB
- Geology and soils, reviewing the context of the area in respect of the corridors

TPO 4: Increasing usage of non-car modes

Question 13: Why does TPO 4 restrict modal shift targets to traffic with origin and/or destination in Newtown and ignore through traffic?

Consultation with local stakeholders identified the primary problem was with local traffic, rather than inter-urban travel. Therefore, we targeted this for modal shift targets. Long distance public transport through Newtown is limited and consultation with operators indicated no distinct plans to improve services.

Question 14: Why does the modal shift target of a 2% reduction for car journeys either with an origin or a destination of Newtown ignore cycling?

When considering overall modal split the likely number of long distance trips undertaken by cycling would result in minimal impact on the overall modal split.

The Montgomery Canal cycle path offers direct access from Newtown to Welshpool and spans over 9 miles, however this route only offers northbound travel by cycling from Newtown.

TPO 5: Integration of Public Transport

The petitioners argue the bypass clearly does nothing to satisfy TPO 5 objectives:

We identified this during phase 1 of the study. Options 1, 2a, 2b and 2c were all purely bypass options and we discarded them.

Local Environment

Question 15: Why is there no TPO relating to the localised environmental impact?

The response to Question 10 identifies that TPOs are not the only factors in the appraisal.

Lettter from DFM

Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-261
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/01436/10

Christine Chapman AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

13 July 2010

Dear Christine

Thank you for your letter of 21 June in response to my letter of 26 May about the Petition: Local Solutions to Newtown traffic congestion.

The appraisal of options for Newtown has now been completed. I am unable to give you a more specific date but I hope to be in a position to make an announcement towards the end of the summer period. I will however write to you again once I have made a decision.

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

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Response from petitioner

Newtown Traffic Solutions Group
Your ref. DFM/00878/10

28th January 2011.

To: Chair of Petitions Committee. National Assembly for Wales.

Newtown Traffic Solutions Group thank the Deputy First Minister for his response (ref. DFM/00878/10) to our evidence in support of petition P-03-261. Using the question numbers in his response for reference, we seek further clarification as follows:

Question 1
'The key issue is the potential impact of Option 6 on the AQMA'. Air quality is clearly considered significant in the bypass issue. We would appreciate the opportunity to view the basis data.
One of our members residing near New Road reports that the prevailing westerly is generally effective in clearing the air here and we contend that our proposals (traffic control synchronisation, modal shift, rail freight, etc.) would be effective in dealing with any residual air quality issue.
Additionally, whilst we appreciate WAG's concern with meeting EU air quality legislation, the group believe that WAG are missing a vital health issue here. Overweight and obesity is Wales' fastest growing health problem. The Minister's reply to question 8 notes the possibility of relocating New Road parking - this would provide a fine opportunity for a cycle highway, such as the Barclays cycle superhighways scheme now proving so effective in London. Given the increasing levels of cycling being seen in Newtown there can be no doubt that this would prove a popular, fast and healthy transport option through the town centre and fits well with the Minister's ambition to 'Promote ... a high quality of life for people in Wales'.

Question 2
The Minister seems to acknowledge our suggestions here for addressing TPO3 as viable and effective in dealing with HGVs, but says they fail to address TPO2. Can we therefore reasonably assume that the Minister accepts a low cost alternative to a bypass (in conjunction with other measures) is possible, provided the air quality issue can be otherwise addressed?

Question 4
'Engineering judgement and input from stakeholders and comparison with similar completed schemes'. This seems a subjective and unconvincing basis for taking major policy decisions.

Question 5
'How did the consultants conclude the effect of option 6 was neutral, when traffic flow measures ... '. Our point here was that dedicated lanes for traffic turning right (included in Option 6) would obviously improve capacity, as would traffic signal synchronisation, modal shift, etc.
WAG have committed to 40% carbon reductions by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, and 3% fall year on year from 2011 in devolved areas of administration. How does the Minister reconcile this with his expectation here of 'predicted traffic growth' and can he demonstrate that their modelling is consistent with CO_2 emissions from transport falling by 3% year on year? Which areas of Wales are expected to see greater than 3% falls year on year to compensate for the inevitable rise in emissions in the wake of a Newtown bypass? What action do WAG intend to take if the CO_2 emissions from transport in 2012 are not 3% less than the CO_2 emissions in 2011? Which minister is responsible for upholding this commitment?

Question 6
The Minister's statement that *'without a bypass there would be more accidents in the future'* is profoundly at odds with all the evidence. The Parsons Brinckerhoff Newtown exhibition showed that no fatal road accidents had occurred within the Newtown boundary, whereas it is well documented that most UK road deaths occur on fast roads. There is no reason to doubt that a Newtown bypass would be no exception. Further, it has been shown that freeing up back roads actually results in faster and poorer driving – with Cycling, horse-riding becoming more dangerous and falling as a consequence.

Please can the Minister also address our concerns regarding funding. Online improvements listed as part of a bypass 'package' would have to be funded by PCC and it has been suggested to us by officers within PCC that they have neither the funding nor the will to fund such improvements. This also casts doubt on the Minister's suggestion here that de-trunking would allow PCC to put additional 'physical measures along the route'. Additionally, the downgrading of New Road from trunk road status would place further burden upon PCC for its lighting and maintenance.
Which 'capacity restraints' does the Minister propose PCC impose 'to ensure that traffic does not simply grow to fill the space'?

Question 7
The Minister's reply suggests that WAG were not trying to find out if improved bus services could obviate the need for the bypass. The potential benefits of increased bus frequency, for instance, were ignored.

Question 8
Our comments here focused on the need to promote cycling and walking. The 'sustainable travel options' listed does not cover these. Our question here has not been answered.

Question 9
It is true that freight and passenger train services could not interleave. However, the line is unused by a passenger service between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth after midnight, leaving plenty of night freight capacity. The '*disturbance to residents'* would be considerably offset by the reduction in road freight.

Question 11
Any suggestion that the bypass will not attract new traffic is implausible: it will encourage long distance commuting and modal shift away from rail use. Does the First Minister not acknowledge the findings of the Atkins meta-study of POPE reports[i] that not only do all road building projects lead to an increase in road usage, but that the economic benefits are dubious?

Question 12
The Minister refers to a 300 metre boundary for noise impact assessment, but the proposed bypass route passes within 300m of the majority of houses on the Garth Owen estate, plus a significant number of those on Treowen estate. How did the minister come to find this acceptable?
The visual envelope of a bypass would be huge – and indeed the noise impact extended - since in places where it could be in a valley (e.g. the Brimmon Lane crossing) it will be embanked because of the huge earth disposal requirements of other areas (e.g. Dolfor Rd. crossing). Does the Minister agree that the visual impact on the greater Newtown area will be significantly more than that seen at the adjacent bypass sites of Llanidloes and Welshpool?
We know of families being caused considerable distress by the imminence of a major construction project near their homes. Please can you inform us of when and if a public enquiry is likely to take place?

Question 13
The Minister's response is incorrect. Long distance transport through Newtown *is* set to improve with the hourly service on the Cambrian line. Does the Minister therefore accept that TPO4 should accommodate through traffic within its modal shift targets?

Question 14
The question did not refer to 'long distance trips'. Please can the Minister reconsider the question with reference to commuting trips.

Finally we urge the Minister to read the recent government white paper "Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon - Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen"[ii], we hope it will provide useful inspiration.

Newtown Traffic Solutions Group.

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[i] Atkins meta-study of Highways Agency Post-Opening Project Evaluation reports (POPE, 2008) states, "Forecasting of economic benefits is generally not accurate". The report found that time savings, which make up a sizeable proportion of the economic benefits, were generally very small: often just a couple of minutes off a morning commute which might take half an hour or more." Use of public transport generally decreased, due to the increased ease of car journeys and cycling decreased due to faster driving on freed-up smaller roads.

[ii] http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/sustainabletransport/pdf/whitepaper.pdf

Response from the Deputy First Minister

Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-261
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/00370/11

Christine Chapman AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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14 March 2011

Dear Christine

Thank you for your letter of 10 February about traffic congestion in Newtown.

On Wednesday 13 October, I announced new plans to ease transport congestion in Newtown. Following extensive public consultation preparatory work will now commence on the preferred Orange Option – a southern bypass of the town south of Mochdre Industrial Estate and passing beneath the main Cambrian railway line east of Dyffryn Industrial Estate. In addition to the bypass, and to tackle further traffic congestion in the town, a package of improvements to local transport will be undertaken.

Construction of the 'Preferred Route' is programmed to start in late 2014/early 2015 with an anticipated two year construction period. However, this is subject to the Welsh Assembly Government obtaining statutory consent to do so. This means, we will need to publish draft Orders and an Environmental Statement setting out the justification for the Scheme, identifying the land requirements, and assessing the impacts, which we would then mitigate wherever possible. This is likely to involve a Public Local Inquiry in 2013 and those affected will be able to support, object or comment on the proposals before an Independent Inspector.

Yours

Ieuan

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

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