

Adran yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Department for Economy, Science and Transport
Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol • Director General



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Darren Millar AM
Chair
Public Accounts Committee

28 April 2015

Dear Mr Millar

Further to the recent evidence session for the Public Accounts Committee's inquiry into Value for Money of Motorway and Trunk Road Investment, please find attached additional information.

The information provided covers the following:

- explore the suggestion that there are inaccuracies in information provided on the A55 on the Traffic Wales website;
- provide a note on numbers of road works in NMWTRA, including overnight works and the time involved in scheme delivery;
- provide a note on the number of complaints around road works, including the percentage of road works which are subject to complaints, and introduce more formal and regular reporting;
- confirm when preparation of the new Street Works Strategy began and the reasons why it has taken four years to develop; and
- investigate the recent difficulties resulting from road works in North East Wales and how this relates to cross border co-operation with English Highway Authorities, including the Highways Agency / Highways England.

Yours sincerely

James Price

Explore the suggestion that there are inaccuracies in information provided on the A55 on the Traffic Wales website

There are generally very few such inaccuracies. We would estimate less than 1% of the interventions we carry out have been subject to inaccurate information.

We had a specific issue with the 12 month long A55 Resilience works. Those works were of necessity very dynamic, moving to various sections of the A55 sometimes several times per week and with some works overnight only and some 24/7. The dynamic programming was required to drive down the overall duration of a very challenging project in terms of deliverability and to minimise traffic disruption.

To reflect that dynamic approach in roadside sign messages was very difficult because of the complexity of the messages and early in the scheme we simply tried to convey too much information and this caused some confusion. As such we simplified the number of messages e.g. on a given section if we were working on one site 24/7 and on another night time only we simply informed drivers of the 24/7 works (which would cause some disruption) and did not inform of the overnight works (no disruption).

It is interesting to note that Highways England has just made the following statement:

“From 8 December 2014 Highways England is trialling a change to the publication of both planned and current road works information. These changes are being introduced to improve the accuracy and reliability of the information. There are three key changes:

- 1. Information on road works will be limited to works that have the greatest impact on journeys for example; full carriageway closures, single lane running and long duration works. Long duration works are typically road works in place for longer than six weeks with three narrow lanes and a mandatory 50mph speed limit.*
- 2. Seven days advance notification of road works will only be provided for long duration works.*
- 3. With the exception of long duration works, information on road works will only be published after Highways England receives confirmation that work has actually commenced.*

We are continually looking to improve our information services. This trial is the first step in our change programme to improve the quality of information on road works.”

As an example of the general information we put out on Traffic Wales web-site, please see Annex 1, for the recent major scheme at Pen y Clip tunnel. These messages are updated in the event of any change, particularly to programme. For the above scheme there was no change as the scheme was successfully completed on time. For the A55 Resilience scheme we gave an initial detail on the proposed phases and then weekly updates to a) report successful completion of the previous week's programme and b) to inform of the coming week's exact programme and works locations.

Generally, information is also given to the media, live on Radio, e.g. Radio Wales, via text, Traffic Wales Apps, a telephone information line and a twitter feed. The Minister for Economy, Science and Transport also introduced a dedicated telephone line for Assembly Members in early 2015.

What could Welsh Government do to improve things?

For static schemes such as the tunnel closures it is very easy to get the information right. All public and media queries can then be directed to the Traffic Wales website where scheme details are available. For more complicated schemes such as the A55 Resilience scheme lessons learned processes are the norm. We have identified the issue of the complicated nature of the messages we deployed and in future we will keep information on works locations, timings and likely delays very simple.

Provide a note on numbers of roadworks in NMWTRA, including overnight works and the time involved in scheme delivery

In the time available and in its evidence NMWTRA gave the Committee details of road works for 2013/14 for the primary route, the A55/A494. These figures are:

- Total number of overnight(18.00 -07.00) work sites = 243
- Total number of daytime (off peak 09.00 -16.00) work sites 63

As an indication of the works for the whole of the NMWTRA area we have taken the week commencing 27th April 2015 as an example. This week is a typical week where we have no traffic management embargos, are in the midst of our cyclic maintenance programme and have what we would consider to be a 'normal' amount of collision repair and statutory undertaker works on the network. An example of the weekly road works is contained in Annex 2. To give the committee some idea of the works undertaken in the week shown in Annex 2, the road works are as follows:

- Upgrade scheme: 1
- Statutory Undertakers Works: 13
- Maintenance Works: 23
- 20mph Outside Schools: 5
- Abnormal Load Movement: 1
- Collision Damage Repair (Urgent): 4
- Road User Safety: 3
- Survey: 2

The committee has requested further information on the time involved in scheme delivery. Each planned scheme on the network requires an amount of road space to be booked for the scheme duration. As examples, the A55 resilience works and the Pen-y-Clip tunnels scheme durations were set at the outset and the schemes were delivered on time and within those durations. Much effort is expended by Welsh Government officials and Trunk Road Agent staff to ensure challenging programmes are set for contractors and that they meet those challenges.

What could Welsh Government do to improve things?

We will continue to do what we have been doing over the last couple of years and that is to continue to drive efficiency, working off-peak hours, using the best possible resource to continue to deliver challenging programmes of work. The last financial year's programme of works on the A55 was the biggest delivery challenge we have faced for many years. There was indeed disruption but we attempted to minimise that and although we could have run the works through to July this year we completed all major works before Easter and the beginning of the tourist season. Thus as traffic levels rise between Easter and the summer we have no planned daytime works on the A55.

Provide a note on the number of complaints around roadworks, including the percentage of roadworks which are subject to complaints, and introduce more formal and regular reporting

We have investigated correspondence to the Department for the whole of the NMWTRA area for the calendar year 2014. During that year we carried out much of the A55 Resilience scheme, closures of several weeks at the A55 tunnels for upgrade works and significant emergency works to deal with a collapsed culvert on the A483 just north of Newtown. We also had a privately owned wall collapse immediately adjacent the A40 in the centre of Crickhowell –this required 24/7 traffic signals for several weeks whilst we dealt with the owner.

A review of 488 pieces of correspondence sent in direct to the Minister or forwarded on from the NMWTRA shows that 26 complained about roadworks, 50% of those about the A55 Resilience scheme, 4 about the collapsed culvert at Newtown and 6 about the wall in Crickhowell. Therefore, the complaints are approximately 5% of all correspondence received in that period. Interestingly, there were also 224 pieces of correspondence requesting interventions that would have required roadworks on the network to carry out the request.

Complaints about roadworks tend to be about the major or longer term schemes. Of all the interventions carried out on the network last year there were complaints on less than 10 of them, and that number of complaints, whilst still of concern, is not large.

What could Welsh Government do to improve things?

Welsh Government is constantly looking to both minimise the need for and time taken when we intervene on the network. We also continuously look for ways to improve our communications with the road user, this will continue.

Confirm when preparation of the new Street Works Strategy began and the reasons why it has taken four years to develop

The preparation of a new Street Works Strategy for Wales began in 2012 and has taken approximately 2¹/₂ years to develop into its current draft form.

Preliminary work in this area was initiated by the Wales Audit Office's report on Major Transport Projects in 2011. This recommended (recommendation 5) that that the then Welsh Assembly Government engage "with local government and the utility companies to develop some clearly agreed principles in terms of how they should work together throughout the lifecycle of major transport projects".

In its response dated 23 March 2011 the Welsh Assembly Government accepted the need to work more closely with other parties such as utilities and discuss with them a protocol for communication and development of Memorandums of Understanding.

Work commenced in 2011 with meetings with the Welsh Highway Authorities and Utilities Committees (WHAUC). However, it became apparent that rather than focussing solely on addressing the impact of Street Works on major projects there was benefit in adopting a more holistic approach. A comprehensive strategy has therefore been developed rather than individual protocols, in order to achieve wider objectives such as reduced congestion and improved journey time reliability.

Pending the outcome of a formal consultation process the Strategy will be published in 2015.

What could Welsh Government do to improve things?

Potentially, investigate the possibility to introduce some performance measures, e.g. the percentage of network availability at different time periods and traffic flows.

Investigate the recent difficulties resulting from road works in North East Wales and how this relates to cross border co-operation with English Highway Authorities, including the Highways Agency / Highways England

The table in Annex 3 details all the co-ordination that took place for the cross border A55 Posthouse schemes since February 2014. Even though the planning was in place the impact to the road user is always monitored and WG deferred some significant drainage maintenance works on the A483 because of the Highway Agency's scheme. Even though Welsh Government works were several miles away, the delays to the road user were too severe and works were postponed.

In terms of the A55, there were issues caused by the cumulative impact of the works on both sides of the border. These issues, however, were not ignored and processes were put in place to minimise the impacts wherever possible. At the committee we discussed the option of postponing the work for later in the year and the fact that this was discounted due to higher forecast traffic flows in the spring and summer months.

The work on the English side of the border had been booked in for an earlier period and then was not delivered to schedule which led to the two projects over lapping. This is a fairly unusual occurrence but one that we should learn lessons from.

Annex 1

As an example of the general information we put out on Traffic Wales during schemes, see below for the message available on the website for the very recent major scheme at Pen y Clip tunnel:

What?

The Pen y Clip tunnel lighting works forms part of the A55 tunnel refurbishment programme. The proposals are to complete, amongst other things, the works for the Pen y Clip tunnel which will include new fire resilient electrical cabling and completion of the new LED lighting system.

Why?

To improve the overall level of safety and resilience of the Pen y Clip tunnel in accordance with EU legislation, the UK road tunnel safety regulations and current tunnels standards.

When?

The works will be undertaken within a six week 24/7 closure commencing on 14 February 2015. The works have been planned during the winter months when traffic flows are much lower than in summertime. Contractors will be working throughout the day and night for the entire closure period to ensure overall disruption to the travelling public and local residents is kept to a minimum.

Consideration for disruption during the day has been fully explored. The safety of the travelling public and site workforce were the driving force to determine the safest implementation method for the Pen y Clip tunnel improvement works. It was concluded that the risk on traffic management operatives and members of the public to close and re-open the tunnel each night for up to 12 weeks was not acceptable.

How?

There will be up to six weeks of 24/7 closures of the Pen y Clip tunnel to accommodate the improvement works. Traffic will run in contraflow via the Pen y Clip Headland. Throughout the works J15a at Bangor Road will be closed and access to the A55 for Penmaenmawr residents will be via J16 at Puffin roundabout.

Features

Lighting works:

Completion of the lighting system that includes:

- The installation of a substantial number of LED luminaires at high level along the centre line of the tunnel
- Over 1km of steelwork to be fixed to the ceiling of the tunnel to support the LED luminaires
- Installation of cabling associated with the lighting system
- Lighting controllers, photometers, LED drivers and associated interfaces

The lighting system has been designed to have minimal maintenance which may subsequently minimise the requirement for future tunnel closures. All in-tunnel equipment associated with the lighting will have a minimum design life of 25 years.

Incident Detection:

A number of cameras are to be installed throughout the tunnel that will be used by the video incident detection system to improve safety. Furthermore, a heat detection system will also be installed to provide additional improvements. The incident detection system will warn the control room operators of stopped vehicles, pedestrians and smoke/fire.

Resilience for the Existing Control System:

Communications cabling and associated network equipment will provide improvements to the tunnel network communications system that safety critical tunnel systems are reliant upon.

Benefits

The successful completion of this phase of works will ensure that the tunnel is compliant to both the EU Directive and the UK road tunnel safety regulations.

The installation of new tunnel lighting systems will have the following benefits:

- Fully compliant lighting installation for 70mph traffic
- Lower power usage per luminaire as a result of LED technology being utilised
- Reduced carbon footprint for the tunnel
- Lighting that is suitable for all operational regimes
- Reduced maintenance burden and costs - better future spares availability

Incident detection benefits are:

- Improved detection of incidents within the tunnel, allowing incidents to be managed more quickly and effectively improving driver safety
- Reduce the negative social, economic and environmental impacts of traffic incidents in the tunnel
- Improve the reliability and resilience of the A55 tunnel incident detection system.

Resilience of the existing control system:

- New fibre communication network will ensure that a new more resilient communications network is available and can be utilised by both existing and new safety critical tunnel assets.

Wide Loads

With a number of wide/abnormal loads expected to travel along the A55 in February/March 2015, consultation with the Road Hauliers Association and North Wales Police will ensure that relevant parties are fully informed of the works. Additional provisions will be put into place for wide abnormal loads to ensure that the numbers travelling via the A470 and A5 are kept to a minimum. Wide loads will thus be escorted round the Pen y Clip Headland whilst general traffic is held for a short period.

Public Transport

A shuttle bus will be provided for affected westbound services that will ensure disruption to passengers is kept to a minimum. Further information will be provided in due course.

Why use Average Speed Enforcement?

To ensure the safety of the workforce, average speed enforcement will be used. The maximum speed limit during the works will be 40mph. The Welsh Government encourages all motorists to travel safely and responsibly through the site and obey the speed limit.

Emergency Services

Planning for the works will include consultation with the emergency services.

Vehicle Recovery

During the works, free recovery of vehicles will be provided to ensure disruption is kept to a minimum.

Further Detail

Updates on the works programme will be displayed on this website or call 0300 123 1213 for further information.

Annex 2

As an indication of the works for the whole of the NMWTRA area we have taken the week commencing 27 April 2015 as an example. This week is a typical week where we have no traffic management embargos, are in the midst of our cyclic maintenance programme and have what we would consider to be a 'normal' amount of collision repair and statutory undertaker works on the network. An example of the weekly road works is contained in the table below:

A55/A494 from Holyhead to the English borders at Broughton and Deeside:

Overnight	Daytime off-peak	Daytime	24/7	Road closure
5	1	0	0	0

A5 from Holyhead to the English border at Chirk:

Overnight	Daytime off-peak	Daytime	24/7	Road closure
0	0	3	3	0

A44 from Aberystwyth to Llangurig:

Overnight	Daytime off-peak	Daytime	24/7	Road closure
0	0	4	1	1

A458 from Mallwyd to Welshpool:

Overnight	Daytime off-peak	Daytime	24/7	Road closure
0	0	1	2	0

A470 from Glan Conwy Corner to Nant Ddu:

Overnight	Daytime off-peak	Daytime	24/7	Road closure
0	0	3	5	0

Welsh sections of A483 between Rossett and Llandoverly:

Overnight	Daytime off-peak	Daytime	24/7	Road closure
0	0	0	2	0

A487 from Menai Bridge and Cardigan:

Overnight	Daytime off-peak	Daytime	24/7	Road closure
0	0	4	7	1

A494 from Ewloe to Dolgellau:

Overnight	Daytime off-peak	Daytime	24/7	Road closure
2	4	0	3	0

ANNEX 3

Date	Purpose of meeting / action	Attendees	Comments
6 February 2014	First contact meeting with NMWTRA and HA/BBMMJV	Route Manager	Held in St Asaph to discuss TTRO
20 February 2014	NMWTRA TTRO	Route Manager	
1 May 2014	Design liaison	NMWTRA / WG / HA / BBMMJV	
20 August 2014	Mobile CCTV	Route Manager	WG agreed to fund and install mobile CCTV
1 September 2014	Advanced signs	Route Manager	Advanced signs erected in A483 lay-bys with Wales
2 September	Design liaison	Route Manager	
12 September 2014	HA information email update		Start of public liaison
17 October 2014	Progress meeting on site	Route Manager	
21 November	Progress meeting on site	Route Manager	
11 December 2014	Public Event	Route Manager	Drop in session at Post House hotel
26 January 2015		Route Manager Assistant Route Manager	This meeting was called by West Cheshire CC
4 March 2015	HA/BBMMJV Progress meeting	Route Manager	
26 March 2015	HA/BBMMJV Progress meeting	Route Manager	
16 April 2015	HA/BBMMJV Progress meeting		Meeting cancelled by BBMM

Operational Interactions

9 meeting/public events all attended by NMWTRA

WG / NMWTRA Installation of a mobile CCTV camera on the A483 Broadoak overbridge north of Junction 7 to assist with traffic information

NMWTRA Site Audit of TM within Wales – 10 times

NMWTRA Use of HA road closure to carry out road defects

Planning events:

Works cancelled on A483 J6-J5-J4 filter drainage work because of the impact the HA's works were having on the A483 in Wales.