



Campaign Against the Levels Motorway

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APRIL 2019 NEWSLETTER

Decision on new M4 imminent!

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, has said he'll make an announcement to the Senedd in the next two weeks.

What can you do now?

We all need to be contacting the First Minister, and other members of his Cabinet, to call for #NoNewM4. Make it clear that the alternatives – affordable, integrated public transport and better active travel – will work so much better for us all. Click on this link to find out how to contact them: <https://gov.wales/writing-ministers>

For all of us who live in Wales it is crucial you contact your AMs – don't just contact your Constituency AM, but remember you are represented just as much by each of your four regional list AMs. The www.writetothem.com website enables you to find their details and compose your own email. However, to make it easy, Friends of the Earth Cymru have an excellent e-action which lets you contact all your AMs to raise all the key issues at stake. To use this e-action, click [here](#).

Did you know that a new M4 would run through four ancient woodlands? It's not just precious wildlife-rich SSSI wetlands which are threatened. Woodland Trust Cymru have also created an e-action so everyone in Wales can contact all their AMs to raise this further crucial issue as well. To do this, click [here](#).

If you are on twitter, why not tweet to the First Minister at [@fmwales](https://twitter.com/fmwales)? Wherever you are, The Wildlife Trusts have organised an e-action so you can write to the First Minister about the threat to the Gwent Levels – as important to wildlife in Wales as the Amazon rainforest is to the world. Nearly 7,000 people have done so already – join them by clicking [here](#).

CALM's last six months

Recent months have seen major progress for our campaign. Last autumn saw the signatories more than double on our 38 Degrees petition against the new M4 and we formally submitted it to the Assembly with more than 12,000 names on it. Since then the numbers have grown further to over 20,000 – a record for a petition in Wales. You can still sign [here](#). And please ask your family and friends to do so!

After a busy autumn in which we briefed MPs and AMs for several debates on the proposals, there was dramatic news in December. First, Mark Drakeford was elected as First Minister after an election campaign in which his scepticism about the bypass was very clear. Then the outgoing First Minister, Carwyn Jones, announced on 7th December that he had passed on the decision about the bypass for Mark to take in the New Year. Since then there has been further delay, including a month's 'purdah' resulting from the Newport by-election.

CALM rally in Cardiff Bay

We held a successful and very well-attended rally on the Senedd steps on 4th December. There were stirring speeches against the bypass from politicians including Plaid Cymru leader Adam Price, Labour AM Lee Waters, the Green Party's Amelia Womack, and representatives of CALM, Friends of the Earth Cymru, Gwent Wildlife Trust, RSPB Cymru and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales.



Newport West by-election

The by-election for the seat of Newport West MP at Westminster saw CALM issue a briefing for all candidates which included our "Super 7" reasons to reject the Black Route:

- 1. It will cost too much.**
- 2. It won't solve congestion or other transport & economic issues in South Wales.**
- 3. It will cause irrevocable damage to the wildlife & landscape in a unique protected area, the Gwent Levels.**
- 4. It contradicts Welsh and UK Government policies to reduce carbon emissions and fight climate change.**
- 5. It breaches The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.**
- 6. It ignores the alternatives to improve transport and access for all.**
- 7. It is opposed by two statutory bodies, Natural Resources Wales and the Future Generations Commissioner.**

For further details of our Newport West by-election briefing [see here](#).

Several Newport West by-election candidates made their opposition to the bypass crystal

clear. It was interesting that each candidate who opposed the Black Route saw their party's percentage of the vote increase in comparison to their 2017 vote share in the constituency, whilst supporters saw their vote shrink!

CALM writes to Mark Drakeford

Our joint chairs, Catherine Linstrum and Rob Hepworth, wrote to First Minister Mark Drakeford last month to sum up the case against the M4 bypass. The letter can be seen [here](#) and attracted media coverage, especially in the [South Wales Argus](#).

The joint letter stated *"We hope that your vision for a Wales fit for future generations will continue to persuade you that the Black Route is not the way forward."* As well as irreparably damaging the Gwent Levels, *"the Black Route would generate huge additional carbon emissions over the next two decades which is completely incompatible with the crisis we now face both in Wales and the entire world in curbing climate change."* The CALM Chairs added that *"the climate change crisis is immediate, as our younger citizens have rightly been pointing out in their climate strikes and demonstrations."* The letter called for *"a full Metro public transport system and new infrastructure for cyclists and walkers which will be cheaper, greener, healthier and fairer to the whole population and our entire environment in South Wales"* in line with the repeated advice of Sophie Howe, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

The joint letter enclosed an updated, detailed and evidence-based statement, available [here](#). We believe that this objective case against a new M4 makes it abundantly clear that:

- **The final decision needs to be made after proper examination of all the evidence (including recent reports from the Future Generations Commissioner) and in accordance with legislation.**
- **This is the largest single infrastructure investment in Wales since devolution. A truly sustainable solution must be chosen.**
- **Politically, the M4 decision is a devolved issue on which the Welsh Assembly has the final word. The decision does not belong to Westminster politicians.**
- **The M4 is a 'bypass to a bypass'. When people need a second bypass operation for their heart, they would be wise to examine their lifestyle. Exactly the same applies to transport policy in Wales. CALM believes we need healthier, fairer and climate-friendly transport options in Wales.**

Legal action if required

Over the last six months, work with lawyers has continued behind the scenes to be ready for a formal legal challenge (Judicial Review) if the Welsh Government decides to construct the bypass despite all the contrary advice they have received from statutory bodies as well as campaigners. Given the Wellbeing of Future Generations and Environment Acts for Wales, as well as pre-devolution legislation still in force, CALM has no doubt that a powerful legal action can be mounted. However, we would much prefer a rational policy decision by Mark Drakeford and the Cabinet to stop the bypass once and for all, investing in the sustainable integrated transport & active travel alternatives, **now!** Gwent Wildlife Trust have been leading the legal preparations, but all the key CALM bodies and experts are involved in a joint effort to support the legal team, with the case being ready to go at a moment's notice.

Media attention

In November 2018, CALM's two Robs (Waller and Hepworth) featured in a two page *Guardian / Observer* article titled *Rich soup of life in Gwent wetlands at risk from Motorway*. You can read this article [here](#)



Campaigners Rob Waller and Rob Hepworth at Magor Marsh. Photograph: Gareth Phillips for the Guardian

The two Robs then did a *BBC Farming Today* radio interview in January. December saw CALM co-chair Catherine Linstrum doing a special *BBC Wales* live programme on the first toll-free day on the Severn Crossings, whilst in February Catherine was back on *BBC Radio* with *Good Morning Wales* – listen at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0002m12>.

Next CALM meeting

The next organising meeting of the campaign is on Wednesday 8th May, 6.30pm, Newport Civic Centre. If you're on the meeting mailing list, you'll have already had a notice of the meeting – the agenda will follow soon. If not, email us so we can send you the agenda. Let's have a good attendance please!

Twitter poll

When the Welsh media has asked the public “Do you want a new M4?” – without highlighting the implications of this road-building project – most have chosen the road. In response, we ran a twitter poll just before Easter which put the true choice on the table.

We asked: “Do you want a £2bn bypass: unlikely to help congestion & our economy; certain to increase CO₂ emissions & wreck the Gwent Levels? Or integrated, affordable public transport, active travel and traffic management in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations legislation?”

Faced with this informed choice, 92% of the 2,774 twitter voters chose affordable travel for all rather than a traffic-generating new M4.

Making Newport a cycling city

Newport East AM, John Griffiths, is holding the first meeting of Newport Cycling Group at Horton’s Coffee House, Newport at 10am on Saturday 25th May. The group will be pushing for improved cycle routes across the city and seeking full implementation of the Active Travel Act. If you are interested in coming along, please email john.griffiths@assembly.wales

How can you get more involved?

Please contact us on social media or email savethewentlevels@gmail.com to offer your help. If you’ve not had this newsletter emailed directly to you, then you are not on our mailing list. We’d love to add you – get in touch!

Social media

Facebook and twitter are great places for you to say why you are against a new M4. Click on <https://tinyurl.com/NoNewM4fb> to find us on facebook. We are @CalmCampaign on twitter.

Do you look at the news online?

Stories about the M4 always get a lot of attention. If you look at Welsh news websites, why not use the online comment sections to give your views on M4 stories? So many drivers don’t understand that more roads generate more congestion, whilst if they are stuck in a traffic jam, their vehicles are part of the problem. See what they are posting in response. Encourage them to start calling for affordable, frequent public transport for everyone.

New roads create induced traffic. This means that every traffic bottleneck in South Wales – be that the Brynglas Tunnels, the A48 into Cardiff or that busy junction in your town – is a sign that we need more public transport **not more roads**. Many people don’t or can’t drive, so it is only public transport that can meet everyone’s travel needs. A new M4 will make congestion worse.

Some of the wildlife at threat:



Kingfisher © Tony Wood



Musk Beetle © www.pse-mendelejew.de



Water Vole © Peter Timmings



Otter © Ken Billington

© CALM, April 2019. With thanks to everyone who is doing so much to ensure a better future for the Gwent Levels, local people & wildlife, Wales & the world.