

24th February 2023

WELSH GOVERNMENT ROADS REVIEW

Purpose

- 1 To report and enable discussion on the Roads Review commissioned by Welsh Government and its recently published response to the review.

Background

- 2 Welsh Government decided in June 2021 to undertake a review to inform its decisions on the funding of new road schemes. It established a panel to undertake the review, headed by Dr Lynn Sloman MBE, founder and Director of Transport Quality for Life, an environmental and sustainable transport consultancy (a full list of panel members is included in Appendix 1). It submitted its final report to the Welsh Government in September 2022 ([The Future of Road Investment in Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)) and on 14th February, Welsh Government published its response ([Roads Review: Welsh Government response | GOV.WALES](#)). The Review's recommendations are not final and Welsh Government will need to consider them on a case-by-case basis.
- 3 The review was commissioned by Welsh Government in light of the climate and nature emergencies we face, and the need to reduce transport emissions which account for 15% of total emissions in Wales. That objective, alongside those in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the Programme for Government and Net Zero Wales strategy, informed the Wales Transport Strategy ([Llwybr Newydd: the Wales transport strategy 2021 | GOV.WALES](#)). The three headline priorities of the WTS are:
 - to bring services to people in order to reduce the need to travel;
 - to allow people and goods to move easily from door to door by accessible, sustainable and efficient transport services and infrastructure;
 - to encourage people to make the change to more sustainable transport.
- 4 Accordingly, the 'sustainable transport hierarchy' which lies at the heart of the WTS prioritises walking and cycling, followed by public transport, then ultra-low emission vehicles, with other private motor vehicles at the bottom. A central target of the WTS is to achieve modal shift, so that 45% of journeys are made by public transport, walking and cycling by 2040 (compared the present level of 32%).
- 5 The review of highway investment schemes was felt necessary to determine if they are consistent with Welsh Government's current policies. Hence, the panel was asked to look at 55 schemes primarily on the Strategic Road Network (managed by Welsh Government) but also including 15 local authority schemes. A further four projects were added during the course of the review.
- 6 In light of the Roads Review Panel recommendations, a National Transport Delivery Plan 2022-27 has also been published ([National transport delivery plan 2022 to 2027 | GOV.WALES](#))

GOV.WALES). It sets out, for nine different modes of transport¹, the projects and activities Welsh Government expects to see over the next five years.

Summary of review recommendations

7 The Deputy Minister called a meeting of Leaders and Transport Cabinet Members on the morning of the publication of the review findings. He also met with some Leaders in advance to discuss specific recommendations relating to their areas. The table below summarises the Panel's recommendations.

Category	What happens next	No. of schemes
Progressing	Included in NTDP. Will progress taking account of Road Review Panel's recommendations and in line with future road building tests. Some schemes will be revised	15
Replaced by new project	New NTDP projects will be taken forward to address issues and opportunities at Menai Straits and Wrexham	2
Superseded by new programme	Superseded by new multimodal corridor-level programmes on M4, A55/A494	15
Not progressing at this stage	Potential for revised schemes to be considered in future funding rounds, in line with the future road building tests	9
Local authority schemes	Will be assessed in future grant funding rounds, in line with the future road building tests	15
Economic development schemes	Cllrs Anthony Hunt and Llinos Medi to lead a group to develop guidance on delivering place-based economic development enabled by transport solutions that support the growth of a prosperous, green and equal economy and are consistent with future road building tests	3
TOTAL	55 schemes identified in Roads Review Panel's initial report and 4 subsequently identified. Of the 59 schemes, 8 were excluded as out of scope or with insufficient info, 2 were reviewed early, 3 were econ devt schemes and the Panel's recommendations on the other 46 schemes set out in appendix to Panel's final report	59

8 Decisions on the Strategic Road Network managed by Welsh Government are clearly of major local importance. Some of the notable schemes recommended not to proceed include (the lists are not comprehensive):

- **North Wales** – Flintshire Corridor Improvement; Chester- Broughton Growth Corridor; Third Menai Crossing; A55 junctions; Wrexham bypass Junctions 3-6;

¹ Active travel; Bus; Rail; Roads, streets and parking; Third Sector; Taxis and private hire vehicles; Freight and logistics; Maritime transport; Aviation.

A5/A483 Halton Roundabout; Llanbedr Bypass and Access Road; Abergele town centre congestions improvements; A494 Denbighshire

- **South West Wales** - M4 junction schemes in Swansea and Port Talbot; A48 Nantycaws Junction Improvement (Carmarthenshire)
- **South East Wales** – M4 junction schemes and A470 corridor (Cardiff to Merthyr Tydfil); Cynon Gateway North; Llanharan Bypass (RCT)
- **Mid Wales** – A470 Alltmaur.

9 The recommendations have been warmly welcomed by some but have also been heavily criticised by others. In North Wales there is a particularly high proportion of schemes recommended not to proceed. This has led to some calls for final decisions on schemes to be devolved to a regional basis. The previous Transport Minister in Welsh Government, Ken Skates MS, has been amongst those making such calls. Whilst Minister, he was actively discussing the possibility of regional funding allocations, enabling regions to determine how funding is then used, based on region's understanding of local priorities.

10 In relation to economic development schemes, where there is potential to access employment and housing sites, the Deputy Minister has asked two council Leaders - Cllrs Anthony Hunt and Llinos Medi - to sit on a group to look at best practice. The intention is to look at how development sites (such as Llanfrechfa in Torfaen) can be taken forward without creating extra car traffic and congestion, such as by building in public transport an active travel options from the outset.

New tests

11 In responding to the Review, the Welsh Government has also set out tests it will use to inform decisions on *future* highway schemes, including those put forward by local authorities for Welsh Government funding. Support will be forthcoming only in circumstances where a scheme will:

- support modal shift and reduce carbon emissions (including in construction)
- improve safety through small scale changes
- adapt to impacts of climate change
- provide access and connectivity to jobs and centres of economic activity in a way that supports modal shift.

12 Support will not be given if the investment will:

- increase road capacity
- increase emissions through higher vehicle speeds
- adversely affect ecologically valuable sites.

Recommendations

13 It is recommended that Leaders:

13.1 Note and comment on the outcome of the Welsh Government Roads Review.

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Appendix 1: Members of the review panel

- Panel Chair, Dr Lynn Sloman MBE
- Julie Hunt, a Chartered Civil Engineer working for an engineering consultancy and Chair of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (Cymru Wales)
- Professor Glenn Lyons, University of the West of England, specialising in future mobility
- Geoff Ogden, Director of Planning, Development and Advisory Services at Transport for Wales
- John Parkin, Professor of Transport Engineering and Deputy Director of the Centre for Transport and Society at the University of the West of England
- Professor Andrew Potter, Cardiff Business School expert in freight, logistics and operations management
- Helen Pye, Head of Engagement at Snowdonia National Park Authority with involvement in traffic and parking management
- Eurgain Powell, Transport Specialist with the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner.