

Report to Planning Inspector following hearing 17th May on special topic of Route along FFordd Cefn Du to Q1

This report concentrates on the people aspects of the proposed route from the A4085 to Q1.

I would first like to address some of the responses SPH have made to issues previously raised by Christine Jordan, myself and others living in Groeslon and Waunfawr.

1. The SPH response [SPH_GREX_WED3_01] to the request that an alternative route to Q1 be found was that an alternative had been considered that would have been integrated with an open cut penstock. This route was rejected due to *“significant effects on the historical landscape and archaeological features, landscape and visual amenity loss from SNPA and the adjacent valley communities of Dinorwig, Fachwen and Deiniolen, and also to local communities, private water supplies and habitats from noise and dust.”*

Apparently there are no such concerns for the residents and visitors in Waunfawr and along the proposed route!! Why are the effects on landscape, features and the community of Waunfawr not afforded the same consideration as those in LLanberis? I doubt many residents of Fachwen and Deiniolen can even see Q1. Their loss of visual amenity is considered more significant than 3 to 4 years of fear, disruption and distress that will be caused to those living along the route right outside their front doors.

Many features of the original plans for Glyn Rhonwy have changed since the first proposal was granted permission, including that the penstock is no longer open cut. I would question how much of the original objections quoted above were based around the proposals for the penstock rather than providing a route from Q6 to Q1, and would urge that this option is revisited in that light. In March 2015, when an Airbus crashed into the Alps miles from the nearest road, an access road was created within days to allow heavy vehicles to reach the site and extract the debris of the plane. I suspect that the terrain in the Alps is much more challenging than Q6 to Q1, so why is it so difficult to find a suitable alternative route? There are no details from SPH of any other options that were considered and I would urge them to look again, as I think it is possible that a suitable alternative could be found.

2. We have raised the issue of the effect the increased traffic will have on businesses and the people working in them in Waunfawr and along the proposed route, and the only response from SPH [SPH_GREX_WED3_01] was to note that not all the businesses listed would be affected. This, of course, means that many of them will be, particularly those that are based directly on the route, for example, holiday accommodation. Although the time that heavy traffic will be passing holiday cottages has moved from 7.00am to 8.30am six days a week, I doubt that will make much difference to visitors

who have come to North Wales to relax, enjoy the peace and quiet, the scenery and outdoor activities. The Tourism Partnership of North Wales aims to make North Wales a market leader in natural beauty, dramatic scenery, heritage and distinctive culture. Websites with reviews of the holiday accommodation on the route will soon be filled with comments about the noise, disruption and nuisance of heavy traffic in Groeslon. Those whose incomes depend on tourism will be badly affected and unable to benefit from the efforts of the Tourism Partnership. Can it be right that SPH can effectively destroy the livelihoods of owners and their staff along the proposed route? SPH have made it clear that they have no interest in the hardship that their money making will impose on those living and working along this route. Loss of income and means of support seems rather more important, for example, than loss of visual amenity.

3. SPH have responded to concerns about the suitability of the road through Groeslon by indicating that above the cattle grid resurfacing and drainage work will be carried out and passing places will be created. Below the cattle grid they claim no passing places are required and the road will remain single carriageway. I cannot conceive how they think pedestrians, children, bikes and horses are going to be passed safely by large vehicles on sections of the road below the cattle grid, for example at the blind bend with walls on either side. There are very few areas that could provide refuge for people, horses or vehicles south of the cattle grid. Cars could be faced with reversing long distances uphill to enable passing to take place – I doubt the HGV drivers will be moving for anyone (whatever instructions they have been given). **If SPH are so confident** that it will be practical for HGVs and other road users to safely use this route, they could demonstrate it by providing a vehicle of the size of the largest to use the road and driving the ExA or his representative and members of the local community along it, say from the A55 exit, or at the least from the A487 through Caernarfon, to the Q1 location. There are many pinchpoints along this route as well as the unsuitable Ffordd Cefn Du. SPH could “put their money where their mouth is”.

One aspect that residents wanted me to emphasise at this hearing is that of the safety of the road users. Many are afraid that there will be a terrible accident if this route to Q1 is used. In the “Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic” the Institute of Environmental Assessment includes “*fear and intimidation*” as a topic that may need to be considered. The guidelines say that “*dependant on volume of traffic and HGV composition, its proximity to people or the lack of protection caused by such factors as narrow pavement widths*” are factors that would indicate whether this topic needs to be considered. How lovely it would be for people using the route to have a pavement, narrow or otherwise, to take refuge on. Although the guidelines are now out-of-date and haven’t yet been updated, this topic most definitely needs to be considered more fully. The resident of the house that sits right on the crossroads has many fears about the effect on her and her property, having already experienced vehicles hitting her property (see below an extract from an

email from her indicating her fears). All the residents and users of this route are subject to “*fear and intimidation*” by the vehicles using the route. At the hearing of May 17th, the representatives of SPH wrongly interpreted “*intimidation*” to mean that they were intimidating the residents and this would not be something SPH would do, but they have no concern that their vehicles will be doing it for them. In this case “*intimidation*” is the result of the effect the increased amount and size of traffic will have on the users of Ffordd Cefn Du.

The route through Groeslon is often referred to as the “Green Lane” and nowadays the adjective “green” relates not only to colour, but is often used to convey environmental goodness and benefit. In its present state it is a green lane in all meanings of the word, with greenery growing alongside it and its use by many residents and visitors to enjoy the tranquillity, opportunities for physical exercise and the mental and physical well-being that these bring. However the proposals for its use by SPH mean that it will become a “Black Lane” in every sense of that word. It will be black in colour with all the resurfacing that is proposed, it will be black environmentally with all the pollution, noise and vibration that the traffic will bring. It will be black in mental health terms for those living along it. It will be black for those who lose their livelihoods as a consequence of its use. We fear it may also be “black” if the residents’ worst fears of accidents are met. In fact SPH have already pushed the residents into a grey area with all the uncertainty concerning the future for themselves, their homes and their livings hanging in the balance.

Please don’t let SPH force the people of Groeslon into a black place, don’t make it “FFordd Du”. This route is not suitable and never will be for the construction traffic, and an alternative must be found.

Extract from email from resident of property at Groeslon crossroads

I’m really worried about removing the curbs at groeslon espwcially as for the safety of the children waiting for buses in both directions to Syr Huw and Brynrefail. Youngsters being youngsters, they luke playing with a ball there too and there's quite a crowd of them. Also primary school children walk there to school. Cars speed up and down the road between ceunant and waunfawr, as do cyclists who turn down the corner from waunfawr and go down the smithy often two abreast. The junction, as we all know, has blind corners in all direction.

I’m also concerned about the frequency Bwrdd Dwr, BT, Scottish Power etc dig up the road at the junction and all the extra vehicles they have. This will make it even more dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists, bikers, equasterians and any other vehicle if they use this road. There are a lot of agricultural vehicles going up and down the road as well.

It worries me that the crossroafs is prone to much flooding. This will be even more dangerous if they use this road. They say that they will open a valve on the dam to check it twice a year. Where will this surplus water go? Will they open it during heavy rain falls and will this effect the bottom of the village, which is also prone to flooding. Any mire water to Gwyrfai will also have devastating effects on homes in Bontnewydd.

The smithy is also lethal in icy conditions.

It goes without saying that we are all extremely worried about the structural impact on our homes especially as it will be impossible to prove who's damaged your house. I know this from bitter experience having lived on the crossroads for twenty years. Not one driver has been honest enough to say that they've hit my house. I once saw a bus driver hitting my wall and drainpipe. He drove away. I phoned the bus company and was told that none of their drivers would do that!!