

Welsh Government's Roads Review

Terms of reference

A summary of the Road Review Panel's purpose.

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Context

Llwybr Newydd the new Wales Transport Strategy (WTS) sets out an ambitious vision for Transport in Wales to achieve our climate change commitments and safeguard future generations. It can only be achieved if we do things differently.

Going forward the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) framework which is currently being reviewed will ensure that all the individual transport projects we fund are aligned to the delivery of WTS ambitions and priorities. However, we need to review our current pipeline of road investment to ensure it accords with the new sustainable transport hierarchy which prioritises investment in active travel and public transport.

In future, in accordance with the WTS, the priority and focus for road investment will be on:

- the avoidance of action which increases carbon emissions from operating, maintaining and improving the road network, especially in the next 15 years;
- the reallocation of existing road space to achieve a shift to sustainable forms of transport;
- the adaptation of existing road infrastructure to cope with climate change;
- investment which maintains the safety and serviceability of the existing road network in compliance with statutory duties, and
- the improvement of biodiversity alongside major transport routes.

Objectives

The objectives for this roads review are:

1. To ensure road investment is fully aligned to the delivery of; WTS ambitions and priorities, Welsh Government Programme for Government June 2021 (PfG) commitments and to the forthcoming second low carbon delivery plan: Net Zero Wales.
2. To develop a set of criteria which identify appropriate circumstances in which expenditure of Welsh Government funds on roads should be undertaken, taking into account the above.
3. To use these criteria to make recommendations on which of the current pipeline of road investment projects should be supported, be modified or have Welsh Government support withdrawn.

4. To provide guidance for reallocating road space on parts of the road network which might in future benefit from enhancement spend.
5. To consider how any savings might be allocated, in order to ensure problems on the road network are addressed and in particular make recommendations on how to tackle the backlog of road maintenance.

Scope of the review

The Welsh Ministers wish this to be as broad an exercise as reasonably possible so that it is able to develop criteria that are applicable to all future schemes. The general scope of the review is to include all proposed road investment, whether funded directly by Welsh Government (WG) on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) or indirectly by grant on the Local Road Network (LRN), subject to the following:

1. Routine operational and maintenance work to ensure the safety and serviceability of the SRN will continue during the period of this review. All statutory duties and existing contractual obligations will continue to be adhered to;
2. Schemes funded in whole or part by WG where construction work is too advanced to cease will be out of the scope of the review; and
3. Access roads with the primary purpose of linking a site or premises for heavy industry to the public highway, or within the boundary of a heavy industry development site, will be excluded from the review. Access roads with the primary purpose of serving residential, retail and light office / light industrial developments should be paused at the next decision gateway to allow them to be considered by the review panel.

A specific request is made in relation to the Llanbedr access road. Given the pressing nature of a decision on this, the Welsh Ministers request the Panel Chair provide a specific view on this scheme within 4 weeks of appointment. This shall be treated as distinct from the main review. It is recognised that that this quick view may not benefit from the inputs of the full panel as they may not yet be assembled. Furthermore, in light of the fact that the Panel will not have determined their appraisal methodology by this point the Chair's view is requested to be structured around the following key questions:

1. Has sufficient consideration been given to non-transport solutions and solutions other than those increasing private car capacity on the road network?
2. Has sufficient consideration been given to whether the road proposal will lead to increased CO2 emissions on the road network, or cause significant impediment to achievement of our decarbonisation targets?

A further specific request is made in relation to the A55 Junction 14/15 and 16/16A Improvements. Given the pressing need for decision making on whether to proceed this project to Public Local Inquiry or not, the Panel are requested to provide their view on this project as a priority after the appraisal criteria is agreed around the 3 month milestone.

Methodology

A review of the alignment of a proposed investment's objectives against WTS vision, aims and objectives and PfG commitments will be conducted by a Roads Review Panel (RRP) appointed by Welsh Ministers.

The RRP are asked to provide options and examples of how budget could be redirected towards maintaining the strategic road network and reallocating road space on the strategic road network to encourage wider policy goals such as modal shift.

Reporting

The RRP is to make an initial report within 3 months of its appointment, setting out how it proposes conducting the Review and the proposed road investment that it considers to be in scope according to these Terms of Reference, for Ministers' approval. Within 9 months of the appointment of the RRP the final report shall be provided to Ministers setting out the findings of the Review.