

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 29<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2019

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE: 25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2019

“84 WELTAG STAGE TWO M4 TO A48 UPDATE (REF) –

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport presented the report which had been referred to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration.

She outlined that the report provided an update on progress of the WelTAG Stage Two transport study that was being undertaken on the M4 Junction 34 to A48 transport corridor. The report also identified the further work as part of a WelTAG Stage 2 plus that was being undertaken in respect of the following:

1. Undertaking environmental surveys and investigations to further inform the recommendations of the Stage Two report;
2. Taking further account of the consultation responses to update the concept design of the highway link and junction options;
3. Progressing the proposed Parkway Station at the M4 junction 34 to a GRIP2 Feasibility Study process (i.e. Governance for Railway Investment Projects);
4. Making recommendations for the progression to a WelTAG Stage Three (Full Business Case) following completion of the additional studies being undertaken as part of the WelTAG Stage Two process and award of Capital Transport Grant funding by Welsh Government.

The Stage Two report options examined against a do-minimum option were as follows (Appendix A of the Cabinet report referred to in detail)

- Option B – a highway route to the east of Pendoylan;
- Option C – a highway route to the west of Pendoylan; and
- Option G – a Parkway Station with Park and Ride facility and bus integration near to M4 Junction 34.

In terms of funding, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that the Authority had applied for Stage Three funding requesting an amount of £940k. Welsh Government had allocated a sum of £750k with further funding possibly available in year depending on the outcomes of the studies. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport reminded the Committee that the objective of the Report today was to update Members and that a decision on the final outcomes of the study would be made at a later date.

The Chairman then invited Ms. Abigail Phillips, member of the public, to make her verbal representations to the Committee.

Ms. Phillips stated that she worked in the role as a Town and Countryside planner and she outlined that there had not be a buy-in to the strategic recommendation for a new trunk road. She stated that a new route to Cardiff Airport was not required as the growth and success of the Enterprise Zone was not dependent on a new road. She also stated that the car manufacturing industry was at present very fragile so she questioned how sustainable was the new Aston Martin facility. Ms. Phillips went on to state that the new route would increase congestion at Culverhouse Cross and she asked why had no other options been considered such as improvement to Junction 35 and also Culverhouse Cross. She also queried why public opinion had been ignored and she stated that the Parkway train link was unreliable and was at a very early stage.

The second public speaker was Mr. Paul Waite, who was speaking on behalf of Pendoylan Community Council and he stated that the WelTAG Stage Two study was flawed and consultation with local residents had been ignored. He queried why the Stage Two process did not include the "Do minimum" option as the creation of a new road was against recent Welsh Government policy. Mr. Waite queried the purpose of consultation if other alternative options had been ignored and he asked how could the Council make a decision without all the relevant information. Mr. Waite stated that the world we were living in was changing and he referenced to a rapid drop in car sales alluding to the objectives within the Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations Act and a commitment for Wales to be carbon neutral. In summary, he stated that the consultation exercise had been flawed, that there was no requirement for a new road and the proposals were no longer fit for purpose.

The next public speaker was Miss. Ushenke Rajapakse who was a representative on the Vale's Youth Forum. She wanted to speak from the perspective of a young person whose future would be effected by the "climate emergency" which required urgent changes. She stated that she would be joining the thousands of young people who had spoken out demanding action on climate change. Miss. Rajapakse referred to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act which stated the importance of consultation with young people. She questioned why young people had not been directly consulted on the proposals. She then outlined Welsh and UK Government policy to reduce carbon emissions which would not be met by building new roads. As an alternative, she called for greater investment in public transport, especially as the local bus service was every two hours. This meant that transport links were not good, and so people were being forced to use their cars. She stated that there was an alternative and she urged the Committee to reject the proposals.

The Committee's fourth public speaker was Mrs. Susan Armitage, who began by stating that she worked in the area of risk management for Welsh Government and also the UK Government. She stated that members of the public questioned the need for a new road and also whether sufficient consideration had been given to the viability of alternatives and also the impact on future generations. She referred to the Welsh Government's Climate Emergency that had recently been declared and a need to lower harmful emissions and to reduce traffic congestion. She pleaded with the Committee for a new road not to be their legacy, which went against the need to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. In addition, Mrs. Armitage queried whether a proper Environmental Impact Assessment had been carried out and she questioned as to what problems would be solved by the new route. Further, she

asked whether alternative options had been properly considered and whether Members were satisfied with the robustness of the studies undertaken.

In responding to the comments made by the public speakers, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport outlined the following:

- The report in front of Members was not looking for a final decision and Cabinet would be provided with additional environmental information, , at a later stage;
- In terms of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and climate change, she fully understood where the concerns were coming from but it had also been recognised that the road network was not up to “scratch” and did not meet the needs of businesses or locals;
- If the Council took the proposals forward, the objectives were greater than simply improving access to the airport. This she stated was a need of the Cardiff City Capital Region and therefore had been a regional response supported by funding from Welsh Government;
- In terms of further consultation, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that should the Council reach Stage Three, then more consultation would be carried out including further opportunities for local schools in the area to give their views.

The Local Ward Member, as a Member of the Committee, stated that a number of local objections had been raised and he read out an email that he had received from Dr. David Moody Jones, Member for Pendoylan Community Council. The main points from the email being:

- Any new road would have a significant impact on the environment, the risk to which had not been fully addressed;
- Alternative options had failed to be considered;
- There would be a negative impact on bio-diversity and eco-systems;
- The proposals were against Welsh Government targets to reduce dangerous emissions and greenhouse gases and targets around de-carbonisation;
- The impact on air quality;
- The environment impacts needed to be addressed now before progression to the next stage and
- Could the Council afford to spend money on the studies

The Member then highlighted the local concerns regarding the impact on the environment and he stated that things needed to change citing the recent announcement of a “climate emergency”. He added that a new road would be damaging to the environment and so a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment needed to be carried out and he queried why this had not been carried out sooner. The Member then referred to a new road being built in order to serve the Airport and he questioned the establishment of the Enterprise Zone. He also explained that local community groups were upset with the proposals, and so it was important to listen to local concerns. Back in November 2017, the Scrutiny Committee had referred options back to Cabinet which included the “Do Minimum” approach. This, the Member stated, appeared to have disappeared and he queried why the road

could not be improved as part of the “Do Minimum” option. He questioned whether there was a need for a new road on the scale and cost that was being proposed that was not value for money and did not address the issues. In closing, the Member stated it was agreed that something had to be done, but an upgrade to the existing road would be better.

In reply to the Member’s comments, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that Environmental Impact Assessments was not part of Stage Two as not all information relating to the options had been gathered. This would be undertaken as part of Stage Three. She stated that she agreed that something had to be done and that the “Do something” approach was considered at Stage One and deemed not appropriate, but this could be reconsidered at any stage. Do-minimum continues to be an option against which all other options are considered against.

A number of Members then aired their initial views and the following comments were made:

- Where was the demand for a new road coming from as it seemed that most local residents were opposed to the idea;
- It was time Welsh Government made up their mind, referring to the 2017 Plan to have a railway spur to improve access to the airport. This had been ongoing for many years and no final decision had been taken;
- Any new road would increase gridlock and the question was raised as to what would happen to all the extra cars on the road and where was the benefit to residents of the Vale of Glamorgan;
- The north access road in Llantwit Major cost millions of pounds despite local objections which were ignored by Welsh Government;
- What were Welsh Government’s objectives when it came to reducing traffic congestion and greater consideration should be given to reducing road traffic by improving the railways;
- Concern regarding the impact on the environment and future generations and the need for greater awareness as Welsh Government had issued a “climate emergency” with local objections not being fully addressed;
- Not convinced that a new road was the answer, particularly in the light of local objections and the need to improve sustainability and the impact on the environment;
- A Committee Member queried whether the Committee was convinced that the right solutions were being taken forward and he recommended that a message be sent to Cabinet for further consideration for the existing infrastructure to be upgraded and for any new road to be rejected. In addition, the Committee Chairman should also write a letter to the Welsh Government Minister outlining the Committee’s concern for the environment and the impact of new roads.

In replying to some of the comments made, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that the demand for a new road had come out of the Cardiff Capital City Deal Region project and had been supported by the Council’s Cabinet. In terms of the Rhoose train station and new spur road, she confirmed that nothing had been received from Welsh Government and she had no more information to provide.

In regard to sustainability, she stated that over 10,000 new houses were likely to be built in the Vale of Glamorgan to 2026. This would increase traffic congestion but she agreed that Welsh Government needed to look at the bigger picture.

With regard to climate change, this was set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act and would be considered as part of the Stage Two plus process. In addition, she advised that Stage Three would be where the assessment of value would be undertaken and whether the final solution was acceptable.

In relation to the rail network, it had been agreed for this to be separated off from the new road in order that the park and ride was not held up by any road or vice versa.

Subsequently, it was

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T Cabinet give consideration to an additional option of improving the existing infrastructure without the need for a new road.
- (2) T H A T an additional report on the Stage Two Plus process should be reported back to the Committee.
- (3) T H A T a letter be sent to the Welsh Government Minister in light of the Welsh Government declaration of a climate emergency, requesting the Welsh Government to outline its vision and how the impact on the environment would be minimised.
- (4) T H A T Cabinet be requested to consider the impact on future generations and the environment should a new road be approved.

#### Reasons for recommendations

- (1) In order to ask Cabinet to consider an alternative option which includes the upgrade of the existing infrastructure with the removal of an option for a new road.
- (2) In order for the Committee to receive information on the Stage Two Plus process.
- (3) In order to gather the Welsh Government vision around transport and the impact on the environment.
- (4) In order to highlight the concern of the Committee in relation to the environment and the impact on future generations.”