

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 14 February 2001
Time: 2.00 to 5.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

REPORT BY MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENT

Appointments to the Countryside Council for Wales and Pembrokeshire National Park Authorities

New appointments have been made to the Countryside Council for Wales and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

The remaining appointments to the other two Parks, Snowdonia and Brecon Beacons, should be completed during March. The two subject committee nominees, Richard Edwards and Mick Bates have been kept informed of progress.

After these appointments have been made the Assembly's Public Appointments Unit will be preparing a paper for this Committee, which will contain the Independent Assessors' certificates of satisfaction and any comments on these exercises.

COUNTRYSIDE

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation

I am pleased to announce that a further 5 new candidate Special Areas of Conservation in Wales were put forward to the European Commission on 29 January. The sites are:

Alyn Valley Woods

Cwm Clydach Woodlands

Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites

Montgomery Canal

Cefn Cribwr Grasslands

This brings the total number of candidate Special Areas of Conservation in Wales to 86. This is a significant contribution to the UK list of Natura 2000 sites and nearly completes Wales's suite of sites.

PLANNING

Technical Advice Notes

The current position is:

- The first Flood Risk Technical Advice Note (TAN) Technical Advisory Group meeting was held on 2nd February.
- The first Renewable Energy TAN Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Meeting has been arranged for 23rd February.
- The consultation draft of the Aggregates Technical Advice Note is planned to be reported to the Committee on 7th March.
- The consultation draft of the Coal Technical Advice Note is planned to be reported to the Committee on 4th April.

TRANSPORT

Standing Wales Rural Forum Meeting

I spoke at the Standing Wales Rural Forum at Llangollen on 2nd February about transport, planning and environment. This was followed by a useful question and answer session.

South West Wales Economic Forum and South Wales Integrated Transport Consortium Meeting

I met last week the South West Wales Economic Forum (SWWEF) and the South Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWITCH) to discuss transport and communications in the

area.

Trunk Road Traffic and Rural Communities

I attach for information a paper prepared by Network Management Division of the Transport Directorate on how we can reduce the impact of trunk road traffic on rural towns and villages.

The paper sets objectives for achieving accident reduction and speed reduction, and for improving the quality of life.

The initiative reflects the concerns that many committee members have about inappropriate driving speeds through our communities.

British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Committee

I met on Monday the 12th of February with the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Committee, who are members from the Irish Dail and Senate and members of the UK House of Commons. The main issue discussed was transport links with Ireland.

Sue Essex

Minister for Environment

Annex 1

ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 14 February 2001

Time: 2 pm to 5 pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

The Rural Town and Village Trunk Road Initiative – Reducing Accidents and Making Life Better

Purpose

1. The paper is being presented to the Committee for consideration.

Issue

2. The inhabitants of towns, villages and hamlets which have trunk roads passing through them, frequently express concern about safety in their community, and the speed of traffic passing through it. The paper "The Rural Town and Village Trunk Road Initiative - Reducing Accidents and Making Life Better" – at Annex 1 - seeks to provide guidance by which the Assembly can respond in a positive manner to those common concerns.

Recommendation

3. The Committee is advised to note:
 - a). the guidance in the paper, which is being used as the basis upon which the Assembly responds to concerned inhabitants;
 - b). that funding for this initiative was included in the Transport Bid in the budget planning round, dealt with separately, and £1M p.a. allocated in the draft budget proposals, and
 - c). that Network Management Division is preparing a rolling programme of work in communities using a route-based strategy and using the assessment method described in Sections 6-9 of the guidance to set priorities.

Background

4. Since the Assembly began business, there has been a significant amount of correspondence from inhabitants, councils and Assembly Members expressing concerns about safety in rural towns, villages and hamlets, and about the speed of traffic passing through them. Those concerns were addressed and responded to using guidance from a number of different sources, but Network Management Division were becoming concerned that there could be a lack of consistency in the responses, and also that current procedures and finance lines did not allow a sympathetic approach to the concerns.
5. This year, it was possible to deal with some of the concerns on the A458 in Powys by using a part of the Transport Budget to fund a programme of route-and-village-related schemes. Initial responses indicate that this approach is welcomed.

6. Those schemes were developed using techniques developed during the recent all-Wales traffic calming trials, particularly those schemes where pedestrian safety and confidence was improved, such as at Glan Conwy and at Aberaeron. Taking into account that work, and feedback from the Powys programme, the paper "The Rural Town and Village Trunk Road Initiative - Reducing Accidents and Making Life Better" attempts to provide guidance on dealing with the concerns in a consistent way that would take account of the environmental and social objectives, as well as road safety issues.

7. At present, the guidance is more appropriate for use on the non-core trunk road network; in general, treatment of the core network will be determined by the outcome of the various route studies currently under consideration. However, initial thoughts from those studies indicate that there will be villages and hamlets on the core network for which the guidance will be appropriate now.

8. To take advantage of funding included in the transport bid for such schemes, the area engineering branches of Network Management Division are currently preparing route-based programmes of work. The programmes will concentrate mainly on the non-core network and will focus on "related" communities along each of the trunk roads, although some of the smaller communities on the core network will also be looked at. The guidance will also be appropriate for use in communities which do not necessarily lend themselves to a route-based approach.

Advice

9. The guidance, and the provision of regular and adequate funds, allows the Assembly to be pro-active in dealing with the concerns of the inhabitants of rural communities in a way that promotes the ideals of "betterwales.com" (and in particular, paragraph 1.8 of "Communities First") together with those of "Driving Wales Forward".

Compliance

10. The Assembly has all the powers necessary to put into action the guidance, and to make available the funds necessary. Those powers have been delegated to Ms Essex or to the Transport Directorate, as appropriate.

Financial Implications

11. All funding necessary is managed from within the Transport Budget. The schemes which have accident reduction targets can be assessed for value for money against the reduction in the numbers of accidents which they should achieve. Other schemes, which provide potential accident reduction measures, have no empirical method to measure their worth, but the use of listed facilities to assess their relative priorities should ensure that best value is obtained.

UK Perspectives

12. The provision of speed management measures is in line with the recent report on "New Directions in Speed Management - A Review of Policy", published by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). Other work on traffic calming measures is in line with current practice throughout the UK, and with various Traffic Advisory Leaflets, also published by DETR.

A R Morgan

Network Management Division January 2001



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

The National Assembly for Wales

The Transport Directorate - Network Management Division

The Rural Town and Village Trunk Road Initiative -

Reducing Accidents and Making Life Better

Introduction

1. This paper provides guidance on means by which the Assembly can respond to the common concerns reported to it by the inhabitants of its rural towns, villages and hamlets through which a trunk road passes. It sets objectives for achieving accident reduction and speed reduction, and for improving the quality of life for those inhabitants in a way that promotes the ideals of "betterwales.com" (and in particular, paragraph 1.8 of the section "Communities First") together with those of "Driving Wales Forward".

2. The paper does not address cycling issues, for they are dealt with elsewhere. However, it is implicit that the interface between cycling and the initiatives will form part of any design considerations.

3. Neither does the paper address problems on trunk roads between towns and villages, or the need to relieve them of traffic, for they are dealt with by improvement programmes and prioritised by assessment on the basis of the 5 criteria for transport: environment, safety, economy, accessibility and integration.

Macro-economic Effects

4. Travel by single-carriageway road is the major means of moving around in rural Wales, and there is no doubt that some of the measures suggested will have an impact by increasing journey times. The greatest effects will be in hamlets and villages which currently have no restriction to movement such as speed limits or traffic calming measures, but those communities tend not to be large, so delays generally will be minimal even when aggregated.

5. Of course, drivers should in any event, adjust their speed to suit the road conditions through the communities, and furthermore heavy goods vehicles are already limited to 40 mph on un-restricted single carriageway roads. In most cases it is unlikely therefore that the economic impact of the increased journey times will be significant. However, there are a small number of routes throughout Wales carrying large volumes of traffic, and for those, the economic impact may be an important consideration. In each case, set against the dis-benefit of delays are the benefits from reductions in the numbers and severity of accidents; from reduced stress levels of those who live in the communities; from reduced air and noise pollution. All of those benefits would generate savings in health costs to counterbalance any additional costs from delays.

Setting Priorities

6. There are always requests for work to be done, or for speed limits to be imposed or altered, in towns, villages and hamlets, and except for Local Safety Schemes (see below) it is difficult to derive an empirical formula to set priorities. When setting priorities for this initiative, we will seek out and take account of the aspirations of the community, by meeting local councilors and by talking to bodies such as parent-teacher associations, local pressure groups and the police. We will take account of the Assembly's concept "Communities First", which is aimed at tackling poverty and social disadvantage in Wales' most deprived areas and, if a community is the subject of a "Communities First" project, we will co-operate with, and possibly join, the partnership that will have been established to promote it. Levels of disadvantage have been established in a new Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, and these can be used to influence the decision-making process.

7. To give further guidance when setting priorities, proposals will be weighted taking into account the presence of the following factors and facilities, and their relationship to the trunk road as it passes through the community:

- numbers of accidents;
- current speed limit;
- schools;
- pre-school groups
- shops and cafes;
- banks and post offices;
- bus stops;
- tourist attractions;
- filling stations (now often with a shop);
- pubs and restaurants;
- community halls;
- residential or nursing homes;

- day care centres or surgeries;
- places of worship;
- playing fields or sports facilities;
- significant numbers of general pedestrian movements;
- significant numbers of heavy goods vehicles;
- deprivation at the local level.

8. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, nor particularly in order of priority, but the presence of these factors and facilities in a community is indicative of the level of movement, both vehicle and pedestrian. The greater the number of facilities, the greater the likely numbers of movements and the greater the potential benefits. Accident numbers will have an influence in setting priorities, but may not prove to be the most important factor.

9. The proforma at Annex 1 further develops the list, and suggests weightings which can be totaled to give an indication of the relative priority of any work.

10. Finally, any assessment must include a visit to the community, use of the facilities, a walk to the shop - *if there is any sense of vulnerability, the inhabitants will feel the same way, every day!*

Reducing Accidents

11. The Welsh Office Trunk Road Safety Plan identified **accident cluster sites** using the criterion of 4 personal injury accidents (pia's) in 3 years within 100 metres. These sites are treated as Local Safety Schemes (LSS) and are investigated by the Road Safety Working Group. Any work recommended from the investigation is prioritised using LSS criteria and funded from a ring-fenced budget within the transport budget. The objective of a LSS is to reduce accidents.

12. This paper introduces a second category; **town and village clusters** are identified using the criterion of 4 pia's in 3 years within 500 metres. These clusters will be investigated by the area team, with the aim of improving safety by the use of traffic management or engineering works, including speed reduction and traffic calming measures. Any work recommended will be prioritised, and currently would be funded from within the Small Schemes Programme or the maintenance budget, depending on the type of work. As with LSS's, the objective is to reduce

accidents.

Reducing Speeds

Setting speed limits.

13. The speed of traffic through communities can be intimidating to inhabitants and is a matter of frequent concern even though there may not be speed-related accidents. For the Assembly to address that concern, it must take a more positive approach towards setting speed limits. Policy with respect to limits has been to let existing speeds and the character of the road indicate the level of limit to be imposed, which would then be self-enforcing. However, in March 2000, the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) published a report on "New Directions in Speed Management - A Review of Policy". This Review has moved a long way forward towards developing a speed policy that takes account of the contribution of reduced speeds to environmental and social objectives as well as to road safety. Additional work is identified in the Review, but in the interim period, and in keeping with the findings, analysis and recommendations of the Review, in Wales the level of limit should be set as that which is deemed to be the most appropriate for the community. In rural Wales, the distinction between hamlet and village, or village and town can be blurred, and so, where a trunk road passes through a community, the suggested limits are:

- 40 mph in most hamlets and small villages;
- 30 mph in hamlets and small villages which have speed-related accident problems, or which have many of the priority facilities listed above;
- 30 mph in all larger villages and towns;
- 40 mph for any buffer zones;
- 50 mph for scattered clusters of housing which could not be described as a hamlet, or for those buffer zones where 40 mph is not appropriate;
- where a hamlet or village with a 40 mph limit has a school within the boundary and adjacent to the trunk road, a short length of 30 mph limit should be imposed to protect the school.

14. In seeking to achieve this approach to speed limits in communities, it is likely that lengths of limit which are shorter than recommended in national guidance will have to be accepted, eg, say 300 metres of 30 mph within a 40 mph zone, to protect a school. In such a case, provided that

the 40 mph limit is being observed, then it would not be too onerous or difficult for drivers to slow to 30 mph over a short distance. The need to do so, and the reason, can be emphasised by combining '30' signing with school signs and other traffic calming measures to ensure that the limit is respected without the need for extensive police enforcement. Should speeds still prove to be excessive, then consideration could be given to additional measures, or to the installation of fixed speed cameras.

15. In similar vein, a short length of 40 mph as a buffer zone may be beneficial. In each of these examples, a significant benefit will be the ability to provide 2 full sets of speed limit signing, including road roundals, so increasing the profile of the speed limit regime. Where current 85%ile speeds indicate that the limit would not be self-enforcing, then there will be a need for traffic calming works. The limit and the works must be considered as a total package which is costed and prioritised. The most appropriate source of funding would be the Small Schemes Programme.

20 mph limits.

16. In the hierarchy of roads defined by function, the primary function of trunk roads is defined as the movement of people and goods by vehicle, and generally, the use of the 20 mph limit is not considered to be appropriate. The traffic calming measures necessary to reduce speeds on through roads to such low levels (usually road humps) are not suitable for the mix of traffic using trunk roads, and the lower speeds would increase levels of air pollution. With a significantly higher proportion of large vehicles using trunk roads compared with other more residential roads, problems of noise and ground-borne vibrations could arise. Where towns or villages currently suffer from severe physical constraints, such as in Lower Town, Fishguard, vehicle speeds through the constraint tend to be naturally low. However, to ensure that speeds remain low in free flow conditions, exceptionally a 20 mph limit may be imposed.

Police enforcement.

17. In most cases it will be necessary to have the approval and cooperation of the police authority to the proposals. Funding the provision of a mobile speed camera or of a fixed camera site (provided that the current difficulties of obtaining prosecutions can be overcome) should be considered as a traffic calming measure. Camera technology continues to develop and their use in locations where speeds remain high may be the most appropriate measure.

18. The use of speed cameras on trunk roads has been favoured for some time, but manpower restraints within police authorities has prevented wider use of this approach. However, initial indications are that the current hypothecation trial (whereby the police authorities are able to use a part of a speeding fixed penalty to fund administration) is running very successfully. Should the scheme be permanently introduced, then it will allow much greater use of speed cameras, both fixed and mobile.

19. Also on-going is development of equipment which automatically reduces vehicle speeds to the appropriate limit. The equipment has been successfully demonstrated at trials in the United Kingdom, Sweden and Holland. If manufacturers are persuaded to incorporate these devices in vehicles, speed limits will be largely self-enforcing. However, there will be an even greater need to impose limits that are appropriate.

Promoting Walking

20. Ensuring that all towns and villages have footways of appropriate width is essential if safe routes to schools, to shops or to other amenities are to be provided. It may not always be possible to provide the usual 1.5-2 metre width, but anything greater than 1 metre allows for its use by wheelchairs. Consideration should be given to reducing carriageway width to gain extra space for footways - the trunk road should share the community, not dominate it!

21. Of course, there is a need to recognise that vehicles and pedestrians do not readily mix, and the more vulnerable in any conflict is the pedestrian. Any facilities provided for pedestrians should not put them at greater risk.

22. It may be possible to include short sections of footway within a planned maintenance scheme; if not, footways could be funded as a Small Scheme. In each case, priorities will be set having regard to the facilities served, as suggested earlier.

Making Life Better

Highway maintenance.

23. There is frequently a perception of danger, particularly in the hamlets and smaller villages, which is not evidenced by a history of injury accidents. Nevertheless, the inhabitants are entitled to a reasonable standard of life, and although they may have chosen to live on a trunk road, they may not necessarily have expected the introduction of 40 ton lorries, say, or the harvesting of the local forest using large numbers of timber lorries. Those fears must be addressed, with the objective of designing measures to alleviate them.

24. The standard of maintenance through towns and villages will also come under close scrutiny. Loose covers, poor utility reinstatements, noisy surfacing, dirty or faded signs, all impact badly on the image of the community. Footways must not become narrowed by uncleared detritus, or because of overgrown banks or hedges. All these defects reflect a poor standard of maintenance of the trunk road, and remedies should be quick and high quality.

25. This type of work has maintenance as its source of funding, and when any maintenance work is being carried out, an inclusive approach should be adopted whereby the impact of the trunk road on the image of the community is examined and a total remedy implemented. For example, it may be possible to re-locate street furniture to reduce its visual and physical intrusion. Laying thin surfacing which has a "negative" texture depth will reduce the effects of traffic noise and spray; properly maintained drainage will prevent ponding; such measures are of benefit to pedestrians as well as drivers.

Pedestrian movement.

26. The need for road crossings will also receive sympathetic consideration, whether it be crossing points, pedestrian islands or formal pedestrian crossings. The numbers crossing may be small, but being able to cross safely to the village shop must be a part of village life.

27. Where communities do not warrant the provision of street lighting, we will consider the provision of footway lighting to emphasise crossing points or to draw the driver's attention to locations where pedestrians may be in numbers, such as village halls. Community Councils may be willing to fund the running and maintenance costs of this class of lighting, or the benefit to safety may justify carrying the costs as trunk road expenditure.

Consistency

28. To reinforce the message to drivers that they are passing through a speed-limited community, they must see the environment through which they are passing as being appropriate to the speed limit, and to believe that the limit is sensible and has not been set at the whim of the highway authority. Signing of limits, gateway signing and community boundary signs along a route must be consistent, so that drivers can readily recognise that they are entering a community and relate that to the presence of a speed limit.

29. To further develop the theme of consistency, traffic calming, maintenance or improvement works in adjacent communities must achieve a consistency of approach. For instance, similar use of traffic islands within communities would act as a reminder that a speed limit is in force. In this way, a route-based consistency can be developed. The methods used must be tailored to reflect the character of the surrounding buildings and landscape, so those used in villages on the A487 in Ceredigion, for instance, would differ from methods chosen for the A458 in Montgomeryshire, or the A5 through Snowdonia. Nevertheless, over significant lengths of trunk road, there would be a commonality of appearance related to speed-limited communities.

Conclusion

Achieving the aims.

30. Inter-urban highway improvements may give significant benefits in accident reduction and ease of journey, but they will not reduce the impact of trunk roads on the many communities that they pass through. To demonstrate that it cares for those communities, whatever their size, the Assembly will work towards taking the lead in dealing with that impact. This means taking an inventory of what exists at present, and drawing up proposals to deal with departures from what should be the standard - an appropriate speed limit, adequate footways, crossing points, quiet running surface - so that a prioritised programme of work can be identified.

31. What is important is that drivers experience a consistency of standards along their route; they must be able to recognise not only that any limits are appropriate to the standard of the road, but also to respect why they are needed. In this way the need for enforcement will be reduced, and drivers will have greater respect for limits where they are imposed.

Main References

National Assembly for Wales: betterwales.com.

Welsh Office: Driving Wales Forward - A Strategic Review of the Welsh Trunk Road Programme.

National Assembly for Wales: Traffic Calming Trials - A Review of Traffic Calming Schemes on the Trunk Road and Principal Road Network in Wales.

National Assembly for Wales: Keeping Wales Moving - Making better use of the Existing Network.

National Assembly for Wales: Communities First – Regenerating our most Disadvantaged Communities: Consultation Papers.

National Statistics (National Assembly for Wales): Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation – 2000 Edition.

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions: New Directions in Speed Management - A Review of Policy.

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions: - 20 mph speed limits and zones; Traffic Advisory Leaflet 9/99.

Department of Transport / Welsh Office: Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Sections 81 - 85 Local Speed Limits; Welsh Office Circular 1/93.

Welsh Office: Trunk Road Safety Plan.

A R Morgan

Network Management Division

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Annex 1.



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

The National Assembly for Wales

The Transport Directorate - Network Management Division

The Rural Town and Village Trunk Road Initiative -

Reducing Accidents and Making Life Better

Setting Priorities

Community	TR A.....			
Factor	Weighting	Number	Total	Comment
Accidents: Pedestrian	5			
Other	4			
Current speed limit: 30	1			(What are current 85%ile speeds?)
40	2			
50	3			
60	4			
Footways:				
Complete on both sides	0			
Complete on one side	1			
Intermittent	3			
None	4			
Schools	3			
Pre-school Groups	1			
Shops & Cafes	1			
Banks & Post Offices	2			
Bus Stops	1			
Tourist Attractions	1			
Toilet Facilities	1			

Filling Stations: Shop	3
No Shop	2
Pubs & Restaurants	1
Community Halls	1
Places of Worship	1
Residential or Nursing Homes	1
Sheltered Accommodation	2
Day Care Centres or Surgeries	2
Playing Fields or Sports Facilities	2
Significant General Pedestrian movement	3
Significant Heavy Goods Vehicle movement	2
Deprivation at local level	
-- least deprived	0
	1
	2
	3
-- most deprived	4
Other (describe)	

COMMUNITY TOTAL

Notes:

1. Determination of weighting for "Deprivation at the local level" is done with reference to Map 1 of the National Statistics publication "Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation – 2000 Edition". In the "Number" column, this topic would usually score 1.

2. "Significant General Pedestrian Movement" and "Significant Heavy Goods Vehicle movement" are both subjective evaluations and in the "Number" column, can only score 0 (not significant) or 1 (significant).