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Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-092
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/06613/09

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12 January 2010

Dea Val

Thank you for your letter dated 18th December 2009 requesting an up-date on the issues concerning Petition P-03-092: A465 to Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate.

I have enclosed a copy of the report Transport Wales produced commenting on the options presented locally as potential measures to address the issues that had been raised. This report was forwarded to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in July 2008 for their consideration and action as they are the responsible Local Authority.

The Regional Transport Plan is the mechanism for funding local transport schemes. While no proposals have been included in the SEWTA Regional Transport Plan, I hope that Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will continue to monitor the situation and, if appropriate, prioritise in the future.

In the mean-time, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has submitted a bid for Safer Routes in Communities funding in 2010/11 in this area which is currently being considered alongside other applications across Wales. I hope to make an announcement on successful schemes in the near future.

*Yours
Ieuan*

Ieuan Wyn Jones
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1.0 Introduction and Brief

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) needs to respond to representations regarding the traffic problems experienced outside Bryn Bach Junior School, Merthyr Road, Tredegar. During peak times Merthyr road becomes congested when parents are dropping off or picking up their children. Parents currently park on the highway straddling the existing kerb, thus reducing carriageway and footway widths (see figure 1). Merthyr Road is a route used by heavy goods vehicles accessing the nearby Tafarnaubach industrial estate, and at peak times this further exacerbates the problem of reduced carriageway width, with HGV's mounting the kerb to pass on coming traffic.-



Figure 1. View of Parked Vehicles on Merthyr Road Outside School

South Wales Trunk Road Agency (SWTRA) commissioned Capita Symonds (CS) to produce a feasibility report detailing options to appease the above safety problem. The task was performed by studying the current infrastructure at the site and by predicting the effects that the various options would have on the key stakeholders. The safety of the children who attend the school is obviously of utmost importance and cannot in any way be compromised. The children's parents must also be considered. They will require a safe and easily accessible dropping off location, which will not impact upon the route that the HGV drivers must use when accessing the Tafarnaubach industrial park. Any solutions should not impact upon the local residents and businesses on the industrial estate wherever possible. Bryn Bach park is located in the area and any proposals would need to consider this to ensure that the park is not compromised.

1.1 Site Constraints

The site is subject to a number of constraints which were taken into account in producing this report. The current Road layout south of the Tafarnaubach bridge means that any road improvements may not be able to link with Merthyr Road without re-aligning or stopping up the road. (see figure 2).



Figure 2. Merthyr Road on approach to Tafarnaubach Bridge

The school is located in a residential area. Immediately outside the school playing field is a pedestrian crossing which may need to be relocated depending on the findings of a Road Safety Audit. In addition to the pedestrian crossing, there are a number of traffic calming measures along Merthyr Road. No alternate route could be identified from the industrial estate to Nant-y-Bwch roundabout as the area is residential, with no land available to construct an alternate route to Merthyr Road. The location of Nant-y-Bwch roundabout also limits the number of locations that additional slip roads can be built up to the Industrial Estate. Large soil banks are also present adjacent to the Tafarnaubach bridge, again limiting the possible slip road locations. These banks extend nearly all the way along the A465, hence it is expected that slips would need to cut into these banks in order to be worthwhile. The current structure over the A465 (Tafarnaubach Bridge) is constructed at a skew to the road and as such could have a negative impact on the road geometry required to allow for the manoeuvring of the heavy goods vehicles when accessing the site. On the North side of the A465 to the West of the Tafarnaubach bridge lie a number of residential properties (See figure 3) which would need to be bought out and demolished should the land be required for the chosen solution.



Figure 3. Residential Properties and Lay-By

Also, west of the structure (on the west bound carriageway) is a lay-by on the A465 which would possibly be impacted by any proposed slip lanes.

It is important to note that the next phase of the A465 works could lead to a potential conflict of traffic movements in the area when the existing links to the roundabout become slip roads. This would undoubtedly require departures from standards but may also have some significant road safety audit issues. The horizontal alignment of the A465 in this location may give rise to difficulties in achieving compliance with standards. Further studies would be required to determine whether the Welsh Assembly Government would need to agree departures from standards for the slips road alignments and their integration with the existing A465.

2.0 Proposed Options – Considerations for Selection

2.1 Option 1 - Introduction of slip roads at Tafarnaubach Bridge utilising existing structure

This option entails the introduction of on and off slips on both the eastern and western carriageways. The slips would link to the current infrastructure by means of a new roundabout south of the A465 and improved roundabout at the entrance to the Tafarnaubach Industrial estate, north of the A465 (see figure 4).

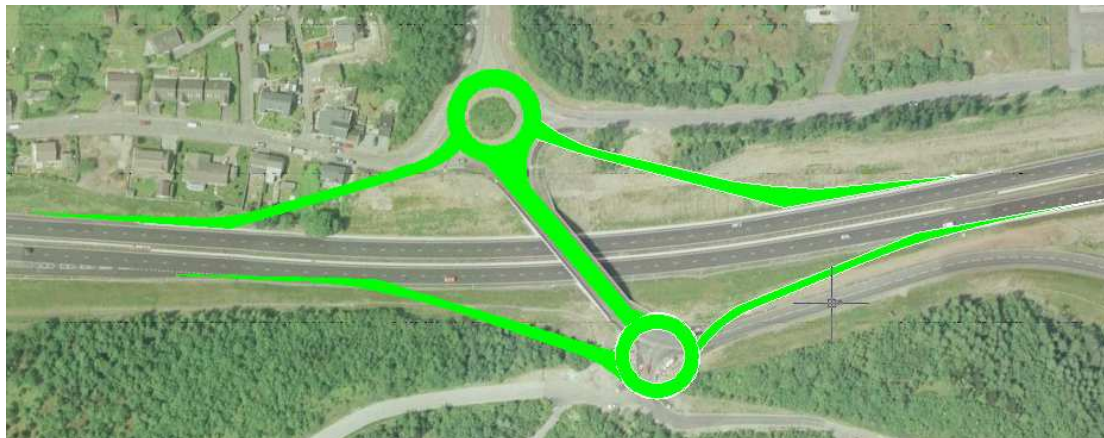


Figure 4. Option 1

The main issue with introducing these slips is the large amount of cutting that would be required to construct them. Appendix 1 includes figures which highlight the extent of the banks that would need to be cut into in order for option 1 to be constructed. A lay-by on the westbound carriageway would conflict with the proposed on slip and as such, would have to be relocated. The new proposed roundabout to the south would make it difficult to connect Merthyr Road to the roads continuing west. As a result, the road would need to be curtailed or realigned. The impact would be small though as vehicles could instead use the new westbound off slip and continue west off the new roundabout. For this reason realignment of Merthyr Road is seen as unnecessary. Using the existing structure to cross the A465 has both a positive and negative impact on the cost; the extra cost of the road improvements being offset by utilising the existing structure. The number of HGV's using Merthyr Road would be reduced to zero by introducing these slips, along with a slight reduction in other vehicular traffic for those cars using Merthyr Road to continue west. This would make the area outside the school a safer place for the children and the parents and while the width of carriageway would still remain reduced due to parked cars, the necessity of having a wider road would be eliminated. The impact on the local residents would be small, primarily being the two properties that would need to be bought out and demolished where the eastbound off slip would be built. There would be some disruption to those living in proximity to where the northern roundabout is to be improved. During construction, businesses in the industrial estate may be slightly affected by the new road construction but would ultimately benefit from the improved links. Bryn Bach Park should also benefit from improved access.

The next phase of work to take place on the A465 is also considered a major obstacle when considering option one. The slips to the east of Tafarnaubach crossing would more than likely conflict with the next stage of the proposed works and as such, a

design solution would be required to ensure the safety of the drivers using the road, based on a road safety audit and likely to include departures from standards. The horizontal alignment of the A465 in this location may give rise to difficulties in achieving compliance with standards. Further studies would be required to determine whether the Welsh Assembly Government would need to agree departures from standards for the slips road alignments and their integration with the existing A465.

2.2 Option 2 - Introduction of slip roads at Tafarnaubach Bridge utilising new structure

Option 2 is similar to Option 1 but rather than make use of the existing crossing, a new one is to be built for the industrial estate traffic. The existing crossing would be demolished to accommodate the new layout. As option 1, on and off slips are to be constructed on both the eastbound and westbound carriageways of the A465, with the roundabout to the north of the carriageway requiring improvement and a completely new roundabout to be built on the south side (see figure 5).

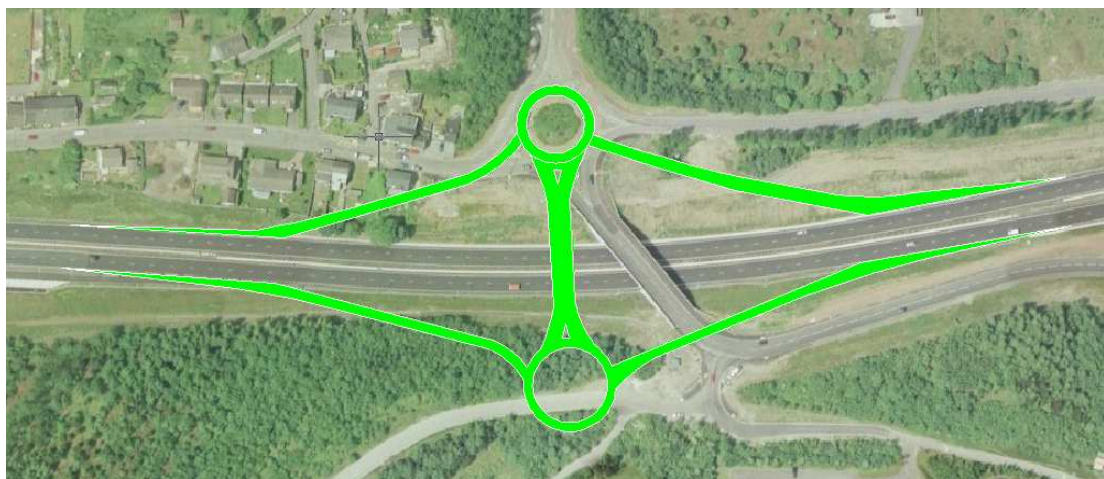


Figure 5. Option 2

The main issue with option 2, like option 1, is the amount of earth bank cutting that would be required to construct the slips roads in both directions. The lay-by on the westbound carriageway would have to be relocated or removed because of the on slip proposed. The differences between Options 1 and 2 are related to cost and ease of integrated current transport links. Obviously by demolishing the existing structure and constructing a new one, the overall cost will be increased in comparison with option 1. However, due to the lack of skew on the proposed new crossing, a more geometrically sound roundabout could be constructed and a more efficient gyratory system installed. This option would also eliminate the need to realign or curtail Merthyr Road, as it could be linked to the new roundabout. The number of HGV's using Merthyr Road would be reduced to zero by introducing these slips, along with a slight reduction in other vehicular traffic for those cars that use Merthyr Road to continue west. This would make the area outside the school much safer for the children and the parents and while the width of carriageway would still remain reduced due to parked cars, necessity of having a wider road would be eliminated. The impact on local residents would be as option 1 with the demolition of two properties required to make room for the new off slip. There would again be some

minimal disruption to the local residents while the northern roundabout was improved. Those people that reside close to the Tafarnaubach crossing but have to join the A465 at Nant-y-Bwch roundabout would benefit from the closer links to the main carriageways. Local businesses would again be minimally affected during the construction of the new links but would eventually benefit from improved access. Bryn Bach Park would also benefit from the improved infrastructure. There is a potential for environmental impact on the park dependent on the finalised size and position of the proposed new roundabout to the south.

The next phase of work to take place on the A465 is also considered a major obstacle when considering option two. The slips to the east of Tafarnaubach crossing would more than likely conflict with the next stage of the proposed works and as such, a design solution would be required to ensure the safety of the drivers using the road, based on a road safety audit and likely to include departures from standards. The horizontal alignment of the A465 in this location may give rise to difficulties in achieving compliance with standards. Further studies would be required to determine whether the Welsh Assembly Government would need to agree departures from standards for the slips road alignments and their integration with the existing A465.

2.3 Option 3 - Introduction of slip roads at Tafarnaubach Bridge and the crossing into Llechryd to the west

Option 3 proposes that on and off slips are added on the east and westbound carriageways joining the A465 although rather than have all four links at the Tafarnaubach crossing, with option 3, only two are located there. The westbound off slip and the eastbound on slip are to be constructed at the Tafarnaubach bridge (see figure 6). The existing crossing is to be utilised.

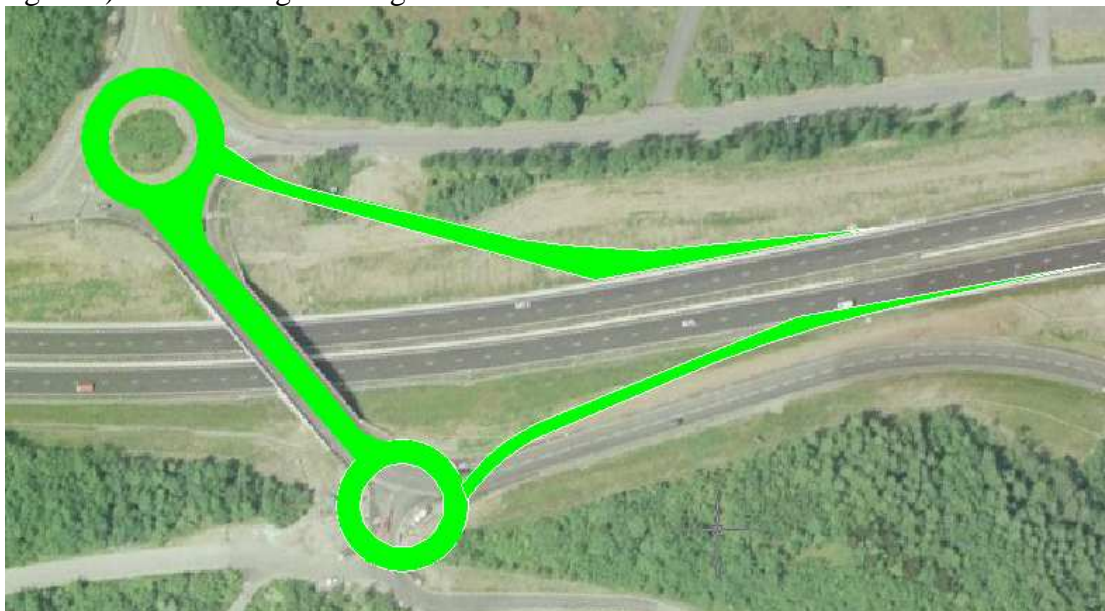


Figure 6. Option 3 at Tafarnaubach Crossing

This leaves the westbound on slip and the eastbound off slip to be constructed at the crossing to the west (into Llechryd) as shown on figure 7.



Figure 7. Option 3 at Llecryd Crossing

Due to the steep banks and limited infrastructure immediately parallel to the A465, the number of viable alternate slip locations was extremely limited. The slip location has to be close enough to the industrial estate to ensure that HGV drivers do not continue using Merthyr Road for access. To ensure this is the case, the eastbound off slip is located to the west and the westbound off slip to the east. The steep earth banks again pose a problem regarding the amount of cutting required at the Tafarnaubach crossing but at the Llecryd crossing, the westbound off slip can be built making use of a small area of land adjacent to the highway at the same level. The loop shown would follow the lay of the land down from the level of the crossing to the level of the A465. Option 3 would require road improvement at the Tafarnaubach crossing in the form of the new and improved roundabouts and at the more westerly crossing in the form of integrating the new slips into the current road layout.

The number of HGV's using Merthyr Road would be reduced to zero by introducing these slips, along with a slight reduction in other vehicular traffic for those cars that use Merthyr Road to continue west. This would make the area outside the school much safer for the children and the parents and while the width of carriageway would still remain reduced due to parked cars, necessity of having a wider road would be eliminated. An advantage of this option in comparison to the others would be that the disruption to the residents near the business park would be minimised, since no properties would be required to be bought out and demolished. Merthyr Road would again have to be curtailed or realigned, dependant on how important the continuation is seen to be. There would obviously still be minor interruption for other residents while the links and new roads were being constructed but this is unavoidable. Residents at Llecryd would also benefit from improved access to the A465 but would also have to suffer some disruption while the slips were being built. An issue that must be raised however is the use of the road through Princetown for HGV traffic that would use the more westerly slips. Some residents do park their cars on the kerb so again the road width for the HGV's would be reduced, hence, the problem could merely be passed further down the road, albeit with less risk due to the lack of the school. It could be seen that due to the lack of a high volume of traffic congregating at

one location along the HGV route, this issue can be dismissed. Businesses should only be impacted slightly whilst the construction work is taking place but eventually they should benefit from the improved links, as should Bryn Bach Park.

The next phase of work to take place on the A465 is also considered a major obstacle when considering option three. The slips to the east of Tafarnaubach crossing would more than likely conflict with the next stage of the proposed works and as such, a design solution would be required to ensure the safety of the drivers using the road, based on a road safety audit and likely to include departures from standards. The horizontal alignment of the A465 in this location may give rise to difficulties in achieving compliance with standards. Further studies would be required to determine whether the Welsh Assembly Government would need to agree departures from standards for the slips road alignments and their integration with the existing A465.

2.4 Option 4 - Introduction of lay-by outside of the Bryn Bach Junior School

Option 4 entails the construction of a new lay-by outside of the school, built on the school field adjacent to Merthyr Road (see figure 8.).



Figure 8. Option 4

Option 4 is the simplest option as it removes the need for any slips to be built. This option does not remove the HGV traffic that travels along Merthyr Road but does provide the children with a safe place to be picked up and dropped off by providing approximately 24 spaces off the main road. This option would make picking up and dropping children off much easier for the parents, along with reducing the congestion for the local residents. The number of vehicles that currently park on the kerb during peak times should be checked to ensure that the number of spaces proposed is adequate, otherwise cars may still be forced to park on the side of the road thus rendering this option ineffective. Potentially other traffic may try to use the lay-by during the times that it would be required by parents. This could be avoided by using signing etc to deter other vehicles. It would however need to be constructed during one of the school holiday periods as constructing during the school terms would make picking up and dropping off children chaotic as parents would have nowhere to park. The current traffic calming may have to be relocated based on the findings of a road

safety audit. The impact on residents would be minimal as the construction should only slightly impact the road and no properties would need to be demolished. This option also allows the current infrastructure to remain unaffected due to the lack of any new roads or roundabouts. HGV drivers should find no difficulty using Merthyr Road as access to the industrial estate since the route should be cleared. Businesses should be completely unaffected as no disruption will occur that could hinder the transport of goods etc. While the school users would benefit from option 4, the land that would be used will reduce the size of the playing fields, possibly having a negative impact on the children. This could be avoided if the fields were extended slightly at the north end of the school grounds.

2.5 Option 5 – Relocation of Bryn Bach Junior School

This option would completely achieve the objective of the brief but would be one of the more difficult and costly options to construct. This option is completely dependant on finding a new location for the school which could be troublesome. Further complexities include the type of construction to be used and whether or not the school is to be demolished and rebuilt in the same fashion elsewhere. If it was to be like for like then disruption to the school year would certainly occur. If a new school were to be built at a different location while the current school continued activity then other questions would need to be considered. Would the school need to be improved or expanded? What catchment area would the new school cover? Would new roads be required to link the new school to the current infrastructure? The cost of this option would however be offset by selling the current school land to residential developers (approximately 5 acres). While this is certainly a viable option, a feasibility study into a new school would need to be performed to confirm its appropriateness when compared to the other options.

2.6 Option 6 – Access via the A465 Nant-y-bwch Roundabout heading north through Trefil

This option utilises the existing road network through the hamlet of Trefil to the north of Nant-y-bwch roundabout on the A465. This network is shown in Figure 9 below:



Figure 9. Option 6 Trefil Road Network

From the plan above, a number of general issues immediately become apparent:

- Creation of a ‘rat-run’ through an urban area.
- Transfer of the conflict situation from the Bryn Bach school site to the Trefil area, without creating a true solution.

The option would include the stopping up of the Merthyr Road just South of the A465 to prevent any vehicular access past the school site.

A review of the potential route shows a number of issues that will create major problems for HGV vehicles



On leaving the A465 at Nant-y-bwch roundabout, vehicles have to travel up Llwyn Helyg road at a fairly steep gradient. This would create issues of noise and particulate pollution in this area. Compounded with this problem is the presence of a significant number of parked cars which necessitate stop/start manoeuvres throughout the route.

This situation is found all the way up to the junction with Waundeg, where vehicles would need to turn off to access the industrial area.



High density housing in this area also provides the potential for conflict between residents and through traffic.

Llwyn Helyg is also a bus route, with a number of bus stops along its length – again a high risk of conflict between through traffic and bus users would be realised if this route were used to access the industrial estate.



A public house is located on the proposed route – potential access to this establishment could create a high risk situation for HGV drivers travelling to the industrial estate.

The issues highlighted above and the various junctions along the route, eg as illustrated right, creates a route with extremely poor forward visibility, and peripheral visibility which would be extremely dangerous in a highly built up area.





Once vehicles have turned onto Waundeg , they would enter a further high density housing area, with parked cars, local pinch points and also an area of grassed common which is very likely to be used as a play area for the local residents. There is a children crossing warning sign in this area which emphasises this point.

The gradient of the roads in this area is still fairly steep, which continues the pollution risk along the route.



On turning of Waundeg, vehicles are required to follow a twisting, tortuous route along a narrow lane with parked cars on both side.

This area is still residential and the obviously residential/vehicle conflicts would still be potential hazards.



The road quality in this area is also particularly low.

Having reached the industrial estate, further hazards are still encountered. These include cars parked on both sides of the road, poor road geometry and also HGVs parked up and obstructing the local road network.



It should also be noted that there is currently further housing being developed to the North of the route taken. This will undoubtedly create further burden on the existing road network and make the proposed access route even less viable.



It is considered that in light of this route review and the totally impractical nature of the road network for HGVs, option 6 is not considered a viable option.

2.7 Option 7 - Introduction of slip roads at Tafarnaubach Bridge and the crossing into Llechryd to the west

Options 7 proposes that on and off slips are added on the eastbound carriageway joining the A465. The eastbound on slip is to be constructed at the Tafarnaubach bridge (see figure 10). The existing crossing is not to be used by HGV traffic accessing the industrial estate.



Figure 10. Tafarnaubach Crossing

This leaves the eastbound off slip to be constructed at the crossing to the west (into Llechryd) as shown on figure 11. It is from this location that an new road would be constructed off Merthyr Road running across the fields and behind the Prince of Wales Inn linking to the top road of the industrial estate.



Figure 11. Option 7 at Llechryd Crossing

Due to the steep banks and limited infrastructure immediately parallel to the A465, the number of viable alternate slip locations was limited. The slip location had to be close enough to the industrial estate to ensure that HGV drivers didn't continue using Merthyr Road for access. The steep earth banks again pose a problem regarding the amount of cutting required at both locations. By reducing the number of slip roads from four to two, the amount of construction is thus reduced and a cost saving made compared to the other slip road proposals. This option would require road improvement at the Tafarnaubach crossing in the form of a new and improved roundabout. At the Llecryd crossing location, links would be required from the farmhouse to the proposed new road and then from the new road to Merthyr Road. The proposed road travelling behind the pub crosses a culvert and as such, work to ensure continued use of this culvert would be required. Since access is only proposed to be on and off the eastbound carriageway, measures must be taken to ensure that HGV's do not continue to use Merthyr Road, both outside the school and to the west onto the B4257. Prohibition orders would be utilised outside the school and through Princetown, while the proposed road would only allow HGV traffic to enter the industrial estate, not leave it.

The number of HGV's using Merthyr Road would be reduced to zero by introducing these slips and prohibition orders, along with a slight reduction in other vehicular traffic for those cars that would use Merthyr Road to access the industrial park but could use the new proposed slips. This would make the area outside the school much safer for the children and the parents and while the width of carriageway would still remain reduced due to parked cars, necessity of having a wider road would be eliminated. An advantage of this option in comparison to the others would be that the disruption to the residents near the business park would be minimised, since no properties would be required to be bought out and demolished. Residents at Llecryd would also benefit from improved access to the A465 but would also have to suffer some disruption while the slips were being built. The slip to the west linking with the Llecryd crossing would pose a major safety and design concern as it would coincide with, or be very near the proximity of the existing Rhymney Interchange on slip. It would be dangerous for traffic to be attempting to get into the inside lane from both sides as well as not providing enough carriageway between slips to comply with design standards. Another issue identified is the possible increase in use of the road through Princetown for regular traffic that would use the more westerly slip. This is however thought to be an insignificant increase, one that the current infrastructure is capable of sustaining. Some residents do park their cars on the kerb so again the road width would be reduced but since no HGV traffic would be passing through Princetown, this does not matter. A slight mileage increase would occur for HGV traffic approaching from the East since they would have to use the Rhymney Interchange. Businesses should only be impacted slightly whilst the construction work is taking place but eventually they should benefit from the improved links, as should Bryn Bach Park. Land acquisition would form the majority of the cost for this scheme. Land to the west of Merthyr Road and before the Prince Of Wales Inn is owned by Mr John Bowen of Pen-Coed-Cae Farm, Princetown, whose agents are Montague and Harris. Mr Bowen has already put in for outline planning for a dwelling alongside the farm road adjacent to the Prince of Wales Inn but would see no issues in allowing the road to cross his land were an incentive provided. The land behind the Prince of Wales Inn and up to the industrial estate is owned by Caerphilly Council.

2.8 Option 8 - Introduction of Eastbound off and on slip roads at Llechryd.

Following suggestions from stakeholders, potential improvements to Option 7 have been identified. Option 8 proposes that eastbound on and westbound off slips are added on the A465 route. The eastbound on and westbound off slips are to be constructed at the Llechryd bridge. Westbound traffic leaving the industrial estate looking to access the A465 will need to continue through Llechryd and utilise the Rhymney Interchange roundabout to the west. Similarly, HGVs travelling east along the A465 will be required to access the industrial estate via the Rhymney Interchange. To avoid any potential conflict with nearby settlements along the old Merthyr road, a new road would be constructed just north of the Llechryd crossing running across the fields and behind the Prince of Wales Inn linking to the top road of the industrial estate (see figure12 below).



Figure 12 New Access Road to Industrial Estate

The existing crossing (Tafarnaubach bridge) is not to be used by HGV traffic accessing the industrial estate. At the Llechryd crossing location, links would be required from the farmhouse to the proposed new road and then from the new road to Merthyr Road along with the provision of new junctions where the on and off slip roads meet the current infrastructure. The proposed road travelling behind the pub crosses a culvert and as such, work to ensure continued use of this culvert would be required. Two further culverts are likely to be required for the eastbound off slip road. Particular consideration of potential environmental impacts in this location will also need consideration.

Measures would need to be put in place to ensure that HGV's do not continue to use Merthyr Road, both outside the school and to the west onto the B4257. Prohibition orders would be utilised outside the school and through Princetown. Along with these orders a carefully considered signing scheme would be required to ensure clear routes

to and from the industrial estate are well sign posted. Also, potential road safety issues would need clear demarcation eg on the westbound off slip proposed.

The number of HGV's using Merthyr Road would be reduced to zero by introducing these slips and prohibition orders, along with a slight reduction in other vehicular traffic for those cars that would use Merthyr Road to access the industrial park but could use the new proposed slips. This would make the area outside the school much safer for the children and the parents and while the width of carriageway would still remain reduced due to parked cars, necessity of having a wider road would be eliminated.

An advantage of this option in comparison to the others would be that the disruption to the residents near the business park would be minimised, since no properties would be required to be bought out and demolished. Residents at Llecryd would also benefit from improved access off the A465 but would also have to suffer some disruption while the slips and junctions were being built. Also, there would be increased HGV traffic to and from the Rymney Interchange.

Businesses should only be impacted slightly whilst the construction work is taking place but eventually they should benefit from the improved links, as should Bryn Bach Park.

Land acquisition could form a large amount of the cost for this scheme. Land to the west of Merthyr Road and before the Prince Of Wales Inn is owned by Mr John Bowen of Pen-Coed-Cae Farm, Princetown, whose agents are Montague and Harris. Mr Bowen has already put in for outline planning for a dwelling alongside the farm road adjacent to the Prince of Wales Inn but would see no issues in allowing the road to cross his land were an incentive provided. The land behind the Prince of Wales Inn and up to the industrial estate is owned by Caerphilly Council

3.0 Approximate Costs

	Cost (£)
Option 1	959,000
Option 2	1,492,000
Option 3	808,000
Option 4	113,000
Option 5	Cost dependant on proposed school
Option 6	Not Applicable
Option 7	1,244,000
Option 8	971,012

Note: All estimates exclude land costs

4.0 Option Summary

Option 1

- Utilises existing structure
- Removes HGV traffic from outside school
- Improves transport links
- Costly
- Could require departures from standards
- Excessive bank cutting
- Requires change of road layout at Merthyr Road
- Requires acquisition of 2 properties

Option 2

- Utilises new structure
- Removes HGV traffic from outside school
- Improves transport links
- Costly
- Could require departures from standards
- Excessive bank cutting
- Doesn't require road layout change at Merthyr Road
- Requires acquisition of 2 properties

Option 3

- Utilises existing structures
- Removes HGV traffic from outside school
- Improves transport links
- Costly
- Could require departures from standards
- Moderate bank cutting
- Requires change of road layout at Merthyr Road
- Doesn't require property acquisition
- Potentially just moving the problem from outside the school and into Princetown

Option 4

- No change in road layout anywhere
- Doesn't remove HGV traffic from outside school
- Provides safe lay-by for drop off/pick up
- Traffic study required to ensure adequate number of spaces
- Reduced cost
- Minimum disruption for residents
- No slips required

Option 5

- School relocated away from HGV traffic
- Possible disruption to school year

- **Requires feasibility report regarding location, new facilities etc**
- **Cost can be offset by sale of school grounds for residential**
- **No slips required**
- **New school would possibly need new transport links**

Option 6

- **Removes problem from outside school**
- **Creates potentially increased problem in Trefil**

Option 7

- **Utilises existing structures**
- **Removes HGV traffic from outside school and Princetown**
- **Improves transport links**
- **Costly**
- **Could require departures from standards**
- **Reduced bank cutting**
- **Increased land acquisition**
- **Increased mileage for HGV traffic travelling westbound**

Option 8

- **Utilises existing structures**
- **Provides a dedicated route to and from the Industrial Estate**
- **Removes HGV traffic from outside school and Princetown**
- **Improves transport links**
- **Costly**
- **Could require departures from standards (however less likely than Option 7)**
- **Increased land acquisition**
- **Possible environmental impact**
- **Increase in HGV traffic for settlements between Rhymney Interchange and the Llechryd crossing.**
- **No physical barrier to travel past Bryn Bach school**

5.0 Conclusion

The lowest cost option to alleviate traffic around the Bryn Bach school area is option 4. However, this does not remove the root problem of HGV traffic passing the school. Whilst future studies (Road Safety Audit or similar) may indicate that the risk is reduced to an acceptable level, the risk is not fully removed.

The cheapest option to remove the risk completely is option 8. This option will enable all HGVs to be banned from using the road adjacent to Bryn Bach School.

If option 8 were to be taken forward the alignment of the slip roads (particularly the on slip to the A465 eastbound) would need to be reviewed carefully to ensure that Departures from Standard were kept to a minimum. The initial line shown for the on slip mentioned has a particularly tight radius as shown in this preliminary feasibility review to minimise land take. This may need to be relaxed if design were taken forward, which would in turn require slightly greater land take. However, at this stage, this point is not considered an insurmountable problem.

Appendix 1 **Photographs**

Appendix 2

Drawings

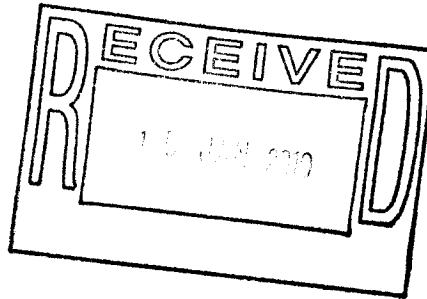
Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-099
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/06362/09

Val Lloyd AM
97 Pleasant Street,
Morrison,
Swansea,
SA6 6HJ.



4 January 2010

Dear Val

I am responding to your letter of the 17th November regarding the petition for the multi-user pathway on the A40 trunk road at Talybont-on-Usk.

Each year, between the end of October and the beginning of March, the Welsh Assembly Government appraises and then prioritises all potential improvement schemes of the type in question for inclusion in its planned programme of work on the motorway and trunk road network in the following financial year.

In carrying out this exercise the key priorities are maintaining the long term safety and integrity of the network and delivery of the objectives for transport set out in 'One Wales' and the Wales Transport Strategy.

Programmes of work are finalised prior to the start of the financial year once detailed budgets have been set. I should therefore be able to advise you further on the status of this scheme around April time.

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-172
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/06296/09

Val Lloyd AM
97 Pleasant Street,
Morrison,
Swansea,
SA6 6HJ.

12 January 2010

Dea Val

Thank you for your letter dated 16th November regarding the proposed re-introduction of the Swansea to Cork Ferry service. A launch date of 1st March 2010 is still targeted and the intention is to secure the crew in January, bringing the ferry into Swansea Dry Docks in the early part of the New Year.

Regarding funding, as a consequence of a shortfall of the working capital and infrastructure spend, which is split across Swansea and Cork, there exists a funding gap. Finance Wales are currently exploring the possibility of a commercial lending, which in addition to further investment from the West Cork Tourism Co-operative, could reduce the residual funding gap to circa £500,000.

Funding negotiations are ongoing with the Irish Government, and a meeting is planned before Christmas with the Irish Prime Minister to discuss some possible funding towards infrastructure costs.

My officials continue to work closely with the Co-Operative members, and a meeting is scheduled before Christmas between *Visit Wales* and *Faillte Ireland* in order to help facilitate maximising tourism opportunities.

I will write again following these meetings to keep you updated.

Yours
Ieuan

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Ffacs * Fax 029 2089 8198
PS.DeputyFirstMinister@wales.gsi.gov.uk



13 JAN 2010

Ms Val Lloyd
Chair Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

14 January 2010

Dear Ms Lloyd,

RE: Petition: Paul Sartori Foundation

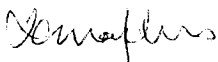
Thank you for the communication sent to the Chairman of Paul Sartori Foundation who delivered a Petition on behalf of the people of Pembrokeshire. This petition was not instigated by the Paul Sartori Foundation but by the community of Pembrokeshire.

After the petition was delivered to the Assembly an increase in funding was made to our charity and subsequent funding has been increased.

As a charity we continue to receive the majority of our funding from the generous and selfless fundraising conducted by a range of individuals and community groups.

We believe that the petition did have the desired effect of creating awareness about the nature and needs of our service.

Yours sincerely,


pp Roger Jones
Chairman, Board of Trustees

Paul **Sartori** Foundation,
31 Haven Road, Haverfordwest
Pembrokeshire SA61 1DU
t: (01437) **763223**
f: (01437) 765755
e: enquiries@paulsartori.org.uk
w: paulsartori.org.uk

Val Lloyd - Chair, Petitions Committee

National Assembly for Wales

Re: P-03-204 Public Accountability and Consultation in Higher Education

Saturday, 19 December 2009

Dear Ms Lloyd

Thank you for your letter dated the 18th December 2009 and your invitation respond to the letter from former Education Minister Jane Hutt dated the 18th December 2009. I am more than happy to attend a meeting of the committee to give oral evidence in support of comments made in reply.

I draw your attention to the press release dated 2nd August 2009 from the former DIUS Committee concerning its Eleventh Report entitled Students and Universities to whom I submitted a memorandum as evidence. While I fully appreciate that Petitions Committee cannot get involved in personal issues, my comments are in keeping with its recommendations that was based upon personal experience. Therefore, in that context, I have used the knowledge gained from my experience as a mature student and from assisting others.

Assembly Government Powers

Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (c.13) as amended by the Education Act 2002 C.32 and by SI 2005/3238;

- section 15: Power to specify which existing institutions will fall into the further education corporations.
- sections 16 and 51: Power to incorporate educational institutions in Wales as corporations.
- section 17(2): Power to appoint 'operative date' for 'further education corporation' (a body corporate established under section 15 or 16 of this Act).
- section 19(4AC): Power to allow in limited cases a further education corporation to form, participate or become a member of a charity.
- section 22: Power to approve or notify instruments of government of such corporations.
- section 27: Power to dissolve further education corporations.

Power to designate institutions as eligible to receive funds from the Council.

- section 38: Power to determine rate of interest and the account of capital to be paid by a Council to a local authority as excepted loan liabilities.
- **section 47: Order transferring higher education corporation to the further education sector.**
- section 49A: Power to issue guidance as to the consultation which should be undertaken by further education authorities.
- section 50: Regulations requiring further education institutions to publish prescribed information.
- section 57: Only applies to Further Education. Power to intervene in the affairs of an institution in the event of mismanagement or breach of duty or loss of efficiency or failing to give an acceptable standard of education or training. Power to give directions.
- section 57A: Duty to give a statement of policy as to their exercise of powers under section 57. Duty to review it regularly. Power to revise it. Duty to lay statement or revised statement to the Assembly.

- section 62(3): Power to appoint chair and members of the Higher Educational Funding Council for Wales.
- section 65: Power to fund Council.
- section 69: Power to require information from Councils.
- section 78: Power to direct the financial year for higher education corporations.
- section 82: Power to exercise joint functions to the extent that the Welsh Ministers is discharging its functions under Part 2 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.
- Schedule 1 paragraph 4: Power to remove member of either the Further or Higher Funding Councils for Wales.
- Schedule 1 paragraph 11: Power of representative of the Secretary of State to attend meetings of either Councils.

Higher Education and Funding Council (HEFCW)

“HEFCW consults with the HE sector in Wales and, occasionally, with other interested parties in order to get a wide range of views to feed into policies that affect HEIs. These consultations are publically available on HEFCW’s website. Section 66 FHEA 1992 requires HEFCW to consult on the terms and conditions it proposes to impose on funding made to HEIs.” Jane Hutt

There were two consultations published on HEFCW’s website during 2009, what is missing is public consultation concerning the financial collapse of the University of Wales Lampeter and subsequent merger with Trinity University College. The public should have been consulted on this merger and the conditions upon which they would be allowed more of our money. If this happened to a school college or hospital there would be a public outcry with people quite rightly demanding to know what went wrong, and why nobody has been held to account for what is an obvious failure.

With regard to the collapse of the University of Wales Lampeter, there is considerable evidence that financial failure was partly to do with the adverse publicity concerning the appalling way in which it treats its students. Clearly, there is a need for an inquiry into the student experience at Lampeter so that lessons can be learned.

HEFCW has the statutory roles of fund provider, financial regulator and quality assurance with regard to standards of conduct and governance. Therefore, higher education does not have the inherent safeguards of these duties divided amongst different bodies with respective statutory duties that prevent commercial, financial and self-interest overriding student needs.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 took away the power of the Auditor General for Wales to intervene and take over the running of an HEI on the grounds of financial mismanagement. HEFCW has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Welsh Assembly Government to provide value for money. However, the Welsh Audit Office WAO has confirmed they have no powers of intervention and that members of the public have no right of complaint to the WAO, to the institution or its auditors.

HEFCW claims it has a procedure for dealing with allegations of financial mismanagement, which from experience amounts to referring the complainant back to the institution. In theory HEFCW have the power to impose conditions on HEI’s but there is the danger that in doing so is going to be viewed as a failure to regulate. I suggest this is relevant to the reasons why there has been no inquiry into the failure of the University of Wales Lampeter.

Higher Education Act 2004 Student Complaints Scheme

My complaints while at Lampeter were outside the remit of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) and unfortunately were eventually heard by the then Visitor Bishop Carl Cooper after a bizarre battle lasting several years. During this time, I had to explain to both the Visitor and Academic Registrar at Lampeter what the rules were by sending them both a student leaflet. Recent contacts from students at Lampeter are evidence that rules and procedures are still being ignored, and I doubt if the OIA would have made the effort or has the remit to investigate serious issues of corporate maladministration.

The growing number of complaints to the OIA which attracted media attention during the middle of this year does not tell the full story and there is growing concern that the independent adjudicator being four fifths owned by the universities is not as 'independent' as they claim. Under the Act student complaints to the OIA, carry privilege from legal action for any allegation they may make. However, it is common practice for students to have to apply to make a complaint on an *Application for Consideration of a Complaint* Form. The form clearly states that any complaint the university thinks unjustified will be dismissed without consideration, and will not hesitate to take action against any student that it considers to have made a malicious accusation.

This is no idle threat I can testify that students will receive a letter from solicitors in my case Eversheds threatening a claim for damages and being prevented from repeating such accusations by means of a High Court injunction. The student is required to sign an undertaking never to tell the truth again in generous consideration of the University not taking any further action. The psychological effects of this having been the victim of injustice or abuse are no different from having them beaten up down a dark alley to keep them quiet; it can leave them just as dead. For these reasons, very few students will stand up to this kind of intimidation and we may never know the full extent of what goes on inside these autonomous public spending bodies.

Under the Act students have a right to complaint to the degree awarding body and for many that is the Federal University of Wales who also have or did have a policy under Appendix J of their financial regulations concerning the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA), which includes students. All universities are required to have a policy but few actually comply with the law. In pursuing a complaint, I was informed by the OIA that as the Federal University does not have any complaints procedures then they cannot investigate any complaint. This despite a requirement by the guidelines issued by HEFCW, the Committee of University Chairmen (CUC), the QAA, the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life, and Administrative Law to name but a few and something that HEFCW has chosen to ignore.

I wrote to the Visitor HM the Queen who while HM does not have any powers she did write to the former First Minister Rhodri Morgan the issue, who upon receiving it placed it on file and ignored it as it said nothing new! Attempts to force an investigation under their policy under PIDA, which is not enforceable in law were unsuccessful.

Quality Assurance and Accountability

Previous attempts to involve the Quality Assurance agency in my complaints about the University of Wales Lampeter were met with the reply that the QAA has quote "no locus in the matters that you raise". Further questioning their role to reassure the public about standards in higher education simply referred me back to this response. However, with the passage of time the QAA who by monitoring my website has in effect validated all my concerns about Lampeter

In August 2008, the QAA devised a Cause for Concern (CFC) procedure which according to its own guidelines on complaints all students should be informed of its existence and right to make a CFC complaint accordingly. Unfortunately, knowledge of this procedure is not finding its way to the students who need to know; in fact, it is being withheld while universities hide behind the law to conceal maladministration. The Quality Assurance Agency unlike ESTYN does not have any statutory duties it is simply contracted by HEFCW to fulfil its statutory duties as stated by Jane Hutt

“HEFCW has a statutory obligation under section 70 of FHEA 1992 to ensure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in institutions where HEFCW provide, or are considering providing, financial support.”

To quote the QAA

“We carry out services under contract with HEFCE and HEFCW and our contracts are web-published. QAA has no statutory role, has no formal connection with Parliament and we are not covered by the Parliamentary Ombudsman.” <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/contracts/HEFCW2006-09.pdf> The current contract expires at the end of 2009.

In November of this year, I made three Cause for Concern CFC complaints to the QAA concerning the University of Wales, Trinity University College and the University of Wales Lampeter in some cases dating back to 2002/3. More details about the procedure are here <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/causesforconcern/default.asp> I have raised concerns with the QAA about the structure of this process with regard to complex issues concerning injustice and abuse.

On Friday the 27th November for fear of further abuse I was no longer able to continue with my CFC complaint. There is no doubt in my that was the sole reason it was published. I immediately submitted a complaint to HEFCW and asked the QAA what they proposed to do about the situation and what protection were they going to offer to prevent such deliberate attacks on students or staff who blow the whistle. I was told that the matter would be discussed between senior staff but unfortunately, I have not received a reply and suggest the answer is nothing and the QAA is content to ignore the matter. In reply to my complaint Richard Hirst Director of Finance and Corporate Services stated

“The term was used only as a shortcut to a specific page which had previously been accessed.”

My server logs state as fact that the specific page in question concerns the suicide risk to students at the University of Wales Lampeter. I include this because there is a real the possibility that these issues may well be raised in a Coroners Court, and I suggest you compare the impact of a sick mind using such terms if they came from the head of a school, college, or children’s services department or any public servant outside of higher education.

Despite this being gross misconduct and libellous my complaint was not taken seriously, no action was taken, I have not received an offer to make amends, and I have not been informed of the name of the person concerned. Moreover, server logs suggest that I was the topic of conversation between a number of interested parties. I have evidence that board members are fully aware of these matters and in my opinion, they have a case to answer for failing in their duty either legally or morally to act and demand an inquiry.

Under HEFCW complaints procedures this matter will be referred to the Chief Executive, then a Complaints Board and then to the Public Services Ombudsman.

I will resume my CFC complaints to the QAA together with another CFC complaint about HEFCW, however, as I have already stated the QAA is only a contractor and commercial issues may well outweigh student concern. By comparison, ESTYN would have nothing to fear from addressing such appalling conduct from a financial provider with regard to schools and colleges.

I have already sought advice from the Public Services Ombudsman with regard to the QAA in this matter and I am waiting for a reply from their legal department, however, I suggest HEFCW will have to answer for any failure by the QAA in these matters. I expect there will be an inquiry by the PSO into HEFCW so if it can be proved that members of the board are involved or have failed to act then I can petition the Assembly to remove them from office.

HEFCW and Freedom of Information FOI

I have made a formal complaint to the Information Commissioner concerning the refusal of HEFCW to supply a copy of the Haines Watts report into the finances of the University of Wales Lampeter. In their reasons given for their refusal the Chief Executive has failed to act reasonable nor has he reached his decisions in a reasonable way. Based upon recent rulings he fails to understand the difference between commercial and financial interests and that he is concealing the failure of HEFCW to ensure proper governance for fear that the merger with Trinity University College will not take place. He fails to understand the FOI cannot be used to conceal maladministration.

It is an example of where we the taxpaying public have every right to know what went wrong and why nobody has been held to account. The Welsh Assembly needs to bring an end to kind of serfdom and adhere to the old saying no taxation without representation.

HEFCW and the Charity Act 2006

After considerably lobbying by myself with the Charity Commission I am pleased to say that the Charity Commission has confirmed that unlike its English counterpart HEFCE, HEFCW will not be the regulator for Welsh Universities, that job will be undertaken by the Charity commission itself.

The main evidence for stating that HEFCW is unfit for purpose was pointing out to HEFCW who claim to have a responsibility for financial management. I pointed out to HEFCW the guidelines issued by the then Department of Trade and Industry DTI on these matters. The response from HEFCW was that "DTI guidelines were a matter for them", they totally disregarded the fact that such guidelines are also referred to by the Charity Commission as applying to Charity Companies or 'Charcoms' such as universities and that HEFCW had a duty to investigate and ensure compliance. HEFCW has demonstrated a total disregard to ensure value for taxpayers' money.

Other Quality Assessments

"The Assembly Government seek the advice of the QAA as to whether the institution has met the criteria." Jane Hutt

The QAA is neither independent or impartial it is only a contractor with no statutory duties nor accountability to the Public Services Ombudsman and as such has the inherent danger that commercial

concerns may outweigh the public interest. It has yet to prove itself of being able to investigate concerns regarding HEFCW in the same way it would investigate a University.

The Need for Change

I make no apology for raising the above issues as it is evidence to substantiate the advice from an expert in University governance that the only way to bring this sort of maladministration to light is to publish it in a magazine or journal. However, getting such material published is not easy and so the only way to tell the truth is by publishing it to the Internet with resulting threats of legal action at public expense to conceal their own misconduct. I have responded with the invitation to go ahead in the knowledge that what I am saying is based on fact and explains why the invitation was ignored.

Clearly, the above issues need to be addressed to prevent Universities from hiding behind academic independence to conceal maladministration; moreover, something needs to be done about the culture of denigrating students who complain. Ministers and Assembly Members are choosing to ignore their constituents in these matters.

Students as Vulnerable Consumers

The introduction of loans and special help for the disadvantaged has meant the erosion of social class based entry into higher education; however, what is disturbing are the reports of a 75% drop out rate of students in this group.

With poor regulation, inadequate accountability and vast amounts of debts from loans hanging over their heads, students are in a vulnerable position with regard to making any complaint for which there seems to be automatic retribution as a conditioned response. Worse still is the abuse of office, position and power in the sexual predation of students.

The doctrine of *ultra vires* was used by the Thatcher government to curb student power and has gone too far. To balance out this inherent disadvantage so that student and staff can as those in higher education claim to 'work in partnership', then students should be designated vulnerable consumers to create a level playing field.

versheds LLP – Abuse of Dominant Market Position

Eversheds LLP has around 100 UK universities on their books including the University of Wales Lampeter and I believe Trinity University College. Various listings on the internet for higher education solicitors state that Eversheds has the higher education market 'sewn up'. I think 'stitched up' would be a better description. Eversheds were instrumental in setting up the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) for which it provided legal advice. The OIA does not meet the standard of impartiality in other regulatory bodies nor in the mind of students or Joe Public.

This situation is evidence that the dominant market position of Eversheds not only acts against the interests of students as vulnerable consumers but those of the taxpaying public and society as a whole.

Lecturers Regulation and Registration

Lecturers should be subject to the same regulation the same as teachers and registered with the equivalent as the General Teaching Council whose purpose is as follows:

- To deal with cases where it is alleged that a teacher has behaved unacceptably or their teaching is seriously below standard. Cases can be referred by employers, government departments students, families or the public.
- To issue various sanctions, ranging from a reprimand to a prohibition order, which bans the teacher from teaching.
- To have a responsibility to act on these allegations which is set out in the Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered Lecturers.

Public Appointments

I have complained to the Commissioner for Public Appointments about the Chair of HEFCW but she decreed that the appointment did not break and rules, but then the same was said about the abuse of MP's and AM's expenses which also complied with the rules and I suggest changes based upon the same principles are made accordingly.

Change in the Culture of Higher Education

To look at the culture more closely here are the current Higher Education and Funding Council (HEFCW) Council Members from the HEFCEW website.

Chair - Mr Roger Thomas

Former: Chair of Governors and Pro-Chancellor of University of Glamorgan, and Chairman of Chairs of Higher Education Wales. In the latter capacity, he was a member of the Chairs' Group of Committee of University Chairmen (CUC) and also a Member of the Board of Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA); and the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff. A former senior partner at Eversheds solicitors and DCELLS Ministerial Advisory Group Review of Higher Education in Wales

Chief Executive - Professor Philip Gummett

Members

- Mr David Allen Registrar and Deputy Chief Executive, University of Exeter
- Dame Sandra Burslem Former Vice-Chancellor, Manchester Metropolitan University
- Professor Mari Lloyd-Williams Professor and Director of Academic palliative and Supportive Care Studies Group, University of Liverpool
- Professor Leni Oglesby Former Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Teeside
- Professor D Garel Rhys Former Director of the Centre for Automotive Industry Research, Cardiff University
- Mr Kenneth Richards Honorary Research Fellow at the Cardiff School of Social Sciences
- Professor Sir Brian Smith Former Vice-Chancellor Cardiff University
- Mrs Pauline Thomas Head of Abertillery Comprehensive School
- Professor Robin Williams Former Vice-Chancellor, Swansea University

The Concept of Groupthink

The list of notable academics has created a situation whereby academics provide a public service, academics provide the money, academics provide the regulation for the money, and academics are responsible for standards, as a result, consultation and accountability is purely 'academic' and out of

touch with the real world. Moreover, I suggest the rights of the individual and public consultation is ignored and that politicians and civil servants seem to be afraid of making any sort of challenge despite the obvious maladministration staring them in the face. From the Wikipedia.

“Groupthink is a type of thought exhibited by group members who try to minimize conflict and reach consensus without critically testing, analyzing, and evaluating ideas. Individual creativity, uniqueness, and independent thinking are lost in the pursuit of group cohesiveness, as are the advantages of reasonable balance in choice and thought that might normally be obtained by making decisions as a group. During groupthink, members of the group avoid promoting viewpoints outside the comfort zone of consensus thinking. A variety of motives for this may exist such as a desire to avoid being seen as foolish, or a desire to avoid embarrassing or angering other members of the group. Groupthink may cause groups to make hasty, irrational decisions, where individual doubts are set aside, for fear of upsetting the group’s balance. The term is frequently used pejoratively, with hindsight.

Causes of groupthink

*Highly cohesive groups are much more likely to engage in groupthink, because their cohesiveness often correlates with unspoken understanding and the ability to work together with minimal explanations (e.g., techspeak or telegraphic speech). Vandana Shiva refers to a lack of diversity in worldview as a "monoculture of the mind" while James Surowiecki warns against loss of the "cognitive diversity" that comes from having team members whose educational and occupational backgrounds differ. The closer group members are in outlook, the less likely they are to raise questions that might break their cohesion. Although Janis sees group cohesion as the most important antecedent to groupthink, he states that it will not invariably lead to groupthink: 'It is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition' (Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 1972). According to Janis, group cohesion will only lead to groupthink if one of the following two antecedent conditions is present:*

- *Structural faults in the organization: insulation of the group, lack of tradition of impartial leadership, lack of norms requiring methodological procedures, homogeneity of members' social background and ideology.*
- *Provocative situational context: high stress from external threats, recent failures, excessive difficulties on the decision-making task, moral dilemmas.*

Social psychologist Clark McCauley's three conditions under which groupthink occurs:

- *Directive leadership.*
- *Homogeneity of members' social background and ideology.*
- *Isolation of the group from outside sources of information and analysis.*

Symptoms of groupthink

To make groupthink testable, Irving Janis devised eight symptoms indicative of groupthink (1977).

1. *Illusions of invulnerability creating excessive optimism and encouraging risk taking.*
2. *Rationalizing warnings that might challenge the group's assumptions.*
3. *Unquestioned belief in the morality of the group, causing members to ignore the consequences of their actions.*
4. ***Stereotyping those who are opposed to the group as weak, evil, biased, spiteful, disfigured, impotent, or stupid.***

5. *Direct pressure to conform placed on any member who questions the group, couched in terms of "disloyalty".*
6. *Self censorship of ideas that deviate from the apparent group consensus.*
7. *Illusions of unanimity among group members, silence is viewed as agreement.*
8. *Mind guards — self-appointed members who shield the group from dissenting information.*

Groupthink, resulting from the symptoms listed above, results in defective decision making. That is, consensus-driven decisions are the result of the following practices of groupthinking

1. *Incomplete survey of alternatives*
2. *Incomplete survey of objectives*
3. *Failure to examine risks of preferred choice*
4. *Failure to re-evaluate previously rejected alternatives*
5. *Poor information search*
6. *Selection bias in collecting information*
7. *Failure to work out contingency plans.*

Yours sincerely

Trevor Mayes

Appendix 1

Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee - Eleventh Report

Students and Universities

Session 2008-09

Press Release - 2 August 2009

UNFIT STANDARDS SYSTEM, 'DEFENSIVE COMPLACENCY' FROM THE TOP AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PART-TIME AND MATURE STUDENTS

MPS DELIVER WAKE UP CALL TO HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

The Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee calls for urgent changes in the higher education sector, in a report published today examining students' university experience.

The report says the current system for safeguarding standards is out of date, inconsistent and should be replaced. The Quality Assurance Agency should be transformed into an independent Quality and Standards Agency with a specific standards remit.

The Committee also says that the culture at the top of the sector should change. The Committee found defensive complacency in the leadership of the sector and no appetite to explore key issues such as the reasons for the proportional increase in first and upper second class honours degrees in the past 15 years.

It is unacceptable to the Committee that Vice-Chancellors could not give a straightforward answer to the simple question of whether first class honours degrees achieved at different universities indicate the same or different intellectual standards.

Support for and treatment of part-time and mature students should be improved - the current system amounts to a form of discrimination. The Government's forthcoming review of fees needs to examine all aspects of support for part-time and mature students, both direct financial support and changes to allow universities the flexibility to attract and retain part-time and mature students.

The Committee also says the current bursary arrangements introduced to cushion the effect of top-up fees on students from poorer backgrounds need to be replaced with a national system. It is not fair that students from identical backgrounds with the same financial need receive significantly varying bursaries depending on which university they attend.

The report also says:

- Further education colleges should play a larger role in the development of higher education. Following the model of American community colleges, a student should be able to start higher education in a further education college and then transfer to a university.
- The Government should help create a credit transfer system which will allow credit earned in one institution to be transferred to another.
- Schemes such as those run by Leeds University for students from disadvantaged backgrounds should be standard practice across the sector.
- **There is a lack of consistency across the higher education sector, despite excellent practice in places, and codes of practice applying to all institutions receiving public money should be introduced.**
- Elements of chance in the admissions process should be reduced so that students get a fairer deal on access to university.
- **Protection for whistleblowers should be addressed - current arrangements are inadequate.**

Phil Willis MP, the Chairman of the Committee, said: "We do need to recognise that our higher education system is regarded as world class, and we celebrate that. But to remain competitive in the 21st century the complacency we detected must be addressed.

"We are extremely concerned that inconsistency in standards is rife and there is a reluctance to address this issue. The QAA needs radical transformation if we as a country are going to meet the needs of a 21st century higher education system with 2 million students."

"Much more needs to be done to help part-time and mature students. There has to be equal treatment for all students and a system that has the flexibility to take account of the needs of, for example, a mature student who has family commitments."

"The current bursary arrangements are not working. On any objective test—widening participation, meeting student need or fair access to higher education—they fail both the student and the taxpayer. We therefore call for a national system anchored to student need."

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/ius/ius_020809.cfm

Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth
Minister for Heritage



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-217
Ein cyf/Our ref AFJ/05671/09

Val Lloyd AM
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

12 JAN 2010

11 January 2010

Dear Val,

Thank you for your letter of 1 December regarding the petition for the National Library of Wales (the Library) to reverse its decision to close on Saturdays from 1 April 2009.

It is extremely important that as many people as possible benefit from the services provided by Welsh libraries. In my Remit Letter to the President of the National Library of 24 March 2009, I stated that:

"I consider it to be extremely important that the Library reopens on Saturdays as soon as possible in order to continue providing an accessible service for the people of Wales."

I raised the issue of re-opening on Saturdays during my recent six monthly meeting with the Library's President, Vice President and Librarian on 2 December. I am pleased to report that I am currently awaiting confirmation that the Library plans to re-open on Saturdays during 2010 and details on the level of service that will be offered.

Following the approval of the Welsh Assembly Government Budget on 8 December 2009 my officials are currently finalising the Library's grant-in-aid funding for 2010-11. The Library's funding settlement for 2010-11 will be set out in detail in my Remit Letter for 2010-11. In addition to the grant-in-aid, this will include £1 million from the Strategic Capital Investment Fund for the second year of the Library's project 'Welsh newspapers and magazines online'.

Alun Ffred Jones AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth/Minister for Heritage

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Edwina Hart MBE OStJ AM

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Our ref: EH/07571/09
Your ref: P-03-219

Val Lloyd AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

18 JAN 2010
9 JAN 2010

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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18 January 2010

Dear Val

Thank you for your further letter of 18 December on behalf of the Petitions Committee requesting details of the Pharmacy Task and Finish Group findings and the statutory Regulations governing the provision of pharmaceutical services in Wales.

As you know, the Emerging Themes report was published in October and the Task and Finish Group has since consulted further with key stakeholders in the development of work including Community Pharmacy Wales, the National Pharmacy Association and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, as well as with branches of pharmacy within the NHS.

A further report from the Group will be discussed at the National Advisory Board meeting on 18 January. I am pleased that workstreams have progressed and the Group, which has now evolved into a Strategic Delivery Group, will be focusing on the development of a clear vision for how pharmaceutical services will look in the future.

In particular, the Group has recognised that the Regulations in relation to applications for new pharmacies, relocations of existing pharmacies and appeals against these decisions are in need of review in order to develop a more planned approach to providing these essential services across Wales. The Group is currently working on defining both the remit and terms of reference of a review group to take this work forward. The Group will finalise their proposals at its next meeting on the 19 January and my officials will submit their recommendations to me for consideration shortly thereafter.

Edwina Hart



COMMUNITY PHARMACY WALES

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From: Russell Goodway OStJ, FRSA, Chief Executive

18 January 2010

Val Lloyd AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
CARDIFF
CF99 1NA

Dear Val

PETITION: PHARMACIES IN BARRY

I refer to your letter dated 18 December 2009 addressed to the Chairman of Community Pharmacy Wales (CPW) in the above connection. The Chairman has asked me to respond on his behalf.

CPW was simply seeking to explain that when giving a view in relation to a pharmacy application, it does so taking account of the regulations currently in force¹.

If the application of the regulations consistently gave rise to outcomes which appeared to be flawed or perverse then CPW would question the validity of the regulations and seek changes in those regulations. CPW is not aware that the application of the current regulations consistently gives rise to flawed or perverse outcomes.

I trust that this clarifies the statement contained in earlier correspondence.

For the record, CPW is not formally represented on the Pharmacy Task & Finish Group, although members of the CPW Board sit on the Group representing other organisations. Clearly, CPW is eager to be involved in the work of the Group and to provide any assistance the Group feels CPW can provide in connection with its deliberations.

With best wishes,

Sincerely
Russell

¹ The National Health Service (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 1992

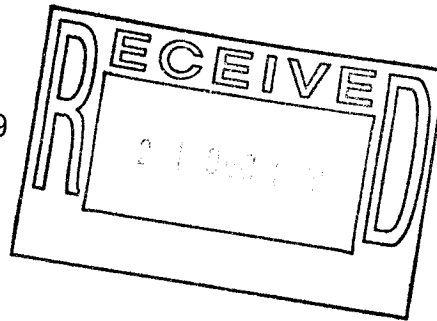
Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-220
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM 6391/09

Val Lloyd AM
97 Pleasant Street,
Morrison,
Swansea,
SA6 6HJ.



15 December 2009

Dea Val

I am responding to your letter of 24 November regarding the petition to lower the speed limit on the A40 near Abergavenny. You requested an update to my letter of 16 June that referred to previous preliminary work for the installation of narrow footway signs on the A40 south of Abergavenny town centre close to Station Road.

I am pleased to report that the necessary funding has been allocated to allow the scheme to progress. It is currently at the design stage and subject to a successful on site Road Safety Audit, to be undertaken shortly, the signs are scheduled for deployment in February 2010.

Ieuan

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/06611/09
Val Lloyd AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
Cardiff Bay
CARDIFF
CF99 1NA

12 January 2010

Dea Val

I am responding to your letter of 18th December 2009 sent on behalf of the Petitions Committee, seeking clarity on the time scale for the review of the speed limit on the A40(T) near Abergavenny, in accordance with the advice given in the Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales – Guidance document.

It is intended that all the speed limits across the trunk road network in Wales will be reviewed by December 2014.

The Assembly Government is currently developing a tool to prioritise individual routes within the wider review of the trunk road network. It is hoped that an initial list of prioritised sites for review will be prepared by Summer 2010.

I will write to you again in due course regarding the A40(T) near Abergavenny.

Ys

Ieuan

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

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Leighton Andrews AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg & Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref LA/05601/09

Val Lloyd AM
Chair of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1NA

6 January 2010

Dear Val,

Thank you for your letter dated 1st December. Throughout the autumn months, Childcare Sufficiency Assessment meetings have taken place between officials and Local Authorities. Although there are a few meetings still to take place, I can note the positive approach taken by Local Authorities, making the future visits both fruitful and progressive.

The visits have enabled officials to gain a sound knowledge of the local childcare issues and it is our aim to address these in our childcare policies. These will become more apparent once all these visits have taken place.

Yours ever

Leighton

Leighton Andrews AM
Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg & Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning

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Jane Davidson AC/AM

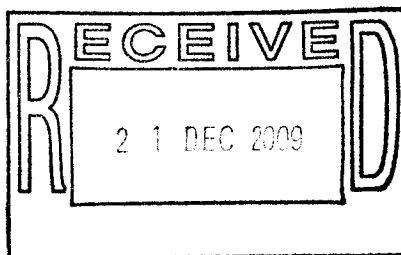
**Y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynaliadwyedd a Thai
Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing**



Eich cyf/Your ref: PET-03-231
Ein cyf/Our ref: JD/06535/09

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Val Lloyd AM
97 Pleasant Street,
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Swansea,
SA6 6HJ.



15th December 2009

Dear Val,

Thank you for your letter of 16 November 2009 sent to the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the petition, from the Glyncoirwg Action Group, on the proximity of wind turbines to residential dwellings. I have been asked to give a response to the issues of the current position on the proximity of wind turbines to residential dwellings, and the existence of wind turbine syndrome.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 8 'Renewable Energy' provides technical advice to supplement national planning policy on renewable energy set out in Planning Policy Wales and the Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement (MIPPS) 01/2005 'Planning for Renewable Energy'.

TAN 8 sets out guidance on the proximity of wind turbines to residential dwellings at paragraph 3.4, Annex D (page 59) and states that 500m is currently considered a typical separation distance between a wind turbine and residential property to avoid unacceptable wind impacts. The research 'Facilitating Planning for Renewable Energy in Wales: Meeting the Target - Final Report' carried out by Arup in 2004, commissioned by the Assembly Government in 2002, concluded that wind industry professionals generally accept 500m as a suitable separation distance between a wind turbine and residential property/community to avoid unacceptable noise impacts. However, the Arup report indicates that the buffer should be applied flexibly and that separation distances can be judged locally as part of the refinement work by local planning authorities on a case-by-case basis, taking into account issues such as topography and orientation when taking decisions on planning applications for wind turbines. This is reflected in TAN 8, paragraph 3.4, Annex D (page 59), which explains that the buffer when applied in a rigid manner can lead to conservative results, so some flexibility is advised.

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In terms of Scottish policy, Scotland has the responsibility for designing and implementing its own policies on renewable energy, and as a result I cannot offer comments on their policies.

Noise generation from wind turbines can be influenced by landscape, orientation, turbine size, and wind speed but it is not always directly related to distance. All of these factors need to be considered when planning applications are being determined. The minimum desirable distance between wind turbines and occupied buildings calculated on the basis of expected noise levels and visual impact will usually be greater than that required to meet safety requirements.

Well designed wind farms should be located so that increases in ambient noise levels around noise-sensitive developments are kept to acceptable levels with relation to existing background noise. This will normally be achieved through good design of turbines and through allowing sufficient distance between the turbines and any existing noise-sensitive development.

Noise levels from turbines are generally low and, under most operating conditions, it is likely that turbine noise would be completely masked by wind-generated background noise. The report "The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms" (ETSU-R-97), describes a framework for the measurement of wind farm noise and gives indicative noise levels calculated to offer a reasonable degree of protection to wind farm neighbours, without placing unreasonable restrictions on wind farm development or adding unduly to the costs and administrative burdens on wind farm developers or local planning authorities.

The report presents the findings of a cross-interest Noise Working Group and makes a series of recommendations that can be regarded as relevant guidance on good practice.

There is no evidence that ground transmitted low frequency noise from wind turbines is at a sufficient level to be harmful to human health. A comprehensive study of vibration in the vicinity of a modern wind farm was undertaken in the UK in 1997 by ETSU for the DTI ("Low Frequency Noise and Vibrations Measurement at a Modern Wind Farm" (ETSU W/13/00392/REP)). Measurements were taken on site and up to 1km away – in a wide range of wind speeds and direction. The study found that:

- Vibration levels 100m from the nearest turbine were a factor of 10 less than those recommended for human exposure in critical buildings.
- Tones above 3.0 Hz were found to attenuate rapidly with distance – the higher frequencies attenuating at a progressively increasing rate.

Regarding problems associated with wind turbines, wind turbines operating in the UK are designed, installed and maintained as part of mandatory health and safety legislation in addition to rigorous technical standards including BS EN 50308 (Wind Turbines – Protective measures – Requirements for design, operation and maintenance) and BS EN 61400-1 (Wind turbines - Design requirements). Experience indicates that properly designed, erected and maintained wind turbines are a safe technology. The very few accidents that have occurred involving injury to humans have been caused by failure to observe manufacturers' and operators' instructions for the operation of the machines.

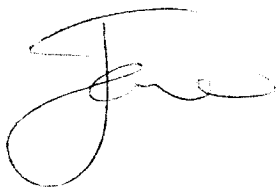
Where a wind power development involves more than two turbines or the hub height of any turbine (or height of any other structure) exceeds 15 metres, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be required if the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

An EIA is a means of drawing together, in a systematic way, an assessment of a project's likely significant environmental effects. This helps to ensure that the importance of the predicted effects, and the scope for reducing them, are properly understood by the public and the relevant competent authority before it makes its decision. In addition, each wind farm development is subject to a detailed health and safety appraisal and risk assessment that take into account specific installation, location and turbine specific issues. This helps to determine the separation distance required for individual wind power schemes.

The potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects is recognised as a matter to be included in an EIA under the terms of the EIA regulations 1999. Consideration of cumulative and synergistic effects is also a requirement under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive which is required for development plans. A cumulative landscape and visual impact assessment will normally form part of an Environmental Statement for wind turbine proposals.

On the subject of icing of wind turbines, TAN 8 at paragraph 2.34 of Annex C (page 40) maintains that even where icing does occur the turbines' own vibration sensors are likely to detect the imbalance and inhibit the operation of the machines.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane', written in a cursive style.

Jane Davidson AM

Y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynaliadwyedd a Thai
Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Dear Val Lloyd

Thank you for your letter of 1.12.09 addressed to Lindsay Milsom. He has asked me to respond on behalf of our group.

With regard to your comments on the separation of turbines to homes

In the letter to you from the Scottish Government of 16.11.09 it states:

"Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 6 Renewable Energy, accompanied by Planning Advice Note (PAN) 45: Renewable Energy Technologies, sets out the Scottish Government's approach to the planning and siting of wind farms in Scotland. The intention is to provide a sound national policy context for addressing onshore wind development.

Annex A of SPP6 concerns the preparation of spatial frameworks by planning authorities. It states that:

"Broad criteria should be used to set out the considerations that developers should address in relation to local communities. **These should ensure that proposals are not permitted if they would have a significant long - term detrimental impact on the amenity of people living nearby.**

PAN 45 confirms that development up to 2 km is likely to be a prominent feature in an open landscape. The Scottish Ministers would support this as a separation distance between turbines and the edge of cities, towns and villages so long as policies recognise that this approach is being adopted solely as a mechanism for steering proposals to broad areas of search and, within this distance, proposals will continue to be judged on a case-by-case basis".

This acknowledges that the Scottish Government is sensitive to the needs of local communities and is trying to lessen the impact of wind farm developments. Both Scotland and Wales are constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It would seem that in Scotland people are better protected from wind farm developments than people in Wales. Welsh people are receiving second class treatment. Wales has followed England in having a 500 metre separation distance from homes to turbines.

I believe there is a possible issue of contravention under the Human Rights Act and this should be investigated.

The crucial point for Glyncorrwg is that if the Welsh Assembly wants wind farms it should be done fairly and the impact on local communities should be minimised. We therefore ask that a 2km separation from homes to turbines be introduced in Wales and developers be advised that wind farms within that distance would not be allowed.

We welcome the news of the letter to the Minister for Health and Social Services seeking her views on the issue of wind turbine syndrome.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Robert Slater
Glyncorrwg Action Group

Copies to Brian Gibbons A.M.
Hywel Francis M.P.
Derek Vaughan M.E.P.

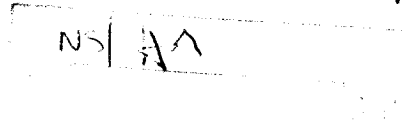
Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



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Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/06612/09

Val Lloyd AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA



14 January 2010

Dear Val

I am responding to your letter of 18 December, on behalf of the Petitions Committee, regarding the footways at Llanddewi Velfrey on the A40.

My officials confirm that extending the road on the northern side would require strips of land to be acquired from private owners by Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). This is an expensive and time consuming process and any objections could result in a public Inquiry. An Inspector at the Inquiry would unlikely rule favourably on the compulsory purchase of land bearing in mind that the section would be detrunked in a few years time by a new trunk road scheme (Llanddewi Velfrey to Penblewin scheme).

Also widening on the northern boundary involves an alteration in the alignment of the road and construction of extensive earthworks. The expense and disruption during construction cannot be justified bearing in mind that the possibility exists that as a detrunked local road with reduced traffic, the Council would be able to enhance pedestrian facilities on the existing road by reducing the carriageway width without expensive engineering works.

In view of the difficulty experienced in acquiring land by unanimous agreement on the southern side of the road, we have decided to erect speed activated warning signs on the trunk road approaches to the village as an interim measure. These signs are programmed to be erected this financial year. The traffic calming that the signs will provide will assist in allaying local concerns. In addition we are also investigating the possibility of widening the footway in the vicinity of the property "Ivy Cottage" to provide continuity in the existing footway on that side.

Ieuan

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

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Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning



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Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-255
Ein cyf/Our ref LA/05636/09

Val Lloyd AM
Chair of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

19 January 2010

Dear Val

Thank you for your letter of 18th December following the reply you received from my predecessor in which she outlined our current policies for children with special educational needs (SEN).

Your latest correspondence focuses on the support provided by the Welsh Assembly Government to local authorities to ensure SEN provision is available in mainstream schools. As you are aware, the majority of funding is provided to authorities via the revenue support grant and then allocated to schools. Total expenditure on SEN provision by LAs in 2009-10 was budgeted to be £335 million. This represents an increase of 4.5% on 2008-09.

In addition, we have again this year allocated £3 million to local authorities and schools for SEN via the Better Schools Fund. This will support training on inclusion, specific duties relating to equal opportunities and working in partnership with parents.

The Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools scheme (worth a total of £9.1 million over the five years from 2006-07 to 2010-2011) has been established specifically to increase capacity in mainstream schools using the expertise available from within the special schools sector. Other initiatives, such as the transition key worker pilot projects and Early Support Programme have also been introduced to support an inclusive education system in Wales and to ensure equality of opportunity for learners with a range of additional learning needs.

Since 2004-05 we have made over £15m available to assist local authorities develop regional SEN facilities through the School Buildings Improvement Grant. I can assure you that I am committed to the continuation of an approach that ensures appropriate SEN provision is in place both in mainstream and special school settings.

*Your ever
Leighton Andrews*

Leighton Andrews AM
Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg & Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning

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Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu
Enterprise and Learning Committee
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Val Lloyd AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

2 December 2009

Dear Val

Petition: Additional Trains to Fishguard

Thank you for your letter dated 24 November asking the Enterprise and Learning Committee to consider the above petition as part of our inquiry into the future rail infrastructure in Wales.

The Committee held a concurrent meeting with the Welsh Affairs Committee on 23 November as part of our inquiry, which was also our final evidence session. Paul Davies AM raised the petition with one of our witnesses - the Lead Chief Officer of SWWITCH, the regional transport consortium for South West Wales. You may wish to send a copy of their discussion (paragraphs 169 to 173 of the transcript of that meeting) to the lead petitioners.

Our Committee Clerk has also requested the additional information that SWWITCH offered to provide.

Yours sincerely



Gareth Jones AM
Committee Chair

Dr Siân Phipps
Clerc y Pwyllgor / Committee Clerk
Tel: 029 20 898582
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sian.phipps@wales.gsi.gov.uk

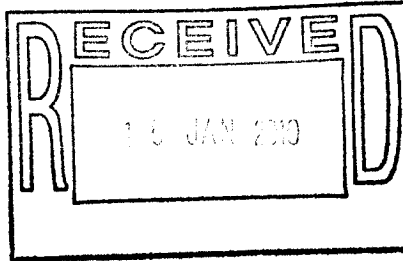
Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-256
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/06365/09

Val Lloyd AM
97 Pleasant Street,
Morriston,
Swansea,
SA6 6HJ.



11 January 2010

Dear Val,

Thank you for your letter of 17 November 2009 on behalf of the Petitions Committee, which calls upon the Welsh Assembly Government to fund five additional trains per day to Fishguard. You ask whether the Welsh Assembly Government has any plans to provide funding for additional services to and from Fishguard.

The National Transport Plan includes specific commitments to the delivery of specific improvements in all the travel corridors across Wales. For the east - west corridor in south Wales, the key aim for rail is targeted investment in infrastructure to improve the reliability, quality and frequency of east - west rail in South Wales.

The regional consortia SWWTCH have submitted their final Regional Transport Plan (RTP), which I am currently considering. The RTP sets out priority proposals for improvements to rail services west of Swansea, comprising; The Gowerton Lougher redoubling scheme (which is committed and in delivery); Three trains per hour (TPH) between Swansea, Gowerton Llanelli and Carmarthen (the current frequency is 1.5 TPH); Hourly services between Carmarthen and Milford Haven (current frequency is two-hourly); Five trains per day to Fishguard Harbour (currently two boat trains per day).

Whilst it would be possible to run extra trains to Fishguard before the redoubling scheme is completed, SWWTCH have proposals for a large number of service improvements, the majority of which do need the redoubling, it could be seen as premature to prioritise Fishguard's needs. Therefore there is no current commitment to provide these additional services, nor funding allocated to them within the revenue budget. I am aware that there is a good business case for them and will keep this under consideration.

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

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Jane Hutt AC/AM

Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref JH/07525/09

10 DEC 2009

Val Lloyd AM
Chair of the petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

NS AM

9 December 2009

Dea Val,

Thank you for your letter on 2nd December seeking my views on a petition organised by Shelter to include leaving home information in the school curriculum.

I agree that it is important for young people to be given clear information about issues that arise when they leave home. In Wales, personal and social education (PSE) offers opportunities to teach learners about such issues. PSE equips children and young people to be more informed, confident and skilled to interact effectively with others and enables them to take an active and responsible part in society

The themes of PSE include 'active citizenship', 'health and emotional well-being' and 'preparing for lifelong learning'. By developing their self-esteem, schools help learners' become more confident and more able to deal with life generally. Successful management of feelings and emotions has a great impact upon personal effectiveness, and increases learners' ability to cope with conflict, stress, loss and change. This together with a better understanding of their rights and of links between political decisions and their own lives will all contribute to helping young people when they come to leave home.

The *Personal and social education framework for 7 to 19-year-olds in Wales* is the key document which schools should use to develop their PSE programmes. The PSE framework provides clear opportunities for schools to equip learners with skills which will enable them to acquire greater self-assurance. More details on PSE are available on: www.wales.gov.uk/personalandsocialeducation which has a link directly to the Shelter Cymru site. If Shelter feel that additional information should be included officials would be happy to discuss further.

In addition to support this important element of the curriculum, the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials are currently being adapted by the Welsh Assembly Government for schools in Wales.

As part of the commitment to providing information and advice for young people in Wales the new Clic site was launched recently. The site has been developed with young people. The aim is to establish Clic as the recognised impartial National Information and Advice Service for young people in Wales 11 to 25. More details are available from

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/091019counsellingbriefen.pdf>

I hope that this outline of the range of initiatives being undertaken within the curriculum and outside will demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that children and young people in Wales receive an education that equips them for their future life.

Beithisles,

Jane

Our Ref/Ein Cyf: ST/DS
Your Ref/Eich Cyf:
Date/Dyddiad: 15th January 2010
Please ask for/Gofynnwch am: Daisy Seabourne
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Val Lloyd AM
Chair Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dear Ms Lloyd

Petition: include leaving home education in the National Curriculum – Shelter Cymru

Thank you for seeking the views of the WLGA with regards to this petition. The WLGA supports and recognises the importance of giving young people access to realistic and helpful information about the many issues involved with leaving home. This supports young people in effective decision-making about their lives and contributes to the prevention of homelessness.

As recognised by Shelter's submission, many local authorities and third sector organisations are currently involved in local projects within schools in their own areas. A successful example is the 'Myths & Legends' project delivered by Bridgend County Borough Council and partners, which aims to dispel some of the myths and legends that are associated with housing and homelessness locally. These examples of good practice could inform future work, although it is important to recognise that the needs of each local area will be different and one type of approach may not be suitable in every area of Wales.

An evaluation of Housemate, the Shelter Cymru project, is due in 2010. The case for inclusion in the national curriculum may be further informed by the outcome of this evaluation, when it is available. When considering this proposal it should also be taken into account that the curriculum is crowded and any additions should be supported with a full evaluation of the need to make this a part of the curriculum and what will be the expected outcomes.

If you require any additional information or comment then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Steve Thomas
Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

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Edwina Hart MBE OStJ AM

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Our ref: EH/00055/10

Your ref: P-03-267

Val Lloyd AM
Chair of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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18 JAN 2010

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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15 January 2010

Dear Val

Thank you for your letter of 7 January regarding petition P-03-267 urging the Welsh Assembly Government to publish the Blood Borne Viral Hepatitis Action Plan for Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government's final budget 2010-2011 includes £1.377 million for delivery of the Blood Borne Viral Hepatitis Action Plan and implementation will begin from 1 April 2010.

The action plan was issued for consultation in April 2009. The final action plan and a report on the consultation will be published shortly.

Edwina Hart

Carl Sargeant AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a Llywodraeth
Leol
Minister for Social Justice and Local Government



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/00009/10

Val Lloyd AM
Chair of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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12th January 2010

Dear Val,

Thank you for your letter of 7th January enclosing a petition from Narberth Chamber of Trade.

The 2010 revaluation has taken place, and, as I announced in my statement on 22 December, I will be increasing the thresholds for the small business rates relief scheme so that most businesses whose rateable values have increased in line with the average will remain within the relief thresholds.

Revaluation is not a tax raising measure, but simply redistributes the rates payable between properties based on their relative values at the time of the revaluation. Consequently, some rates bills will rise and some will fall, but the average national bill will only change roughly in line with any increase or decrease in the September 2009 retail price index. Over 60 per cent of ratepayers will benefit from the Revaluation and will see a reduction in their bills, because we have provisionally reduced the multiplier for 2010-2011 from 0.489 to 0.409. The average increase in rateable values in Wales is 19.55 per cent. Unless a property increases in value so that it ceases to qualify for small business rates relief, it will see a reduction in rates bills if the increase is below the average.

I am aware that some individual businesses, and, in certain local hotspots clusters of valuations have increased by significantly more than average, but this reflects local rental values, which form the basis of non domestic rating valuations. I do not propose to undertake an assessment on individual areas as requested by the petitioners, as non domestic rates is only one of many factors that affect the viability of businesses.

The Assembly Government gave careful consideration to additional forms of assistance, including targeted measures to help small and medium sized businesses whose rateable values have increased by significantly more than the average, but due to the current difficult financial situation was unable to provide any additional funding for a viable scheme within the budget that was passed by the Assembly on 8 December 2009.

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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

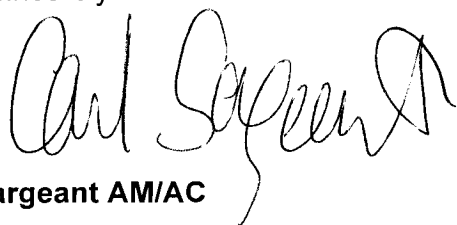
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The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is responsible for assessing the rateable value of properties. Any ratepayer who feels that their rateable value has been set too high can ask the VOA to review the valuation of the premises, and if an agreement is not reached, they have the right of appeal, free of charge, to an independent Valuation Tribunal. The Assembly Government is unable to intervene in this process. The VOA can be contacted on their main telephone helpline at 0845 602 1507.

The Local Government Finance Act 1988 gives local authorities the power to grant relief to businesses on real grounds of hardship. Local authorities must be satisfied that the ratepayer would sustain hardship if the relief is not granted, and that it is in the interest of council tax payers for it to do so. The Assembly Government funds 75 per cent of all hardship relief granted by local authorities

There are other mechanisms to help businesses and the Assembly Government has put together an extensive package of measures of support. Full details can be found online at <http://www.business-support-wales.gov.uk> or by telephone at 03000 6 03000.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Sargeant', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carl Sargeant AM/AC