

requested FOI on 03-10-2007 from W.A.

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



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyt/Your ref
Ein cyt/Our ref DFM 325/07

Kirsty Williams AM
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

26 September 2007

Dear Kirsty

I refer to your letter of the 6th September regarding a request from your constituent Lucienne Bennett for a bridleway on the A40 to the east of the recently completed improvement at Llansantffraed.

In 2006 the Community Council wrote to us requesting that consideration be given to the provision of a footway - which could also be used by cyclists and horses - along the southern side of the A40 between the toilets in the lay-by to the east and the newly improved junction with the road leading to Talybont-on-Usk, a distance of some 800m. There is a reasonably wide verge along this length. Although it was appreciated that any such facility here would get relatively little use, we commissioned a report to look into the feasibility of providing such a path. Gareth Hall wrote to you on the 22nd May 2007 to advise that resource issues had prevented the report from being carried out in the last financial year, but that the Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency would complete the report within this financial year and report to my officials.

You passed this letter to your equestrian constituent, who wrote back to you on the 4th June to clarify that she was not asking for a footway but for a bridleway/cycle path, separated from the A40 carriageway by a horse height safety barrier. Her letter continued by claiming that the signs for the new junction at Llansantffraed, by being sited in the verge, constituted an obstruction. You forwarded this letter to Gareth Hall on the 6th June 2007. Dr Brian Gibbons AM then wrote to you on the 28th June to explain that there had been some uncertainty as to the actual scheme that was being requested, but that a report was expected in August which my officials could then consider. A first draft of that report has now been received.

The first issue I would like to address is your constituent's desire for horse height fence to separate any path facility from the trunk road. Guidance from the British Horse Society states that such fencing should be a minimum of 1.8m high and continuous; to ensure that horses cannot see traffic through or under it. An 800m long 1.8m high barrier is not a feature that we believe would be acceptable at this visually sensitive area within the Brecon Beacons National Park. Furthermore, it would probably prevent the use of any such path by

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pedestrians and cyclists, who could only see this as a significant hazard in personal safety and security terms. Such a fence would be a substantial structure and would need to be protected by a safety fence (crash barrier). It would also prevent the use of the verge for one of the most common functions they have, which is a safe area to leave a broken down or damaged vehicle. It would greatly increase the risk of the road being closed by snow during the winter. It would also spoil the very attractive views from the A40 across the Usk valley. For these reasons we do not intend to investigate further the idea of installing a horse-high barrier along this length of the A40.

I will turn now to your constituent's comments regarding the road signs near the improved junction at Llansantffraed. These signs, which are necessary for the safe operation of the trunk road in this area with its newly improved junction, are properly located in the verge. Some of them are indeed very large, but these cannot be reduced in size without adverse safety implications. The signing for the junction improvement scheme was included in the independent Road Safety Audit that was carried out for the scheme, and was found to be wholly appropriate and in line with current design standards. Significant changes to the signing are unlikely to be acceptable on road safety grounds.

My final comments relate to the provision of an 800m long mixed use path along the verge. The report has concluded that the provision of a mixed use path within the verge is feasible, and advocates using recycled road planning's as the surfacing material, which is judged to be the best compromise surface for shared use by Equestrians, Pedestrians and Cyclists. However, even using this relatively cheap material, the cost of such a scheme would be over £100,000. Given the relatively low level of use expected, and the calls on our very limited resources for such schemes across Wales, it is unlikely that this scheme would command a high priority, and is therefore unlikely enter our work programmes in the short term. My officials will however ask the Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency to develop the design a little further, so that should resources become available in future years a clearer potential scheme will have been drawn up.

*Yours
Ieuan Wyn Jones*

Ieuan Wyn Jones

**Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport**