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P-03-261 Local Solutions to Newtown Traffic Congestion - Further Information Provided by the Petitioner

Two thirds of the traffic on the A483/A489 corridor in Newtown is local.

The measures to address traffic congestion on the A483/A489 should include those designed to make better use of road space, such as:

- traffic management measures to reduce conflicting movements at junctions
- dedicated lanes in Pool Road and Llanidloes Road for traffic turning right to industrial and retail premises
- co-ordination of traffic lights

They should also include measures designed to promote alternatives to car travel, such as:

- a redesigned town bus network serving supermarkets & industrial estates, and avoiding the A483/A489 where possible
- a 15 minute interval town bus service
- a footbridge across the River Severn connecting the Llanllwchaiarn river path to Pool Road
- promotion of cycling and walking

We recognise that there is currently a problem caused by high vehicles diverting through residential areas in order to avoid the low railway bridges on Dolfor Road and Llanidloes Road. This can be solved by the following measures:

- raising the railway bridge on the Llanidloes Road
- construction of a link road from Dolfor Road to Heol Ashley in the Mochdre Industrial Estate



RSPB Cymru information for the Petitions Committee

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- In 2001, EU heads of state agreed a target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010.
- In 2006, the Wales Environment Strategy (WES) committed to both halt biodiversity loss and bring sites designated for nature conservation into favourable condition by 2010.

As 2010 begins, it is widely acknowledged that these targets have been missed.

- RSPB Cymru is calling on the National Assembly for Wales to hold an inquiry into the reasons why the 2010 targets have not been met.
- Such an inquiry should help ensure that future commitments, including the goal outlined in WES of reversing biodiversity loss by 2026, are successful.

The United Nations has declared that 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity.

Holding an inquiry and honouring its recommendations would present an opportunity for Wales to take a lead in promoting biodiversity in 2010 and beyond.

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY AND WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

Biodiversity refers to the variety of all species of plants and animals, encompassing the genetic diversity within each species and the range of habitats they rely on. Biodiversity and its status can therefore be used as a measure of the health of the natural environment.

There is substantial evidence linking biodiversity loss to human activity, including habitat destruction, pollution and human-mediated climate change. Whilst we should protect wildlife for its own sake, doing so also safeguards the environment that we depend on, and enables us to hand over a healthy planet to future generations.

Wildlife also provides many benefits for current generations, including:

- resources to sustain our health in a time when a sedentary indoors lifestyle is increasingly associated with mental and physical health difficulties.¹
- educational opportunities for children and adults.
- employment, with 1 in 6 Welsh jobs supported by the environment, contributing £1.8 billion in wages annually.²
- economic growth, with £6 billion of GDP in Wales dependent on the environment.³

Access to wildlife and green spaces can also contribute to local regeneration and make communities more attractive.

¹ Nature improves your fitness and reduces stress. <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/policy/health/index.asp>

² 'Valuing our environment' 2006, http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-wales-valuing_our_environment-marine-english.pdf

³ 'Valuing our environment' 2006, http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-wales-valuing_our_environment-marine-english.pdf

BIODIVERSITY TARGETS

In 2001, The EU Heads of State approved the target of halting biodiversity decline by 2010. In April 2002, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity agreed the Global Commitment to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. The Welsh Assembly Government published its own targets in the 2006 Wales Environment Strategy (WES). The central outcome of this document was in line with that of the EU, pledging to both halt biodiversity loss and bring sites designated for nature conservation into a favourable condition by 2010.

Under the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, all public bodies now have a duty to conserve, enhance and protect biodiversity. Despite this, and the targets outlined above, it is widely acknowledged that these ambitious commitments have not been met and as 2010 begins, we are still losing biodiversity at an alarming rate.

For example, between 1995 and 2007, there were significant declines in several bird species in Wales with decreases of 51%, 43% and 39% in starlings, swifts and curlews and respectively, all of which are species of conservation concern.⁴ Global warming also brought about an increase in temperature of 1.7°C in Welsh moorland streams between 1981 and 2005, with a corresponding drop of 21% in invertebrate abundance for every 1°C temperature rise, placing many of the species concerned at risk of local extinction.⁵ Numerous other species have continued to decline in recent years, particularly farmland wildlife, including birds, mammals, butterflies and flowering plants.

BIODIVERSITY BEYOND 2010

Given the current economic climate, some might feel that biodiversity should not be a high priority. However, the economic downturn also presents a golden opportunity to shift towards a more sustainable economy. Wales has long been proud that it is one of the few administrations in the world with a duty to promote sustainable development, but the loss of our biodiversity is a clear symptom that we are failing to live in a sustainable manner. Investment in sustainability and the natural environment will create jobs, develop skills and ensure Wales' competitive advantage in future years as the world shifts towards an ever greener agenda. Wales could also reap increasing economic benefits from safeguarding and improving its environment in terms of tourism. In 2005, for example, just one year after the establishment of RSPB Cymru's osprey watch station on the Glaslyn River in North-West Wales, it was estimated that visitors contributed £1.225 million to the local economy.⁶ Promoting sites such as these, and developing others, is therefore a way of insuring ourselves against economic hardship in the long term.

The beginning of 2010 is a moment to take stock: to reflect on the efficacy of measures employed to date to conserve our natural environment, and consider new ways to set Wales on a course to promote and enhance biodiversity in the new decade. Wales' countryside, already renowned for its striking scenery, would be improved by such actions, bringing economic, health and social benefits to Welsh residents. Wales could also set the example for the rest of the UK, and indeed the world, to follow.

**For more information please contact Ruth Lovell (ruth.lovell@rspb.org.uk), Policy Advocate
on 029 2035 3006**

⁴ 'The Breeding Bird Survey' 2009, <http://www.bto.org/bbs>

⁵ Durance & Ormerod (2007) Global Change Biology: 13, 942-957

⁶ 'Watched like never before' (2006), http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/watchedlikeneverbefore_tcm9-133081.pdf

**P-03-267 BLOOD BORNE VIRAL HEPATITIS ACTION PLAN FOR
WALES
(Supporting information provided by the petitioner)**

Hepatitis C can cause cirrhosis and liver cancer and it is estimated that 14,700 people in Wales are infected although most of them have not yet been diagnosed. Treatment can cure the virus in around half of patients, but action needs to be taken to diagnose patients and give them the support, care and treatment they need.

The Welsh Government promised an Action Plan in 2006 (John Griffiths AM, 8 February 2006) to address the public health challenges of hepatitis B and C, but since then there has been a catalogue of delays. A draft Action Plan was finally published in April 2009 for consultation, which closed in July 2009.

The Minister has now refused to set a date for the publication of the final Action Plan. The Department of Health in England published an Action Plan for hepatitis C in 2004 and the Scottish Government published phase II of their Action Plan in May 2008 (phase 1 was launched in 2006 and focussed on evidence gathering).

The Welsh Government is falling behind and failing patients. We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to publish the Blood Borne Viral Hepatitis Action Plan for Wales as a matter of urgency.

Supporting Information for Action for Children-Gweithredu dros Blant's petition about vulnerable young people and work based learning

Action for Children-Gweithredu dros Blant's project Network Brynmawr provides services to care leavers and homeless young people in Blaenau Gwent, in partnership with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. The project has been providing this service in Blaenau Gwent for 11 years and has provided support services to around 500 young people, many of whom have received personal support for a substantial time.

From our experience, most work based learning schemes do not cater well for vulnerable young people and a significant number of young people are failing. Vulnerable young people usually have multiple difficulties and homeless young people often have no support from their families. Most training providers are ill equipped to support young people with multiple difficulties and training providers frequently remove the most 'difficult' young people from the schemes. If a training provider feels the young person has issues (motivation, attitude, unpunctual etc.) instead of working on that issue they give them a certificate after 12 weeks and do not give them a further 'contract' leaving the young person to move onto another scheme. The quality of many of the work based learning schemes is poor with young people having little to do and often sent home or finishing early which can have a huge impact on motivation that may already be fragile. A shortage of suitable work placements results in young people spending many weeks in the training centre, where they lose interest, and, in this unnatural environment, the behaviour of the young people can deteriorate. Even the successful participants usually only achieve NVQ level 1. Most vulnerable young people go from one training scheme to another, achieving little and after 18 go onto Job Seekers Allowance.

Training providers need to identify and build on the strengths of these vulnerable young people, identify and work on weaknesses, be more understanding and provide person centred flexible training provision and support to help them succeed.

Case Studies

M aged 17

Following a meeting with Careers Wales, M was recommended for a work based learning scheme that would provide him with 30 hours per week of quality training and work placements to meet his needs. M has been there for 12 weeks and is often sent home early and not been out on any work placements. There can be about 30 young people in the training centre, doing nothing productive and just hanging around smoking. When our staff ring to question their attendance or advocate for the young people, their attitude is 'they get paid their £50 whether they are here or not'. The training provider is not fulfilling their contract but M's initial enthusiasm and motivation has diminished and he thinks that all work is like this.

N aged 17

N commenced a work based learning scheme, which started with several weeks doing key skills in the training centre. The training provider felt that N was lacking in motivation and that his behaviour was poor. So after 12 weeks he was presented with a key skills certificate and told that he would not be offered a contract. N had no choice but to find another training scheme, but with huge waiting lists it is not easy, so decided to claim Job Seekers Allowance.

Homeless young people on work based learning schemes live in severe poverty- they receive less per week than those on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). Young people on training schemes receive a training allowance of £45 or £47 per week (£50

less £3 or £5 towards their transport costs) whereas young people claiming JSA receive £50-95 per week. As a minimum, young people who are homeless or living independently and on work based learning schemes, should always be eligible to receive the additional £0.95 JSA and therefore benefits, like optician services or social fund grants, but this is not currently the case as Job Centres are not consistent when assessing JSA hardship claims. We would recommend that training allowances should be supplemented for those young people who live independently so that training pays better than JSA.

Case studies

J aged 17

J was asked to leave the family home, as was her sister before her. She couldn't move in with her Nan like her sister, there was no room and Nan couldn't manage the relationships between the two girls. J worked hard, with support, to go back home but mother quickly left the area with her partner, leaving no forwarding address.

J tried with support, to manage a flat without the knowledge she needed to be successful. She did not want another 'family' at the time as she was working through anger and hurt after her family had left her 'abandoned', so J accessed supported lodgings and rented a room in the home of a supportive landlord and landlady. She now lives in a structured environment and there are times to be in each evening and expected ways for her to behave as she lives in a home with others. Despite the sadness she was managing, J accessed training in hairdressing and focused a little more on herself including her appearance.

J receives housing benefit (single room rent) and £50 training allowance. She pays £25 a week to her landlady for gas, water rates and food which she prepares herself. This leaves her £25 a week for transport to work (costs £21 with only £16 weekly reimbursement), toiletries, clothes, entertainment, haircuts, mobile phone top up. She is now 17 and is worrying about services ending on her 18th birthday. Being 'abandoned' and not wishing to be 'accommodated' in foster care, she feels should not mean services should end when she reaches 18 (section 17, 1989 Children Act).

J understands that supported lodgings gives her a little more disposable income than she will have when she moves into a flat and she's afraid that she will not be able to cope financially in a place of her own. She would like to be able to finish her training, work as a hairdresser and afford her own place.

J's friends include care leavers who are much better off and her heart often sinks as she explains that she continues to feel 'abandoned' by the training department who pay her 95p less each week than she would receive if she was on benefits. J is expected to pay the first £5 of her transport costs out of her weekly training allowance, leaving her £6 worse off than if she was on benefits. With no element of benefits in her income she cannot access "passport benefits" like the social fund grant, eye tests and dentists treatment.

J is determined to succeed and would prefer not to live in poverty.

S aged 18

S lived with his Mum, younger brother and mother's partner until the relationship broke down and despite mediation he was unable to return home. S moved into emergency supported lodgings and then on to a better matched supported lodgings.

He just managed to maintain his place on a computer and IT NVQ1 despite dealing with the trauma of moving out of his home and change of lodgings.

Further mediation and his family's behaviour meant S's only option was to prepare for independent living. So he moved into TS House, a supported self contained tenancy with staff attached. While living in TS House he lived on a weekly £50 training allowance plus £0.95 income support (paid three monthly) and had access to passport benefits. He caught two buses each morning and evening to get to and from his training placement in Ebbw Vale. He had £5 deducted from the reimbursement of his travel costs, which reduced his income to £45.95 and so lives in severe poverty.

His next training placement for NVQ2 is in Risca and he had to leave home at 7:30 in the morning. To complete S's work-based NVQ2 he needs to continue until he is 19. S has now moved to his own council tenancy with all of the expenditure of a single householder and is still in receipt of only £45.95 each week. If S was on a course with Coleg Gwent he would be eligible for Income Support plus £30 EMA and would be receiving £80.95 each week.

S has aspirations for his tenancy, his lifestyle and his future.

Cyngor Tref Y Trallwng WELSHPOOL TOWN COUNCIL

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14th December 2009

Welsh Assembly Government
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
Wales

Dear Sir

Mid Wales Wind Farms

First of all may I thank you for your time in helping us to put this petition together, it was much appreciated.

The enclosed petition is seeking a intervention by the WAG into the transportation and the practicality of a large number of wind farms in the Mid Wales area.

The reasons for this request are:

Lack of consultation

The County Council is not giving the community councils an opportunity to discuss or represent their views fully in an open debate; this can only be achieved with a public inquiry.

Lack of local knowledge

It is clear that the companies are not taking into account the local environment. Every wind farm constructed so far in the UK has underestimated the transport issues. From one meeting held with National Power they suggested that a quiet time for moving Lorries would be when the schools are on holiday!

Co-ordination

There appears to be a lack of co-ordination to ensure that an overall picture is presented and considered before any wind farm applications are considered.

Road transport

The road network is not able to cope with the large loads required for the construction of wind farms even with alterations proposed to junctions etc.

Overall effects on Mid Wales

The overall effect on a fragile economy, particularly with regard to tourism, is not being considered properly.

Main issues affecting transportation

The main issues which have not been addressed include:

- a) The effect on foundations along the main routes through towns and villages in older buildings need to be protected.
- b) The effect on the environment with alterations to road layouts is extensive.
- c) The effect on traffic and in turn the effect on tourism is excessive.

Representation

The people of Mid Wales feel that the Wind Farms are being imposed without proper consideration and to ensure that this is redressed a public inquiry is the only way forward.

The public of Mid Wales do hope that you will find it possible to support such action and insist upon a public inquiry so that whole issue of Wind Farms can be covered with special emphasises on the transportation with the road network.


I enclose a copy of one of our objection letters to Powys County Council which more fully explains our situation.

I shall also be taking a copy of this petition to Westminster in the coming weeks seeking their support for a public inquiry.

I have not offered a full report as I know time is precious and you will be aware of many of the detailed issues. However, if you wish to have a full report on our concerns I can arrange this for you.

Thank you again for your time.

Yours sincerely



Robert A Robinson FRICS AILCM
Town Clerk