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Mr William Powell AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee
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5th October 2012

Dear Mr Powell

Re: Newtown Traffic Petition – Newtown Traffic Issues Summary Report

Thank you for your correspondence and for providing me with a copy of the Newtown Traffic Issues Summary report, which was given to members of the Committee by the Local Government Minister, Carl Sargeant AM.

It did make interesting reading. However, I have to say the conclusions in this report really bear no resemblance to the reality of the situation on the ground. For example, Point 3.2.1 of the ARUP Report states that:

“Initial site visits for the study were undertaken in February and March 2011 and were timed to observe the Thursday interpeak and pm peak period, as local residents had highlighted Thursday pm peak was most often the most congested.”

This is a cause of great conjecture because you only have to ask local people living in Newtown and they will tell you that it is Friday afternoon/evening and Saturday early afternoon that are the periods of most concentrated levels of congestion.

Therefore, I have to question how the evidence was gathered to produce this report. Personally, I would strongly urge the Minister to re-visit the methodology of how the data was collected and analysed.

Having examined the report in detail, there are a number of questions I would like the Minister to answer:

- Over what period of time was the assessment carried out and at what times of day?
- How did ARUP account for traffic that avoids the town completely and commuters taking alternative routes?
- In a leaflet produced by Tesco prior to opening they announced the new store would benefit the town and surrounding area by the construction of a new roundabout on Pool Road to provide a safe and satisfactory access to the store. Therefore I would

like to understand whose decision it was to remove the roundabout completely and replace it with traffic signals?

- The ARUP Report makes reference to several recalibrations of the SCOOT system. How many times has it been calibrated in total?
- The ARUP Report also states that any further capacity improvements at the Kerry Road junction would require third party land or property. Therefore, what work have officials undertaken to look at purchasing third party land?
- What considerations have been given to construct an improved roundabout with filter lanes?
- Point 2.5 of the ARUP Report states the traffic congestion was partly due to a lack of SCOOT training and understanding at Powys County Council. Powys County Council officials do not agree with this assertion, can you provide further background on why this statement was made?
- Point 3.2.1 of the ARUP Report states that site visits for the study were undertaken in February and March 2011 and were timed to observe the Thursday interpeak and pm peak period, as local residents had highlighted Thursday pm peak was most often the most congested. Therefore, how many residents highlighted this time as being the most congested?
- There are references in the ARUP Report that improvements have been made to the signalled controlled junction on Pool Road, why was the junction not designed correctly in the first place?
- Delays have increased on the Kerry Road and Cambrian Bridge to try and alleviate the delays on the main road. Have these two roads been monitored?
- The traffic flows measured during the study were conducted by counting the number of vehicles passing a specific point. Theoretically, does this then mean if the traffic is stationary for an hour with no vehicles passing the point, congestion would not be measured? If that is not the case how is congestion properly measured, as it seems to me the greater the levels of congestion, the slower the traffic moves over the passing point, the less traffic passes the point which would mean the lower the congestion is registered.

I would have to conclude that with these questions, coupled with the genuine level of uncertainty regarding the reliability of the evidence and data sets used to compile this report, my one recommendation to you Mr Powell, as Chair of the Petition's Committee, would be to invite the Minister back for further questioning and scrutiny.

Yours faithfully

Mr Paul Pavia