

**P-05-841 Include the alternative 3rd Menai Crossing proposal 'Pont Bendigeidfran'  
- Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 14.10.18**

Dear Petition Committee Members,

Thank you for this further opportunity to comment on the petition to have the Pont Bendigeidfran proposal formally included alongside the other options for the proposed third Menai crossing. I was very grateful that so many committee members and officers were able to take the time out of your busy schedules to meet me at the Senedd on the 9<sup>th</sup> October, and that you had clearly taken the time to look through the proposals and had lots of interesting questions and comments. The level of continuing engagement shown has pleasantly surpassed my expectations, and I would like to register my appreciation.

In the week since the petition was submitted, First Minister Carwyn Jones has announced the preferred route option for the crossing. I was pleased to see that this was chosen as the 'purple route'. As explained in the video proposal, this route option appears to be the most beneficial, and is the route option that the Pont Bendigeidfran proposal is based on.

I also note that within the 'Consultation - summary of response' report (published by the Welsh Government following the First Minister's announcement), that the structure type preferred by the largest proportion of respondents was the 'Balanced Cantilever Bridge'. This is the structure type that the Pont Bendigeidfran proposal is based upon. This report also states in Section 6.6 that 'The Purple Option also provides better opportunity to maximise the separation from the Britannia Bridge which allows more freedom to adopt an aesthetically outstanding design'.

Making the announcement on Anglesey, Mr Jones said he would like the new bridge to be "equally iconic" as the Menai Bridge - built by Thomas Telford in the 1820s - and Robert Stephenson's Britannia Bridge - opened to carry rail traffic in 1850 (BBC News website 11th October 2018). I fully agree with this sentiment.

I believe that the developments highlighted above add even more weight to the argument that the Pont Bendigeidfran proposal should be formally included within the remaining appraisal processes.

Further to this, Design Commission for Wales' Design Review Report 'A55 Proposed Third Menai Crossing, Menai Strait' DCFW Ref: N160 Meeting of 15th March 2018 provides the following guidance (cropped and emphasis added):

*'clear objectives must be established from which defined outcomes arise, leading directly to enhancement and public benefit.*

*Such justification is also necessary to allow the proper weighing of all benefits set against the scale of intervention in a location of such high landscape, historic and tourism value and in one of the most important views in Wales. The existing Stephenson and Telford structures are of national historic importance and represent outstanding engineering innovation of their time.*

*Wider scheme objectives should be determined and communicated, such as environmental impact and potential for enhancement as well as ensuring a high quality visitor and user experience. Establishing such objectives will help identify the opportunities provided by the scheme and avoid an approach solely based on the mitigation of negative constraints and impact.*

*Although this may seem to represent analysis above and beyond the requirements of the current WelTAG stage, it is imperative to ensure that changes to this highly sensitive and important environment are fully justified and delivered to the highest possible quality.'*

Justification for the changes related to Pont Bendigeidfran are provided within the YouTube video mentioned in the wording of the petition. What is required from the Welsh Government is the courage and ambition necessary to deliver something that is truly iconic for the people of Wales.

I fully accept that this may be a daunting decision to make, to move away from the 'tried and tested' standard solutions. I therefore would like to take this opportunity to suggest a number of actions that will provide comfort and encouragement to the Welsh Government, and to further allow them to justify any bold decisions made:

1. As part of the appraisal process, a Contingent Value Assessment could be carried out to assign a financial value to the relative additional benefits provided by all the options. This was the mechanism used very effectively in the appraisal of the successful Colwyn Bay Waterfront Project, which allowed a new beach to be installed instead of a large rock revetment along the frontage. The beach nourishment option provided many additional regeneration benefits to the town, and was justified through the improved adjusted Cost/Benefit ratio that was able to be formally demonstrated.

Due to the decades (centuries even) that the new bridge will be in place, any additional tourism benefits will be multiplied by very large timescales, and would therefore lead to huge gains in the Cost/Benefit ratios.

2. In addition to the views of the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, the views of the Ministers with responsibility for Culture, Tourism, and the Welsh Language should be sought. The Pont Bendigeidfran proposal provides significant benefits within their portfolios, this is therefore a fantastic opportunity for some joined-up thinking across a number of sectors, and they may be able to provide further support and guidance.
3. Further to this, the views of organisations such as Visit Wales (responsible for marketing Wales within the UK and internationally), Design Commission for Wales, and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act Commissioner could be sought.

I thank Cabinet Secretary Ken Skates for the kind sentiments expressed in his letter to the chair of the Petitions Committee dated 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018. I note he closes with the following statement:

*‘Clearly this is only the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Menai Crossing development and further analysis will need to be undertaken to develop a suitable form of structure that best fits within the Menai Strait landscape as part of the next stage of design development. Mr Poulton’s proposals can therefore be further assessed and considered during this next stage.’*

This response goes 90% of the way to addressing the request highlighted in the petition. If this could be strengthened to a firm commitment to formally include the Pont Bendigeidfran proposal (described in the YouTube video quoted), as one of the options to be fully assessed alongside the original options, then the petition will have achieved its overarching goal.

This is a fantastic opportunity to add significant value to the project, and has the potential to provide an incredible centrepiece for the A55 Culture Corridor.

Many thanks,

Benji Poulton