

P-06-1234 The new Heads of the Valleys road should not be restricted to 50 mph

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Chwefror 2022
Petitions Committee | 7 February 2022

Reference: SR21/1626/3

Petition Number: P-06-1234

Petition title:

The new Heads of the Valley road should not be restricted to 50 mph.

Text of petition:

The Welsh Government has spent £336m to improve the Heads of the Valley road which was previously restricted to 50mph. If the new road is also restricted to 50mph the £336m will have been completely wasted.

The works on the road have over run in terms of time and costs with regular users subject to years of delays and 40mph. The promise of improving speed of transit will be destroyed with a 50mph speed limit. As a new road the project will have been designed with good vision and all current safety measures. There is no justification for a 50mph limit



1. Background

The [Welsh Government website](#) explains that the existing A465 was built in the 1960s as a single carriageway with three lanes. It indicates that a 1990 study identified the need to improve this road as the width restricted traffic flow and opportunities for safe overtaking.

Detailed scheme development was undertaken following a public consultation in 1994. The road between Abergavenny and Hirwaun is being upgraded to dual carriageway, with the route divided into 6 separate projects, or 'sections'.

The petition refers to section 2 of the route – Gilwern to Brynmawr. [The scheme is described in the Stage 3 WelTag report](#) published in 2013 as extending for 8.1km from west of the Intermediate Road Bridge to immediately west of the Glanbaiden Junction. The new road would be a dual carriageway with two lanes in each direction.

The [Welsh government website](#) sets out a range of expected aims and benefits including reducing congestion and queuing during peak times, and improving connectivity and journey times.

These [scheme plans](#) provide maps of section 2.

2. Welsh Government action

Historical information

Information was published from 2013 which set out that this section of the Heads of the Valleys road would be restricted to 50mph.

This includes the [stage 3 WelTag report](#) which states that due to the constrained nature of the gorge, the hardstrips and verges are narrower than would normally be expected for a road of this nature and the alignment includes tighter bends:

This layout combined with the need to minimise the air quality impacts of the road on the surrounding ecological sites requires that the whole length of the scheme would be subject to a mandatory 50mph speed limit which would be monitored and enforced.

In the [same document](#), the engineers assessment describes how the scheme had been designed taking into account all relevant national and local planning policies, plans and standards:

The Design Speed of the scheme is 85kph (50 mph), however, there would be some Departures from Standards in terms of highway geometry to reduce the impact on the environment.

In addition, the [planning inspector's report](#) on the scheme (published in 2014) also states within the section 'The Case for the Welsh Government - Proposed Road' that:

...there would be departures from normal engineering standards, the main mitigation to which would be a 50mph speed limit imposed on the road.

Current progress

Welsh Government publishes [information on current progress](#) and the scheme timetable on its website as well as [this update from February 2021](#) published under the previous administration.

In order to implement the 50mph speed limit a [Statutory Instrument](#) was made on 28th October. In its [Statement of Reasons](#) the Welsh Government states that the limit is:

...in the interest of road safety and meets the engineering design of the improved road. The new road alignment is designed to reduce the road's impact on environmentally sensitive designated sites and complies with environmental legislation specifically the Habitats Directive 92/43/EC.

In a January letter from the Deputy Minister to the Chair of the Petitions Committee, he notes that the draft Order was published on 10 June 2021. Thirty one objections were received and considered but these did not provide any new information that would enable the speed limit to be safely increased from the 50mph speed limit.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that

these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.