

**P-06-1352 Approve the construction of the Third bridge over the Menai Strait –
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 24.08.23**

Dear Clerk,

I would like to thank you for considering my petition to Approve the construction of the Third bridge over the Menai Strait for a discussion at the Petitions Committee and to also extend a thank you to the Deputy Minister for his response.

To begin, I would like to welcome his remarks about the improvements being made to Menai Bridge. These are much needed structural improvements that have been necessary for a very long time, and I am glad to see that work is finally starting on this. However, his response doesn't reference the period of closure that happened in October 2022, nor does it adequately respond to my petition as a whole.

My petition was very specific in that it is calling on the Welsh Government to approve the construction of the third Menai Crossing, as they promised countless times when the project received approval and a route was agreed. The Roads Review itself agreed that approving this project would improve safety, resilience and allow more provisions for active travel. Using Climate Change as the sole reason for cancelling any project is simply doesn't add up, especially when such projects can be catalysts in their own right to future climate-friendly proposals. We all agree that Climate Change needs to be addressed, but this does not and should not mean we can't use innovative solutions to tackle modern day problems.

Resilience is of course one of the main arguments used in support of a Third Crossing, and the resiliency improvements on Menai Bridge, as I mentioned earlier, are hugely welcomed, however this will not address the issue of what happens should Britannia Bridge have to close for any length of time, Menai Bridge will never be able to cope with this level of traffic. Current congestion levels across both bridges is the other factor at play. Nobody likes to be stuck in traffic, and the poor road designs that leads to either bridge is a major cause of the congestion levels seen on the two crossings.

A third crossing would have provided an effective way of not only eliminating the congestion across Britannia Bridge, but also could help to relieve much of the congestion across Menai Bridge and the surrounding areas of Porthaethwy and Upper Bangor, whilst also providing a brand-new connection to improve resiliency for those travelling between Ynys Môn and Gwynedd on a regular basis.

I also want to pay particular reference to the North Wales Transport Commission's report which the Minister referenced in his response. I do welcome the options being considered and I agree with the priorities of the commission, however some of the options being considered would very much require a Third Bridge to be built in some capacity. Provision for Active Travel across Britannia Bridge would be inappropriate without a Third Crossing to divert the A55 as it would be unsafe with the current traffic volumes. Increasing bus frequency would also be difficult without the additional capacity that a Third Bridge would inevitably release from the current crossings over the Menai.

We can use HS2 as an example in this regard where a new High-Speed rail network is being built to relieve congestion on the busy West Coast Mainline corridor and allowing more paths for local, regional and freight services whilst the faster traffic is diverted onto a new set of lines. This is exactly the model which a Third Crossing over the Menai can deliver by relieving the congestion the current Menai and Britannia Bridges are facing, allowing for more capacity for Active Travel by diverting the faster moving traffic.

I would love to see more Active Travel arrangements to connect Ynys Môn and Gwynedd, but by cancelling the Third Menai Crossing altogether, this really puts a question mark on many of these

proposals. I would also like to see a modal shift away from using personal transport to public transport, particularly towards rail travel, however this doesn't mean a Third Bridge shouldn't be built.

I understand the Roads Review Panel has also set out some conditions which road schemes should meet if they are to go ahead, and I would like to propose how a Third Menai Crossing can meet these:

- The scheme should minimise carbon emissions in construction.

We can refer back to HS2 and utilise some of the techniques adopted to build the Colne Valley Viaduct. The rail network can also be used to transport materials, and plenty of climate friendly construction techniques have been used on past projects that could be utilised.

- The scheme should not increase road capacity for cars.

Once a Third Bridge is built, Britannia Bridge could very easily be repurposed to solely be used for Active Travel and Public Transport. There would inevitably be some capacity increase, although this would not necessarily mean more cars will be on the road if a Third Bridge was built.

- The scheme should not lead to higher vehicle speeds that increase emissions.

By imposing a 50mph speed limit on the bridge, vehicle speeds would be no higher than the current allowed speeds on Britannia Bridge, although the reduced congestion would likely lead to lower emissions overall as vehicles wouldn't be idling for lengthy periods of time and journey times across the Menai Strait would be decreased as a result.

- The scheme should not adversely affect ecologically valuable sites.

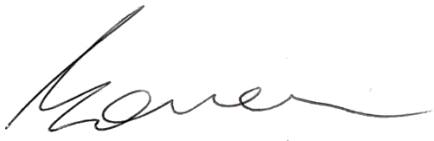
Whilst I'm not entirely sure what the impact on any ecologically valuable sites in the area would be, this could also be minimised if planned accordingly.

Given the overall benefits a Third Crossing can and would bring, I would like to know whether any solutions to the conditions outlined in the Roads Review Panel were investigated at length.

Whilst he is well intentioned, I believe the Minister has made a grave mistake in cancelling the Third Menai Crossing outright. I, therefore, urge the Minister to look more broadly at this scheme and consider more widely about approving its construction. I agree with his priorities to improve Active Travel and would like to see a bigger shift towards Public Transport, particularly through rail travel, but we need to look more constructively at this project than to simply say it should not go ahead.

I would like to once again thank the Petitions Committee on considering my petition for a discussion in the upcoming meeting on September the 11th and I'm personally looking forward to watching this. Please let me know if there is any more information I may need to provide and I will endeavour to return any correspondence at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emyr Owen', written in a cursive style.

Emyr Owen