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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1353
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/01412/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

31 August 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 11 July enclosing P-06-1353 – Devolve responsibilities and budgets for trunk roads in North Wales to North Wales Local Authorities from Askar Sheibani.

Since devolution in 1999, Welsh Ministers have had responsibility for the strategic road network (SRN) in Wales and in law, are the highway authority. The strategic nature of this asset is not localised and must reflect the requirements of the whole of Wales and ensure Welsh Government policy, such as the [Wales Transport Strategy](#) (WTS) is applied to every aspect of its management.

These roads formed what the Trunk Roads Act of 1946 called "the national system of routes for through traffic". The trunk road therefore takes a different role within local authority areas compared to the local road network i.e. the trunk road generally caters for high volumes of through traffic with the local roads distributing the local traffic to local businesses, communities and supporting the local economy. When a trunk road has been improved by a motorway, bypass or a similar route, it may be de-trunked. This is generally de-trunked to the local authority to manage with much less traffic on that route with the improvement made and seldom becomes more of a distributor road.

To switch the responsibility of trunk roads to the local authority would not be an easy task especially with the various legislation and powers in place for Welsh Government. Furthermore, it would lead to a disjointed view on the way the national system of routes operates across Wales. This was identified when the trunk road network was originally managed by local authorities on behalf of the Welsh Government many years ago. It led to inefficiencies and cost increases with the high number of resources required to operate and maintain the trunk roads each year. This resource no longer exists in local authorities to manage the various assets effectively. That is why over the years, we have reviewed the

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

management of the SRN via our agents and reduced these to two agents that work for the Welsh Government today, the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent and South Wales Trunk Road Agent.

This management arrangement is the same as other parts of the UK where devolved administrations manage the trunk roads in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The exception being National Highways managing the trunk road network in England

There are benefits with this model of the SRN being managed by Welsh Government when it comes to prioritisation of projects which help support the environment, economy and for those living and working in Wales.

In addition, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the LGE Act”) created a framework for a consistent mechanism for regional collaboration between local government, namely Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). The Act provides for the establishment of CJCs through Regulations. The emerging Regional Transport Plans (RTPs) are currently under development by the various CJCs following the publication of our [Regional Transport Plans: Guidance for Corporate Joint Committees](#). The RTPs and accompanying Regional Transport Delivery Plans (RTDPs) will set out the policies, programmes and projects to deliver the WTS in the region over a five-year period from 2025-2030.

In accordance with this guidance, they must align with the [National Transport Delivery Plan](#) which sets out Welsh Government’s policies, programmes, projects to deliver the WTS vision, ambitions and priorities across Wales over a five-year period. This includes SRN projects. Given the overlapping publication cycles, it is expected that RTPs will inform subsequent versions of the NTDP. The current NTDP is due to be revised in 2027 and will include involvement and consultation from all stakeholders.

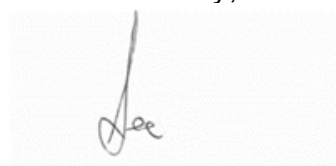
Furthermore, the planning and design of schemes always involves consultation with the local communities and businesses. The Future Generations Act requires us to do this, and the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) is our mechanism.

Prioritisation of funding is also a fair and equal process spread as far as possible and equally across Wales. Ensuring the Welsh SRN is updated to meet statutory and policy objectives is a focal point of the WTS, and Welsh Government continues to promote schemes in the NTDP that align with legislation and policy.

Considering the development of the RTPs and CJCs there are currently no plans to review the management of the trunk road/strategic road network for Wales.

We have asked the North Wales Transport Commission to advise and recommend solutions for a better transport system in north Wales. They published their [interim report](#) in June [North Wales Transport Commission: Interim Report June 2023 | GOV.WALES](#). I look forward to receiving the Commission’s final report and recommendations later this year and following this, I will set out the Welsh Government’s response.

Yours sincerely,



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