

# P-06-1353 Devolve responsibilities and budgets for trunk roads in North Wales to North Wales.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 25 Medi 2023  
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Reference: SR23/6132-5

**Petition Number:** P-06-1353

**Petition title:** P-06-1353 Devolve responsibilities and budgets for trunk roads in North Wales to North Wales.

**Text of petition:** At the moment all the roads, except large trunk roads, come under the responsibility of the six local authorities in North Wales. Including the trunk road networks within the responsibility of the six local authorities in North Wales will lead to much more relevant and pragmatic decisions, as local authorities are far more in tune with local businesses, communities, and the economy.

North Wales has some of the largest industrial parks (such as Wrexham and Deeside) in the UK. There are many internationally known companies that have made North Wales their home. It has one of the biggest manufacturing jobs concentrations in the UK. Holyhead, two international airports (Liverpool & Manchester) make it easy to promote North Wales as a great place for investment. Unfortunately, its road network is outdated and is therefore preventing the region from achieving its potential for economic growth. These roads including the trunk roads must be planned and designed together in consultation with the local communities and businesses to achieve the best return on investment. This will address local needs such as easy access to employment. Only a locally based decision will address North Wales' road transport needs. The voice of local businesses and communities needs to be heard.



# 1. Background

The Welsh Government is the highway authority for the trunk road and motorway network, known together as the Strategic Road Network (SRN). Each local authority is the highway authority for the local road network in its area.

The Welsh SRN is managed by two trunk road agents – the [South Wales Trunk Road Agent](#) (SWTRA) and the [North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent](#) (NMWTRA). Together, these are responsible for network and asset management, capital maintenance and routine maintenance. Major projects on the SRN are managed centrally by the Welsh Government. Transport for Wales also has a role in integrating the planning and development of the SRN in its overall sustainable transport programmes.

The Senedd passed the [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) in November 2021. The Act established Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) as regional corporate bodies to deliver certain local authority functions on a regional basis. This includes preparation of Regional Transport Plans (RTPs), with further functions likely to pass to CJCs in future. Senedd Research's [2022 article on CJCs](#) includes further background.

## The roads review

The Welsh Government published the [final report of the its Roads Review Panel](#) in February 2023, along with the [its response](#) and a new [National Transport Delivery Plan](#) (NTDP).

The Welsh Government's new policy limits highways investment to four purposes: support for modal shift; casualty reduction; climate change adaptation; and sustainable access to development sites. It also sets four conditions for investment, for example that carbon emissions from construction should be minimised.

Of 16 north Wales schemes reviewed, [15 were stopped or sent back for review](#). Some plans set out in the new NTDP differ from the panel's recommendations. For example, a recommendation that the third Menai Crossing shouldn't proceed was changed to a referral to the [North Wales Transport Commission](#) to develop options for resilience on the Menai strait. Also, while the [Flintshire Corridor Improvement programme has been cancelled](#), the NTDP commits to develop options to improve air quality at the A494 Aston Hill.

Senedd Research has published an article providing further details on the review and the Welsh Government response.

Following publication of the review Ken Skates MS – formerly Minister responsible for transport in the Fifth Senedd – called for transport responsibilities to be devolved to CJs.

On 13 June a media report suggested two economic projects - the Western Gateway project in Wrexham and Warren Hall at Broughton – are at risk following the roads review.

In July, the Welsh Government’s Deputy Director for Transport Strategy and Policy told the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister that Warren Hall is included in a review of economic development and transport schemes established following the publication of the roads review report. He also said discussions are underway with Wrexham Council on the Wrexham Gateway project.

## 2. Welsh Government response

The letter from the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters, to the Chair responding to this petition says there are no plans to review management of the Welsh SRN. He explains why, in his view, it would not be desirable to devolve responsibility, highlighting that the SRN has a different role to local roads so that devolution would lead to a “disjointed view on the way the national system of routes operates across Wales” as well as inefficiencies and cost increases. He says:

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

He goes on to explain the links between, and coordination of, the NTDP and the RTPs currently being developed by CJs. He refers to the fact that the final report of the North Wales Transport Commission is expected later this year.

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.