



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **M4 Newport – Next Steps**

DATE **5 June 2019**

BY **Ken Skates AM – Minister for Economy and Infrastructure**

In his Oral Statement yesterday the First Minister set out his decision on the M4 Project and said that I would make a further statement on next steps. The full decision letter and a copy of the Inquiry Inspector's report have been published for all to see.

The First Minister has indicated that we will act decisively to address the problems of motorway congestion in south east Wales.

Given the complexity of the issue, the impact of the current road and the impacts of the potential solutions, I intend to take a broad strategic approach to addressing the issue. There is a need to alleviate congestion and the resultant air quality issues now, especially as a result of the abolition of the Severn tolls. It is clear to me that we need to work together to consider how we provide for the movement of goods and people across the region in a way that creates a fairer more prosperous Wales, recognises the unprecedented challenge of climate change, and is affordable given the enormous pressure on our budgets caused by 10 years of austerity and capital budget cuts.

In the short term, I have asked my officials, working with partners in the Cardiff Capital Region and Newport City Council, to bring forward a suite measures designed to provide modest but immediate benefits.

These measures will include:

- additional traffic officers to reduce incidents and lane closures as employed during major events,
- dedicated on call recovery vehicles to support traffic officers by quickly removing obstructions when they occur as we would in roadworks
- live journey time information to inform better choices
- exploring the operation of junctions to reduce the load on the Brynglas tunnels
- a driver behaviour campaign to make best use of the available road space.

As well as these short term measures, we need to develop a long term, integrated and sustainable way forward which addresses these long run challenges of congestion, climate change and affordability. This is in the context of the advent of Metro, our commitments to Active Travel, the deterioration of the structures on the existing M4 through Newport, the ongoing air quality issues, and the imperative to create a more prosperous and equal society. I am focused on achieving our ambition of a high quality, multi-modal, integrated and low carbon transport system for the whole of Wales.

As the First Minister confirmed yesterday, I am immediately appointing an expert Commission to make recommendations on next steps for the transport network in South East Wales.

The Commission will consider the problems, opportunities, challenges, and objectives for tackling congestion on the M4 in south east Wales, and make recommendations on alternative solutions in the light of the First Minister's decision that the 'Black Route' proposal should not proceed.

The Commission will be small and focussed, and will consider the views of all stakeholders such as the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales, the Future Generations Commissioner, business groups, social partners, environmental groups, transport user groups, and local and national political representatives.

I am pleased to announce that Lord Terry Burns will Chair the Commission, whose Terms of Reference are attached.

Lord Burns brings a weight of diverse experience to the role and I have no doubt he will do justice to this crucial work. He is tasked with refocussing the debate, and taking a fresh look at alternatives that will provide a long-term, sustainable solution for the people of Newport and South Wales.

I believe it is imperative that the views of the people who use the current road, who are impacted by its shortcomings, who are concerned by the environmental impact of any solution, who will have to make any future solution work to improve our nation's social and economic performance should be central to this crucial work. The Commission will ensure that these views are fully captured in its work.

The Commission will report on its interim findings, with recommendations for immediate practical interventions, within six months of its formation.

The Commission will look at the extensive work the Government has done on this, at the alternatives proposed in the M4 Project Public Inquiry, and will also look at new ways of operating and funding a solution. This will require new ways of working with local and strategic partners, such as the Cardiff Capital Region local authorities, to deliver improved flow on the M4, whilst mitigating impacts on local communities.

The £114 million spent since 2013 developing the proposals for the £1.32Bn (in 2015 prices, which equates to £1.57Bn in 2019 prices) M4 Project will not be wasted, and will be put to good use by the Commission, making sure it is fully informed in terms of transport modelling, environmental surveys and all the other factors in play across the region.

We look to the Commission for a suite of practical actions that can be implemented immediately and in the longer term. We will of course need to consider the affordability of their proposed solutions in light of the Welsh Government's overall budget position. While there will always be competing demands for funding, we are clear that delivering sustainable solutions to the significant challenges along this transport corridor is a top priority.

Value for money and impact will be central considerations. The decision not to pursue the Black Route does not give me or anyone else a blank cheque to pursue pet projects - there is no windfall or free money.

Transport is an area where this Welsh Government has a bold and ambitious plan for the future. From the £5 billion plan we have developed through Transport for Wales for the new rail franchise and Metro, to major legislation that will help re-regulate the bus network to the biggest investment in Active Travel ever seen in Wales, there are exciting things going on right across Wales. We are committed to resolving the congestion issues around the M4 as an important part of those plans, but there are no easy answers.

We are committed to taking an inclusive, and collaborative approach to finding innovative, affordable and sustainable solutions in the shortest possible timescale and we look forward to working with Members across the chamber to achieve that ambition.



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South East Wales Transport Commission

Terms of Reference

The Commission will consider the problems, opportunities, challenges and objectives for tackling congestion on the M4 in south east Wales, and make recommendations to the Welsh Government on a suite of alternative solutions in the light of the First Minister's statement of 4 June 2019 that the 'Black Route' proposal should not proceed.

The Commission will consider the views of all stakeholders including the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales, the Future Generations Commissioner, business groups, social partners, environmental groups, transport users' groups, local and national political representatives and of course the public.

The Commission will consider the needs of current and future generations, taking into account immediate problems and future trends, such as the impact of alternative fuels and connected and autonomous vehicles.

The Commission will take into account the report of the Commission on Climate Change and other social, economic, cultural and environmental issues, including air quality.

The Commission will consider the behavioural issues which lie behind the continued growth in road-based transport in Wales, and how solutions might respond to those factors.

The Commission will advise on innovative interventions and funding solutions. It may consider any issues, including governance, costs, financing, planning approach and programme/project management and may recommend improvements to statutory processes.

The Commission will have access to the South East Wales Transport Planning Model, and to the full library of information available to the M4 Project Public Inquiry.

The Commission will operate independently of the Welsh Government. It will be supported by a Secretariat comprising Welsh Government officials and secondees as required.

The Commission will report on its interim findings, with recommendations for immediate practical interventions, within six months of its formation.

End.