

Ken Skates AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Trafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru
Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: KS/139/20

Russell George AM
Chair of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

SeneddEIS@assembly.wales

3 March 2020

Dear Russell,

Following on from my answer to you in WAQ79265 please find attached the update to the accepted recommendations relevant to my portfolio from the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's report into the State of the Roads in Wales October 2018.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', written over a light grey horizontal line.

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Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

Transport update on accepted recommendations to EIS Committee report into the State of the Roads in Wales October 2018

February 2019

No	Committee Recommendation	WG Response	Financial Implications	Action Taken & Next Steps
1	The Welsh Government should evaluate whether mobile apps like Boston's Street Bump could be used to improve the quality of real time data available for Wales' road network.	Accept - Mobile apps are increasingly becoming the norm and this would be another useful tool to assist maintenance planning. It is recognised industry wide that current surveys lack a real-time effective approach. Welsh Government are currently implementing a Geographical Information System (GIS) based network for access by their Agents to highlight condition issues and inform planned maintenance decision making.	No additional funding required beyond that already identified in the current budget.	Mobile inspections of civil engineering issues by the Trunk Road agents have been implemented. The Street Lighting maintenance app is being developed and should be ready April 2020 for testing. Phase 2 is to get the mobile apps to the Contractors who will then be capable and able to update the system
2	Highway Asset Management Plans (for local authorities and trunk road agencies) should be published and collected in a single place to ensure that there is transparency and public accountability around the process.	Accept - for Welsh Government motorway and Trunk Road Network only for the time being - Welsh Government are currently finalising the Asset management Policy and Strategy based on current best practice (ISO 55001:2014). Asset management plans would be generated using individual asset management systems which would be different for each local authority. Summarised output reports could be produced in a common format	No additional funding required beyond that already identified in the current budget.	A draft asset management strategy and plan with key performance indicators to ensure the motorway and trunk road network in Wales makes its contribution to the delivery of Welsh Government's objectives in Taking Wales Forward while complying with the Well Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. It is currently envisaged that a final version will be published on the Welsh Government's internet site by summer 2020.

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		and stored centrally. Welsh Government will discuss the best way to compare asset performance with local authorities following completion of the strategy and policy.		
5	The Welsh Government should bring together a stakeholder group similar to the Highways England Pavements Efficiency Group to advice on the most effective materials and processes.	Accept - Work commenced in 2017 by Welsh Government Pavement specialists in improving materials and processes used for highway maintenance on the Strategic Network. Trial works have been conducted with positive results to date. Liaison with various practitioners throughout the UK including Transport Scotland and Highways England and also local contractors has resulted in a new specification for road surfacing suitable to meet the challenge of durability, sustainability and environmental effects of climate change. Welsh Government Pavement specialists currently attend UK Technical Project Board and various national working groups for highway maintenance disciplines.	No additional funding required beyond that already identified in the current budget.	Work is ongoing to improve surface material specifications and this has resulted in further developments in road surfacing for the 2019/20 programme. A number of working groups are underway between Welsh Government, their Agents and Contractors to promote further improvement. Sections subject to the trials are performing very well and is anticipated that these materials will be far superior in terms of durability, sustainability, safety and value for money. Further development is planned in order to specify materials for the entire Welsh Trunk Road Network.

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6	Welsh Government and local government should ensure that priority and funding is given to cost-effective long-term planned maintenance in order to reduce more costly short-term fixes.	Accept - Welsh Government is investing more money in preventative methods of maintenance, which will help arrest deterioration of road surfaces before major interventions are required. In line with promotion of more durable surfacing, planned maintenance is now strongly influenced by longer term planning and a 5 year maintenance plan is currently under development. Welsh Government is utilising deterioration modelling capabilities which are used to project maintenance funding requirements.	No additional funding required beyond that already identified in the current budget	The 2020/21 surfacing programme is increasing use of preventative maintenance techniques to enable a long-term planning approach. These materials are both cost-effective and low carbon emissions.
7	Where geology or the laws of physics prevent full adherence to the standards laid down for active travel routes, then any decision to amend proposals should be taken in full collaboration with users.	Accept - Active Travel routes are identified through Local Authority consultation process. If the constraints are limited to localised restrictions it is likely the route would be approved as the overall benefit to the users would outweigh any minor restrictions. However if the constraints were	Where the Welsh Government provides funding it would ensure the appraisal process	The revised Design and Delivery Guidance will be published for consultation by the end of January, which now reflects the need for some flexibility in design more clearly. The consultation process will provide the opportunity to test if the right balance has been struck in this revision.

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		such that they jeopardised the route, Welsh Government would engage with stakeholders; Sustrans and the LA Cycling Officers to seek alternatives.	would take into account value for money and affordability.	
11	The Welsh Government should commission an independent review of recent Welsh Post Opening Project Evaluations to assess whether new Welsh roads have delivered against the estimated economic benefits that were projected when the schemes were agreed.	Accept - The WeITAG toolkit already contains the need to identify the benefits when making the investment decision, during construction and post construction. Once sufficient Impact Reports are available, Welsh Government will commission a review of the benefits of investing in the road network	The Commission will be funded through existing budget.	Preparation of documents to enable the procurement of a commission to undertake an independent review of recent Welsh Post Opening Project Evaluations is underway.
13	Welsh Government should ensure that support is available to ensure that the new WeITAG guidance is widely understood, and implemented both by public bodies, and contractors working on their behalf.	Agreed - Welsh Government is already working with the Future Generation's office to develop a programme of support sessions to ensure the toolkit is understood and where necessary, is refined.	No additional funding required beyond that already identified in the current budget.	Workshops were held for WeITAG users with sessions on how to apply the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to the assessment of transport interventions in Wales. We are currently considering which areas of the guidance to focus on providing further support on.

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14	<p>The Committee is keen to ensure that every new road project should be subject to challenge to ensure the Well-being of Future Generations Act has been rigorously applied in the scheme. If the WeITAG guidance is being followed, this should happen at all stages. The Welsh Government should audit a small selection of projects to assess the extent to which is this happening, and report back to the Committee in 12 months' time.</p>	<p>Agreed - WeITAG 2017 contains best practice for the development, appraisal and evaluation of proposed transport interventions in Wales. It has been developed by the Welsh Government to ensure that public funds are invested in a way that ensures they maximise contribution to the well-being of Wales, as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and to deliver the Act's vision of the Wales we want.</p> <p>The Welsh Government will report back to the committee in 12 months time on progress made against new road schemes which have been developed since WeITAG 2017 came into force.</p>	<p>No additional funding required beyond that already identified in the current budget.</p>	<p>WeITAG 2017 is currently being used to develop, appraise and evaluate the Llandeilo Transport Study. Two consultants were appointed in October 2017 to undertake stage 1, which has now been completed. This led to the identification of a long list of 42 options.</p> <p>The list was reduced to a shortlist of 11 which have been taken forward in stage 2. This was based on their ability to solve the problem, their fit with local and regional objectives, their positive impacts relating to well-being, deliverability, robustness in uncertainty and the potential for long lasting change.</p> <p>Stage 2 commenced in October 2018 and is nearing completion, due by April 2020 with a view of commencing WeITAG stage 3 in June /July 2020.</p>