

**Note of a meeting between the Deputy Minister for Climate Change and Pobl
group and elected representatives re Llanbedr
26 April 2023, 0930, Ty Hywel and MS Teams**

Present: Deputy Minister for Climate Change
Seren Allen, Lucy Powell, Jane Taylor Williams, Wyn Hammond – Pobl
Dyfrig Siencyn, Cyngor Gwynedd
Mabon ap Gwynfor MS
Liz Saville Roberts MP (via MS Teams)
Lee Robinson, Dave McCullough – TFW
Emma MacAulay-Nolan, Sam Hadley, Christopher Warner – WG

The Deputy Minister (DM) thanked everyone for attending and emphasised his wish to focus on what could be done to address the issues in Llanbedr. He thanked Pobl for their report. He set out the context, referencing the fast-track Llanbedr assessment and the subsequent full Roads Review report. He explained that although roads are necessary, they should not be the default, especially as the evidence shows that increasing road capacity generates additional demand. He observed that the Llanbedr scheme has been in development for many years, but policy had changed.

In terms of the latest position, the DM noted the work that had been undertaken on quick wins, some of which appeared to be suitable, and said he wanted to explore those in more detail alongside other ideas. He outlined his vision for Llanbedr to be an exemplar for deep rural areas, building on learning from across Europe. He also highlighted that the Roads Review recommendations had included a low-speed bypass option. He confirmed that he was willing for a bypass around Llanbedr to be part of a broader package, but it would need to be substantially different from the original proposal, i.e. with a reduced design footprint for a lower speed and lower ecological impact, and potentially an alternative route. The wider package would need to reallocate road space to public transport and pedestrians, address pavement safety. The DM mentioned the work Cyngor Gwynedd was doing on active travel planning and emphasised that measures to reduce car use would need to be part of the solution for Llanbedr, including exploration of options such as car clubs and e-bikes. Key routes, such as to Shell Island and in the longer term to Barmouth, would need to be considered. A range of measures would be needed as different people would need different travel options.

Representatives from Pobl reflected on the disappointment felt by the whole community about the outcome of the Roads Review, and the feeling of not being listened to. The DM acknowledged that they were justified in being annoyed. Pobl shared a powerful letter from a Llanbedr resident, and highlighted a range of challenges for the village including:

- feelings of being let down for generations

- the effect on well-being of current traffic problems – in contrast to the experience of previous generations who would have walked to school and work
- poor public transport
- the dynamics of living in rural Wales, which meant high car dependency
- the high proportion of older people and carers who would struggle to use car clubs and e-bikes
- the importance of securing economic development on the airfield and in the Enterprise Zone, with road infrastructure perceived as a barrier – with, for example, HGVs unable to reach the airfield without putting pedestrians in danger, and people being unable safely to walk to work at the airfield
- the need to promote the Welsh language by securing employment opportunities to keep young people in North Wales
- the difficulty of making deliveries through the village, with associated impacts on agriculture and other supply chains
- the lack of access for emergency vehicles.

Seren Allen, representing Ysgol Llanbedr, asked the DM when she and her friends would be able to feel safe.

Pobl emphasised their desire to work with the Welsh Government, and in turn the DM reiterated his desire to find a solution, working side by side with Cyngor Gwynedd.

Dyfrig Siencyn reported that Cyngor Gwynedd was keen to develop a green corridor for Llanbedr and that a bypass was essential for this. He acknowledged the work underway with the Welsh Government to develop the airfield, which he said was very important for the area but sometimes overlooked as too remote for economic development despite its advantages such as designated airspace. He mentioned recent horizon-scanning work which had surfaced labour market issues, ageing and dementia and falling rural school rolls as significant challenges. He observed that economic development, which was his priority, was likely to mean more traffic of one kind or another and that currently the access to the airfield was dire, which was also a challenge for existing micro-businesses. He referred to a forthcoming WLGA meeting about bus services and the need for regular coastal bus services, integrated with rail services. He confirmed his sympathy for reviewing road-building programmes (as long as there were other options available), and his willingness to look at a new design for the bypass with a lower speed limit, and to produce a new WelTAG appraisal, but asked for confirmation of the funding available.

The DM confirmed that c£250,000 had been earmarked in the 2023-24 financial year. He made clear that the purpose of the Roads Review had been to help end the cycle of expensive new road schemes which limited the funding available for public transport improvements, but that such a systemic change would inevitably cause some friction.

The DM then led a discussion on some specific improvements for Llanbedr, which covered:

- the new 20mph default speed limit on restricted roads which would come into force on 17 September (which was felt to be unlikely to have a major impact given current congestion)
- traffic lights (unlikely to be practical)
- road markings e.g. yellow boxes (mixed views)
- parking restrictions and a new car park (worth exploring)
- enabling people to reach the railway station and Shell Island without needing a car (recognising that holidaymakers are likely to bring cars and trailers)
- safe routes to school

The DM summed up the discussion by emphasising that any specific interventions should be seen as a package rather than in isolation.

Liz Saville Roberts MP reflected on the very positive conversation and supported the pursuit of a lower speed road with a green corridor. She highlighted that the area remains dependent on tourism, and that there was a need to improve rail access to the Cambrian Coast alongside solutions for visitors from, for example, Manchester. She emphasised that there is no alternative road past Llanbedr that is realistically usable, that the village is 40 miles from the nearest hospital, and that the ageing population would need better transport links to access public services. She asked for more information about how a new scheme would be funded.

The DM confirmed that the process would be the same as for all schemes and that all roads will need to meet the new tests. In terms of developing a new scheme, he commented that this could build on work already undertaken to date. Lee Robinson agreed that it would be possibly quickly to prepare a list of improvements.

The DM said that he wanted to deliver quick wins before the summer, and that he was committed to making rapid progress after that too. He appreciated that the change of direction had been difficult. He asked for consideration of the airfield to be part of the work, and emphasised that this was all being done in the context of a climate emergency.

Mabon ap Gwynfor MS welcomed the significant steps forward, which he characterised as being 70 per cent of the way. The remaining 30 per cent was economic development – with transport being the key to accessing work. **He suggested a follow-up meeting with the Minister for the Economy, to which the DM agreed.** He advised caution around the messaging from the meeting, and pressed for a public assurance from the DM that a bypass would go ahead, to avoid a situation where a new scheme did not meet the tests.

In response to these points, and to questions from others about the timescales and the amount of work which would need to be repeated, the DM explained that he had asked Councillors Medi and Hunt to lead a group to develop guidance on delivering

place based economic development enabled by transport solutions that support the growth of a prosperous, green, and equal economy and are consistent with the future tests for road building and the Wales Transport Strategy. This was in the context of multiple challenges including climate change, austerity and changing demand leading for example to falling bus revenues.

The DM reiterated that the proposals must form a package, and that including a bypass option within this was consistent with the recommendations of the Roads Review. He was not able to give a cast iron guarantee about funding, but was absolutely committed to developing a scheme and did not foresee any immediate barriers – and would seek to streamline processes where possible. He reflected that creative tensions between central and local government were part of a functioning democracy.

Sam Hadley added that the advantage of having a railway line, which was not the case in other parts of Wales, should be maximised.

Pobl welcomed the outcomes of the meeting and the renewed sense that everybody was striving in the same direction.

The Deputy Minister closed the meeting by agreeing that **those present would reconvene in 6 months**, in Llanbedr, to review progress, and that **he would assist Pobl with communicating the outcomes of the meeting.**