

PET(4)-13-12 : Tuesday 2 October 2012
P-04-391 : Llandeilo By-pass

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Tim ap Hywel

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27th. January 2012

LLandeilo By-pass: To Lobby for a Return to the Original Eastern Route, Instead of the Refined Eastern Route.

At the 2006 public consultation, the town indicated that the eastern by-pass route as presented to them in the map we'd all had a copy of, was acceptable to them. Yet late in the consultative process a "refinement" to that eastern route was introduced; at the time looking very tentative, – with the use of dashed lines to indicate possibility. I don't think people really took it on board, and I don't think it had proper discussion. It was certainly a surprise to find, following the consultation that the eastern by-pass with the late, tentative "refinement" in, had been set in stone as the protected route.

As set out in the consultation report, the "refinement" was driven by two engineering considerations:

1. To keep the road as much as possible out of the area susceptible to flooding;
2. To avoid the expense of having to build a bridge diagonal to the river, rather than at right-angles to it.

But I don't think due weight was ever given to its impact on the town. It brings the by-pass, with its noise, fumes and headlights, right up against the properties in the south-east quarter of the town: notably, Bridge Street (south side), Quay Street and Church Street. You only have to look at the sorry impact of the Carmarthen by-pass on the properties in the Parade and the Esplanade, and then bear in mind the Llandeilo by-pass will be even closer. Additionally it means the road will run slap-bang through the middle of the world-famous view of Llandeilo, rising on its hill above the tranquil water-meadows of the Tywi; one of the treasures of Wales. I don't think anyone with a responsibility for care of the Welsh heritage should sign that off lightly.

As regards taking the road out of the flood area, I can tell you that the stretch of the "refinement" from the river to the base of the town escarpment (about 1/3 of the "refinement"'s length) crosses a field that in a bad flood goes eight foot under water. The railway on its embankment, built with victorian technology goes unabashedly straight through the middle of the area they are seeking to avoid, and has never had any trouble from floods. I guess it's all down to the expense of raising embankments. I should imagine the "refinement"

road, where it goes along the edge of the flood area, would still have to have a low embankment.

Okay, they sought to avoid the complications (=expense) of a diagonal bridge, and its possibly increased flood vulnerability (=more expense, to ensure it's sufficiently resilient).

But isn't it worth spending a few more pounds to preserve an amenity and a beauty that once lost can never be recovered, rather than saving a few quid and getting a shoddy job, - ever after to incur general reproach. The same cost argument applies of course to having to raise a few extra metres of embankment

The third reason adduced in favour of the "refinement" was that by being at the bottom of the town escarpment it will keep the road out of view of the town, and that this in turn addresses some of the concerns of the 1993 enquiry. But I reject this as spurious: merely an attempt to put a fair face on something that was actually done for engineering and budgetary reasons. Where would it be out of view from? From the Crescent Road boulevard that's all, and even there you will still hear it loudly enough. *[Actually, I just checked this afternoon: it's going to be perfectly visible from there, - and close too.]* It's going to be out of sight to RHosmaen Street and the rest of the town wherever it is. It's not going to be out of sight to the south-east quarter of the town; they're going to have it at the bottom of their gardens. It's not going to be out of sight from Llandeilo Bridge. The current beautiful prospect up the Tywi valley will be blocked by the "refinement" bridge monstrously close and the stream of traffic coming off the new bridge descending the embankment across the field.

To address this I urge a return to the pre-"refinement" eastern by-pass route that we actually signed up to. Yes, it would be visible from the boulevard, but it would be a long way off and not in-your-face, like the route right up against the town would be. Nor would it be in-your-face when viewed from Llandeilo bridge. Instead it would pass almost mid-way between Llandeilo and FFair-fach. It would be a good way off from the residential area of the town; like LLandysul by-pass is. It wouldn't desecrate nearly so much, that famous view. In fact travelling for much of its length side-by-side with the railway would minimize its amenity impact, - insofar as it wouldn't cut a fresh scar of its own through the beauty of the Tywi valley.

Now, I know the town and the town council subsequently assented to the "refined" eastern by-pass, as proposed. But the main concern and anxiety of the town (particularly those, obviously, not directly affected by it) was, and is, to have a by-pass, rather than no by-pass. They were, and are, extremely anxious not to rock the boat in any way that might impact or derail a by-pass roll-out. But I really don't believe that they are passionately wedded to the "refined" eastern route, or opposed to the original eastern route. They just want a by-pass, - some by-pass, to happen as quickly and in as hitch-free a manner as possible. In fact I suspect that secretly many of them think the original eastern route is preferable.

Could I therefore humbly ask you to at least give this proposal an airing at your meeting with Llandeilo Town Council to discuss the by-pass, provisionally arranged I believe for some time early in February.

Yours faithfully,

Tim ap Hywel (Leadbeater)