

# P-06-1352 Approve the construction of the third bridge over the Menai Strait.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023  
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/6132-4

Petition Number: P-06-1352

Petition title: Approve the construction of the third bridge over the Menai Strait.

## Text of petition:

The Welsh Government's Road Review Panel has finally concluded that the Third Menai crossing should not be built due to concerns around Climate Change. Whilst we all understand and appreciate the issues surrounding the Climate, this decision is a huge blow for the residents of Anglesey and for anyone who regularly commutes across the Menai Strait.

The Third Menai Crossing has been a project proposal for many years with hope it would finally be built when the outcome of a consultation on the plans were published in 2018. However in 2021, this project (like other road projects in Wales) was frozen to be scrutinised by the Roads Review Panel.

Many arguments have been made about resilience, most recently during the recent closure of Menai Bridge which lasted 3 months, showing the nightmare of crossing Britannia Bridge with the increased traffic volumes, and should it have to close for any length of time then Menai Bridge certainly wouldn't be able to deal with the increased traffic volumes.



The review even stated that supporting the 3rd crossing would improve safety, resilience and active travel yet concluded the project shouldn't go ahead, which makes the decision even more confusing.

The construction of the Third Menai Crossing should be approved, doing so can be a great catalyst to Climate-friendly projects in the future.

## 1. Background

The Menai crossings are internationally significant infrastructure - part of the UK landbridge connecting Ireland to Europe. The A55 Britannia Bridge carries both rail and road traffic and is the only section of the A55 route which is single carriageway. The Menai Suspension Bridge provides another link between the mainland and Anglesey.

Plans for a third Menai crossing have been discussed since 2007 and the Welsh Government consulted on a number of options between December 2017 and March 2018. In October 2018 it announced its preferred option for a third crossing.

The December 2022 Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan project pipeline gave a start date of 2027 and an estimated delivery date of 2029/30 for the A55: third Menai crossing project.

### Roads Review

In June 2021 the Deputy Minister for Climate Change announced that a roads review panel would be established to review planned Welsh Government road investments. The Deputy Minister announced a pause on all new road schemes while the existing pipeline of schemes was reviewed, except in cases where “there are currently diggers in the ground”.

The panel published its final report in February 2023 which included a number of scheme specific recommendations. The panel recommended the third Menai

crossing **should not proceed**. When questioned on the panel's recommendation **in Plenary**, the Deputy Minister said:

...At the moment, this is a £400 million scheme for which we do not have the funding. So, regardless of the recommendation in the review, it's a slightly academic point.

In response to the panel's findings the Welsh Government published a **new roads policy statement** and its **National Transport Delivery Plan** (NTDP) which sets out the schemes being taken forward.

Despite the panel's recommendation, the NTDP includes an action to "develop options to ensure the resilience of crossing the Menai Straights [in a way] that supports modal shift" and states that the Welsh Government has "asked the North Wales Transport Commission to make recommendations on how this is best achieved".

## North Wales Transport Commission

The **North Wales Transport Commission** was established in March 2022 to make recommendations on creating an integrated transport system across North Wales. The Commission is chaired by Lord Burns who also chaired the **South East Wales Transport Commission** which considered alternatives to the M4 relief road.

As outlined, following the Roads Review the Welsh Government extended the Commission's remit to consider options for Menai.

The Commission published its **interim report** in June, and its final report is expected in the autumn. **Annex 1** of the interim report focuses on Menai and states:

... At this stage, and in keeping with our approach to make the infrastructure that is already available work better, it is the view of the Commission that the current bridges can be made more resilient, and we are looking at options that can achieve this.

## Closure of the Menai Suspension Bridge

On 21 October 2022 the Menai Suspension Bridge was closed due to safety concerns. The Deputy Minister made a **Plenary statement on 25 October**. He explained that technical analysis following a 2019 Principal Inspection Report identified potential issues with the span hangers. Subsequent modelling

identified “serious risks” and the bridge was closed. This called in to question the resilience of the crossing, particularly in the event of the Britannia Bridge needing to close due to high winds.

The bridge reopened in February 2023.

In July 2023 a further programme of works on the bridge was announced. The work will see the bridge reduced to one lane between the hours of 7am and 7pm until summer 2025.

## 2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Chair dated 4 August 2023, the Deputy Minister refers to the work of the North Wales Transport Commission in considering options for Menai. He states that the Welsh Government’s response will be set out once the Commission publishes its final report.

## 3. Welsh Parliament action

Following the sudden closure of the Menai Suspension Bridge, the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee explored issues around maintenance and safety in a December 2022 scrutiny session with the Minister and Deputy Minister for Climate Change.

In March the CCEI Committee also scrutinised the Deputy Minister on the Roads Review following the publication of the panel’s final report. The Committee questioned the Deputy Minister on the decision to ask the North Wales Transport Commission to consider options for Menai.

The Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister also raised the issue in its July meeting focused on North Wales.

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.