

Carl Sargeant AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau  
Minister for Local Government and Communities



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-261/319  
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/00214/13

William Powell AM  
Chair Petition's committee  
committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

19 February 2013

*Dr Bill*

Thank you for your letter of 23 January on behalf of Mr Paul Pavia about the Newtown Traffic Study Report issued in April 2012. This report concerned the existing A483 through Newtown, and in particular the Pool Road / Kerry Road junction. I attach a response to the queries raised.

My officials met with you recently and provided an update progress on the proposed bypass for Newtown as follows;

Award of an ECI contract (subject to final approvals)	March/April 2013
Publication of Draft Orders	Summer 2013
Start of Works	Early 2015*

\* Subject to statutory consent and agreement of target cost

I would like to seek clarification of your request that any decisions or actions arising from future local meetings held by the Welsh Government on the bypass are forwarded to the Committee. During the development of the scheme, my officials carry out an extensive public engagement exercise and will hold a significant number of meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders. These meetings which range from those with individuals via a public liaison officer which will be appointed by the successful contractor, public exhibitions, to provide information on scheme development to meetings with elected representatives known as Local Authority Liaison Committees (LALC).

To provide an overview of the progress of the scheme, I would propose to issue the decisions and actions arising from the LALC meetings, which are held quarterly. I would be grateful if you could confirm your agreement to this approach.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CS', written in a cursive style.

**Carl Sargeant AC / AM**

Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau  
Minister for Local Government and Communities



## Newtown Traffic Study

### Response to letter from Mr Paul Pavia, 5 October 2012

The Newtown Traffic Study Report was issued in April 2012. Meetings to present the results of the report were held by my officials with local councillors and with members of the public were held in Newtown in July 2012. At the public meeting, my officials acknowledged that there was an apparent discrepancy between the reported results and anecdotal evidence from the public as to the severity of the traffic problems. As a result, it was agreed that additional traffic information would be collected and the analysis of the current problems would be revisited and checked and potential further improvements considered with subsequent feedback to a local stakeholder group.

Further studies were completed in Autumn 2012. The first stakeholder meeting was held by Welsh Government in November 2012 with a number of Newtown town councillors and Powys County Council councillors including Cllr Russell George AM, Cllr Joy Jones, Cllr Gemma Bowker, Cllr Bob Mills, and Cllr Susan Hill, along with representatives from Newtown Chamber of Trade, Powys County Council Transport department, local access groups and interest groups. The meeting agreed that further studies should be taken forward on a number of options to improve four key junctions on both the A483 trunk road and adjacent county roads. This further study work was completed in January 2013 and was the subject of the second stakeholder meeting which took place on 28 January. Further information will be issued shortly on progress on the options being taken forward.

I present below answers to each of the points raised in your letter concerning the Newtown Traffic Study Report issued in April 2012 (the report). However, please note that some of the points have been resolved or taken forward as part of the ongoing work. For ease of reference I have addressed each point in the same order.

- Query over the use of Thursday peak traffic data versus Friday peak data.

The data gathered for the use of Thursday peak versus Friday peak indicated that the worst case hourly flow occurred on a Thursday, albeit that the Friday peak traffic congestion lasted for a longer period. However, at the public meeting, my officials agreed that additional traffic information would be collected and further assessment would be completed.

- Over what period of time was the assessment carried out and at what times of the day?

The initial site visits were in February 2011 through to March 2012. The times of day concentrated on the pm peak but inter-peak periods were also observed.

- How did Arup account for traffic that avoids the town completely and commuters taking alternative routes?

The ATC data showed traffic levels out of town and on A483 through town, giving an indication of the traffic avoiding the A483 through town. This is reflected in the report. However, the core part of the study was to compare the alternative junction layouts. In order to make a fair comparison, the same traffic demand was used.

- In a leaflet produced by Tesco prior to opening they announced the new store would benefit the town and surrounding area by the construction of a new roundabout on Pool Road to provide a safe and satisfactory access to the store. Therefore I would like to understand whose decision it was to remove the roundabout completely and replace it with traffic signals.

When Tesco submitted a planning application in May 2006 for a superstore development on the old livestock market site in Newtown, a holding direction was issued by the National Assembly for Wales.

Subsequent to that and following a Transport Impact Assessment from the developer, Powys County Council and the Welsh Government jointly funded traffic modelling of the road network in Newtown. This traffic modelling identified that in order to accommodate a superstore development on the old livestock market site in Newtown, the access to it needed to be signalised; the existing roundabout at Kerry Road junction needed to be replaced by traffic signals; the two new sets of signals and existing three sets of signals needed to be linked by an Urban Traffic Control system.

As part of the Tesco supermarket development which opened in February 2010, the Pool Rd / Kerry Rd junction was converted from a roundabout to a signalised junction.

The initial set up of the traffic signals (by the developer) was not completed correctly, and resulted in significant traffic congestion on the approaches to the junction. In addition, there were issues with the lane marking of the junction, which restricted visibility for traffic and exacerbated the congestion.

Ultimately, the granting of Planning Permission for the development and alterations to the road layout was given by Powys County Council as Planning Authority.

- The Arup report makes reference to several recalibrations of the SCOOT system. How many times has it been calibrated in total?

The initial calibration of the SCOOT system was undertaken by Siemens as part of the Tesco development. Subsequently, the signals have been recalibrated four times between April 2011 and March 2012 by an external consultant employed by the Welsh Government. Each occasion followed physical alteration to the junction or traffic signals, and were completed in order to gain the benefit from the alterations without delay.

- The Arup report also stated that any further capacity improvements at the Kerry Road junction would require third party land or property. Therefore what work have you and your officials undertaken to look at purchasing third party land?

The scope of the study related to the reinstatement of the previous roundabout and improvements achievable within the existing highway boundary. The scope did not include the potential purchase of third party land to facilitate more significant changes to the junction. However, at the public meeting, it was agreed that this would be investigated in the subsequent work. This work is in progress currently.

- What considerations have been given to construct an improved roundabout with filter lanes?

There is insufficient space within the existing highway boundary to fit a roundabout with filter lanes in accordance with current standards. As it would have required third party land, it was not considered. However, this option was considered as part of the further study work.

- Point 2.5 ARUP Report

From the initial site visits it was clear that the SCOOT system was poorly calibrated with a lack of coordination between the adjacent junctions. The SCOOT system was then recalibrated by an external consultant as Powys officers had not been trained to undertake this task. As part of the series of recalibrations, Powys officers were provided training such that they would be able to make minor adjustments to the SCOOT system as necessary.

- Point 3.2.1 ARUP Report concerning the use of Thursday peak traffic data versus Friday peak data

I have addressed this point in the first part of my response.

- There are references in the Arup report that improvements have been made to the signalled controlled junction on Pool Road; why was the junction not designed correctly in the first place?

The junction was designed by the developer and the subsequent improvements carried out by Powys County Council and the Welsh Government comprised minor changes to kerb lines, road markings, vehicle detection loops, signal timings and pedestrian detection and signals. These were all relatively minor in nature, aimed at making best use of the junction layout.

- Delays have increased on the Kerry Road and Cambrian Bridge to try and alleviate the delays on the main road. Have these town roads been monitored?

The queuing and delays on the side roads has been considered during the SCOOT recalibration works. While queuing on these arms has increased, the calibration has aimed to balance the delay on the side roads with that on the busier main road.

- The traffic flows measured during the study were conducted by counting the number of vehicles passing a specific point. Theoretically, does this then mean if the traffic is stationary for an hour with no vehicles passing the point, congestion would not be measured? If that is not the case how is congestion properly measured, as it seems to me the greater the levels of congestion, the slower the traffic moves over the passing point, the less traffic passes the point which would mean the lower the congestion is registered.

There is no simple, singular definition of congestion. One of the most useful measures is to consider variation in journey time. In the theoretical case cited, if no vehicles moved for an hour, this would give a very high average journey time indicating a high level of congestion. In looking at traffic flows, the key point is to understand traffic demand, rather than the number of vehicles passing a particular point. As such, during the study historical traffic patterns and survey locations outside of the Newtown urban area have been considered, in order to understand the likely levels of traffic that would want to travel through Newtown.