

Public Accounts Committee
Value for Money of Motorway and Trunk Road Investment
MTRI 01 – Isle of Anglesey County Council

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Eich Cyf - Your Ref.

29th January 2015

Dear Sir

Inquiry into value for money of Motorway and Trunk Road Investment.

I respond to your consultation document on behalf of Ynys Môn County Council. As you will know the only Trunk Road on the island forms part of the A55 DBFO contract, hence the authority does not operate a Trunk Road Agency. Bearing this in mind, the authority regularly attends the NMWTRA Trunk Road Joint Committee and has always been supportive of the Trunk Road Agencies remaining with local authorities, as it is essential to retaining high quality jobs within the local area.

As the authority does not have a Trunk Road Agency I will not have detailed costs of project procurement, but will hopefully be able to provide an independent and fair view on the operation of NMWTRA.

My response to the matters referred to as part of the consultation process is as follows:-

1. The effectiveness of Welsh Government's planning and costing of schemes.

- 1.1 Am not able to comment on the value for money aspect as the information to do so is not available to me.
- 1.2 Generally speaking major trunk road projects provide a considerable cost benefit in the long run and recent major improvements to the A470/A487 North to South Wales route have been very beneficial in terms of safety, time saving and cost benefit.
- 1.3 The provision of a third crossing of the Menai Straits would provide huge benefits to the area in terms of attracting industry and improving the resilience of the current crossings, which will be essential for developing Wylfa Newydd. The opportunity to work with National Grid for a third crossing capable of carrying the proposed additional

electrical cabling should not be missed, especially while European Ten-T funding is available.

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2. *Routine Maintenance and improvement of the network via the Trunk Road Agencies and how they can be improved.*
- 2.1 The current arrangements provide considerable local employment within the design consultancies and direct labour organisations of these authorities, as well as within the agencies themselves.
- 2.2 There are definite advantages in using the expertise of local government consultancies, in particular their local knowledge, for the design of major improvements.
- 2.3 Economies of scale are considerable for those local authorities who have Trunk Road functions, in particular with the sharing of gritting fleets and salt storage sheds. Additionally combined gritting routes between Trunk and County Roads can be better planned to avoid free travel and hence will provide a more efficient service. Most Council's have behaved as honest brokers in this matter and the recent amalgamation of NWTRA and MWTRA would have helped with this issue.
- 2.4 The stringent financial cuts that have hit local authorities' County Roads does not appear to be implemented within the Trunk Road Agencies, with the number of staff having increased considerably over the past few years.
- 2.5 The example of Trunk Road Agency and Welsh Government not getting value for money that most strikes me is the employment of circa 20 no. Trunk Road Stewards to patrol the A55 in 4 by 4 vehicles, which are often if not always double manned. I have queried this matter previously at NMWTRA Joint Committee meetings and was told that these Stewards respond to circa 3,500 incidents per annum. This equates to less than one call/steward/shift, which for an annual cost of circa £2 million seems very costly. Additionally, to these Stewards the road is still patrolled by highway inspectors and North Wales Police (whose presence has now been reduced).

I trust these comments are accepted in the totally unbiased manner that they are submitted.

Yours faithfully

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HEAD OF SERVICE (ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNICAL)

Copies to: Richard Parry Jones – Chief Executive
Colin John Edwards – Chief Engineer (Operational)