

Inquiry into international connectivity through Welsh ports and airports

Evidence from Paul Glyn Davies

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### **How Wales connects with the world**

Dear Ms. Phipps,

I refer to an article published in the Daily Post regarding the Inquiry into how Welsh ports and airports could be better developed to boost the economy and tourism and the invitation therein to submit suggestions / evidence to you.

I am specifically interested in the North East area of Wales and in recent days have read of the new appointment of Ashkar Sheibani as Chairman of the Enterprise Zone Board for Deeside. Mr Sheibani plans to carry out improvements that will stimulate growth for the next twenty years and I wish him luck. In my humble opinion however there is much needed infrastructure work required to transport links in this area to achieve this.

As a resident of Flintshire at the 'Gateway to North Wales' my comments revolve around the potential improvements that could be made in this area to the road network to Mostyn Docks, the neglected River Dee and the rail infrastructure in North East Wales.

#### **The River Dee**

As you will be aware the North Wales border is very close to Chester City centre .The River Dee was canalised in 1737 from Connah's Quay to Chester and gave birth to a variety of manufacturing industries for which Deeside became famous. Today the river lies silted up with very little commercial activity occurring other than wings from Airbus transported out to Mostyn Docks by barge. For the thousands of foreign tourists visiting Chester and North Wales they must notice a marked difference in the way the river is exploited for tourism from above the weir in Chester to the way the river lies unused and neglected in Flintshire.

If you travel along the river bank on the Wirral peninsular in Cheshire the coastline is exploited for tourism, the same cannot be said for the Welsh side of the river Dee from Saltney, through to Mostyn.

The foresight and imagination exercised by our forefathers in developing and exploiting river transport has been lost in time. Whilst I accept that dredging silt is a problem to be tackled I do not believe this is insurmountable and could open up opportunities for new business initiatives. I cannot think of many other towns and communities situated alongside a canalised river in Britain that rarely see a boat.

#### **Mostyn Dock**

As a child I recall Mostyn being somewhere where there was plenty of work at the Iron works, docks and the local coalmine. Today industry has all but abandoned the area and the resident population struggle to find work without travelling considerable distances.

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Whilst activity in respect of offshore wind farms is vibrant, the Port does appear capable of handling more freight and thereby generating more work for local people. The limiting factors appear to be poor road transport links from the Wales border and like the river further inland, the need for regular dredging.

Improved road access to Mostyn could be achieved through *exploiting the A 548 Deeside Industrial Estate Road from Shotwick on the Cheshire border over the Flintshire Bridge and the construction of coastal route bypass of towns* such as Flint in which traffic congestion currently occurs. An opportunity would also then exist to build in a flood defence scheme along the river bank. Such action would tidy up the appearance of the Wales side of the River Dee estuary and cater for global warming and future rising tides. Whilst Councillors of yesteryear were against a Flint by pass, from comments in local newspapers those in Office today now appear to welcome such a development.

If Ashkar Sheibani is to be successful in his quest to stimulate growth in the Deeside Enterprise zone then I am sure that improved links to Mostyn Docks by river and road could open up opportunities for industrialists to exploit and the growth in business activity he is targeting.

### **The Roads into North Wales**

As a resident of Flintshire living at the gateway to North Wales from north west England I have been amazed at the lack of joined up thinking between Highways Agency England, the Welsh Office( now Wales Assembly ) and the two local authorities of Flintshire and Cheshire in developing the cross border route into North Wales.

The majority of commercial traffic entering or leaving North Wales heading to, or travelling from Holyhead, passes along the main arterial roads in this area i.e. the M 56, M 53 and A 55. Such traffic brings little or no economic benefit to North East Wales but contributes considerably to traffic congestion in Deeside particularly during summer months when traffic volumes peak because of holiday makers.

Congestion at the entrance to the North Wales border is undesirable and acts as a deterrent to both tourism and trade. It could be avoided with a little strategic imagination, leadership and investment. The planners working for the Wales Assembly Transport Officials arrogantly dismiss local residents' health and welfare concerns by repeatedly proposing ever wider roads through heavily populated communities when a more preferred option for the people of Deeside exists.

The obvious solution to Deeside residents is the creation of a new and dynamic entrance into North Wales from the Cheshire border by again *exploiting the A 548 dual carriage way to the Flintshire Bridge and construction of a link road to join the A55 at Northop.*

This dual carriageway route with scope for widening would be the most direct route into North Wales from the Cheshire border and has real potential. A large truck stop and services has just been established there which will expand in due course and this would service truckers and motorists entering the Principality right at the 'Gateway'.

### **Benefits**

- Separation of through traffic from local traffic thereby reducing potential congestion.
- Provision of an alternative route for one or the other route in the event of hold ups.
- Reduced dependency on one river bridge at Queensferry
- The opportunity to build a Tourist information centre at the gateway to North Wales

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Evidence from Paul Glyn Davies

- Removal of a considerable volume of H.G.V traffic from the routes around Deeside
- Smoother cross border crossing over an iconic landmark bridge 'The Flintshire Bridge'
- Free up the A 494 to support further economic development and tourism in Flintshire
- A significant reduction in the volume of traffic passing through communities in Deeside.

### **The Rail Network**

As a former Steelworker in the 1960's I am well aware of the Dee Marsh railway sidings that were installed many years ago to serve the Steel industry established originally by John Summers & Sons. These extensive sidings just off the Bidston line lie mostly idle today, a monument to the scale of operations that used to occur when the Steelworks was fully operational.

As a means of reducing pressure on the A 55 arterial road there has to be scope to establish a trans-shipment rail depot there to which containers could be brought by road for onward transfer by rail to either Mostyn or Holyhead Docks or to the rest of Britain or the Continent. This idea was submitted in evidence to the Public inquiry into the Wales Assembly failed proposals to create a 'super highway' along the A 494 in 2007.

### **Ports / jetties along the North Wales Coast**

In recent months a project has been publicised to take North Wales waste to an incinerator in either Anglesey or Deeside for treatment and incineration. The sceptical amongst us never expected the Anglesey site to materialise as North East Wales has the higher concentration of population to generate more waste and has better transport links than Anglesey.

When I visited New York a few years ago I saw huge barges transporting waste from the city along the River Hudson for treatment. A similar opportunity exists here in North Wales to exploit jetties and small ports along the coast to transport waste, most Counties other than Wrexham have such facilities. A facility also exists a short distance away over the border on the banks of the River Mersey at Ince, Cheshire that can be accessed via the Mersey / Manchester Ship canal.

The fall back solution to this is rail and if Deeside is to be the chosen location then railway upgrades will be necessary and this again could involve the Dee Marsh railway complex.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute suggestions, this area is inextricably linked with the North West of England and motorists routinely cross the Wales border without giving a thought to the fact they are moving from one Country to another.

A new and dynamic entrance into North Wales as suggested via the magnificent Flintshire Bridge would emphasise the border crossing, reinforce our Welsh identity and make a tremendous improvement to traffic movement in this area thereby creating more opportunities for business expansion and jobs alike.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Glyn Davies.

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