



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd **The Environment and Sustainability Committee**

Dydd Mercher, 6 Tachwedd 2013
Wednesday, 6 November 2013

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Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mick Antoniw	Llafur Labour
Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Llyr Gruffydd	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Julie James	Llafur Labour
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Antoinette Sandbach	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

James Byrne	Rheolwr Eiriolaeth Tirweddau Byw, Ymddiriedolaethau Natur Cymru Living Landscapes Advocacy Manager, Wildlife Trusts Wales
Clive Campbell	Cadeirydd, Grŵp Polisi SEWTA Chair, SEWTA Policy Group

Gareth Clubb	Cyfarwyddwr, Cyfeillion y Ddaear Cymru Director, Friends of the Earth Cymru
Yr Athro/Professor Stuart Cole	Athro Emeritws mewn Trafnidiaeth, Prifysgol De Cymru Emeritus Professor of Transport, University of South Wales
Iestyn Davies	Pennaeth Materion Allanol, Ffederasiwn Busnesau Bach Head of External Affairs, Federation of Small Businesses
Martyn Evans	Rheolwr Cynllunio Ecosystemau a Phartneriaethau De Cymru, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Ecosystems Planning and Partnerships Manager South, Natural Resources Wales
Graham Hillier	Cyfarwyddwr Gweithredol ar gyfer Gweithrediadau y De, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Executive Director for Operations South, Natural Resources Wales
Carl Jones	SEWTA a Phrif Beiriannydd (Cynllunio Priffyrdd) Cyngor Dinas Casnewydd SEWTA and Principal Engineer (Highways Planning) Newport City Council
Keith Jones	Cyfarwyddwr, Sefydliad Peirianwyr Sifil Cymru Director, Institution of Civil Engineers Wales Cymru
Joshua Miles	Cynghorwr Polisi, Ffederasiwn Busnesau Bach Policy Adviser, Federation of Small Businesses
Simon Nicholls	Prif Gynllunydd Trafnidiaeth, SEWTA Principal Transport Planner, SEWTA
Jessica Poole	Arweinydd Tîm Ardal Caerdydd a Chasnewydd, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Cardiff and Newport District Team Leader, Natural Resources Wales
Mike Webb	Uwch-swyddog Cadwraeth, Cynllunio, RSPB Cymru Senior Conservation Officer, Planning, RSPB Cymru

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Catherine Hunt	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Andrew Minnis	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Nia Seaton	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:02.
The meeting began at 09:02.

Ethol Cadeirydd Dros Dro
Election of Temporary Chair

[1] **Ms Stocks:** In the absence of the Chair this morning, our first item is the election of a temporary Chair. I invite nominations.

[2] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I nominate William Powell.

[3] **Ms Stocks:** William Powell has been nominated. Are there any objections? There are no objections, so William Powell is duly elected as temporary Chair.

*Penodwyd William Powell yn Gadeirydd dros dro.
William Powell was appointed temporary Chair.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[4] **William Powell:** Thank you very much Naomi and Members. Bore da, bawb. It is good to see you here on this moist November morning. We have a very important session to deal with. The usual housekeeping conditions apply; in the cause of making progress, I shall not go through them in detail. I think that you are all familiar with them. Are there any declarations of interest? I think that I should make a brief declaration of my own. In a previous life, Jessica Poole, one of our witnesses, was a project officer for Tir Gofal, in the good old days when the Countryside Council for Wales was looking after that scheme. I should make a note of that point because she was a project officer on our own holding. It is good to see you again, Jessica and, indeed, to welcome you all.

[5] We have an apology, as has been stated, from our Chair, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas. There are no others. Just to note, there is still a vacancy on the committee arising from Vaughan Gething's promotion to Deputy Minister. Otherwise, we have a full complement, which is excellent, for today's important sessions.

09:03

Ymchwiliad i Gynigion Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer yr M4 o amgylch Casnewydd—Tystiolaeth gan Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Proposals for the M4 around Newport— Evidence from Natural Resources Wales

[6] **William Powell:** I should say by way of context that Natural Resources Wales, as we are all aware, has three distinct roles in relation to the M4 proposals: the informal advisory role, the statutory consultee role and, of course, the regulatory function. In that context, I think that it is fair to say, before the witnesses speak for themselves, that they are unlikely to be in a position to provide detailed evidence on views regarding the proposals at this stage. They have explicitly been invited today in order to provide Members with information on their role in the strategic environmental assessment and habitats regulations assessment process, and questions should be focused around those areas of the NRW function.

[7] I welcome our witnesses and ask you to introduce yourselves briefly, just to check the sound levels, and to make an initial statement. I am sure that Members want to get under way with a round of questions. So, over to you.

[8] **Mr Evans:** Bore da i chi i gyd. **Mr Evans:** Good morning to you all.

[9] I am Martyn Evans, the ecosystems planning and partnerships manager for south Wales.

[10] **Mr Hillier:** Bore da, bawb. **Mr Hillier:** Good morning, all.

[11] My name is Graham Hillier, and I am the executive director of operations for south Wales.

[12] **Ms Poole:** Good morning. I am Jessica Poole, district team leader for the Cardiff and Newport district team, and Natural Resources Wales's lead officer in advising the Welsh Government on the M4 corridor proposals.

[13] **William Powell:** Could I ask you first of all to set the context by setting out for Members in brief the key stages and requirements of the SEA process that applies in this case?

[14] **Mr Hillier:** Martyn is probably well equipped to cover that question.

[15] **Mr Evans:** Well, I will try. The stages are set out under the strategic environmental assessment directive 2004. There are some Welsh Government regulations that transpose the directive into Wales. It is mandatory for NRW, and Cadw, to be consulted at four different stages in the production and in the culmination of the assessment. The first stage is the screening stage, which is to determine whether a plan or a programme—it is a plan in this instance, I believe—is required and is likely to have a significant environmental effect. Typically for NRW, this would mean us providing the maker of the plan or programme with information about baseline geographic information system datasets and so on.

[16] The second stage is scoping, which determines the length and breadth of the assessment in hand—that is, the scope and the extent and the level of detail of information that the output of the assessment, which is the environmental report, will need to contain. That is a key stage, and we focus our efforts on the first two stages—the screening and the scoping—so that its content is set and we know roughly what we can expect when we get consulted on the third stage, which is the reporting stage, when the draft output, by way of the environment report, is presented to us by the plan maker, which is termed in the directive as the 'responsible authority'. In this case, it is the Welsh Government.

[17] The fourth stage is the adoption of the plan itself, having incorporated the findings of the environment report, which is the output of the assessment. That should have informed, at all stages, the production of the plan, so that the findings of the environment report will have been woven into the development of the plan, highlighting weaknesses in particular areas and so on with respect to the environment. So, our role is at those four stages.

[18] **William Powell:** Given the significant controversy that surrounds these proposals, I think that it would be particularly interesting for Members also to understand what constitutes 'a reasonable alternative' for the purposes of the SEA directive.

[19] **Mr Hillier:** I think that this is where the interesting question is for us, in our role in advising on and subsequently being consulted on the SEA, specifically in terms of the proposals for the M4, which is what is being put before us in the context of the current round of the consultation. If we take a step back, however, in previous iterations of these ideas—and it goes back over quite a length of time—there have been other discussions around a wider set of alternatives. I think that it would be fair to say that, had they developed an SEA of their own, that would have been a position at which we would be observing a comparison of those alternatives. What we have seen this time is an SEA that is focused on the M4 road as one of those sets—a subset, if you like—in the range of other options.

[20] **William Powell:** Okay, that is useful.

[21] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Gofynnaf fy **Llyr Gruffydd:** I shall ask my question in
nghwestiwn yn Gymraeg. Welsh.

[22] Rwyf am holi ychydig am y ffaith y I want to ask a little about the fact that there
bu asesiad amgylcheddol strategol yn ôl ym was a strategic environmental assessment

mis Tachwedd 2012 o'r opsiynau yn y cyfnod hwnnw. Daeth hwnnw i gasgliadau penodol ynglŷn â'r impactau y byddai'r gwahanol opsiynau yn eu cael. Mae'r asesiad amgylcheddol strategol presennol wedi newid rhai o'r *impacts* hynny o fod yn *major negative* i fod yn—beth yw'r term?—*minor negative*. Mae'r papur tystiolaeth yr ydym wedi ei dderbyn oddi wrth Gyfeillion y Ddaear yn honni nad yw'n glir bod unrhyw gyfiawnhad dros y newid hwnnw. Hoffwn wybod eich barn chi ynglŷn â sut y byddai sefyllfa o'r fath yn gallu codi, felly.

back in November 2012 of the options for that period. That came to specific conclusions about the impacts that the various options would have. The current strategic environmental assessment has changed some of those impacts from 'major negative' to—what is the term?—'minor negative'. The evidence paper that we have received from Friends of the Earth claims that it is not clear that there has been any justification for that change. I would like to know your views on how such a situation could arise, therefore.

[23] **Mr Hillier:** Mae'n flin gennyf, ond nid wyf yn gallu siarad Cymraeg.

Mr Hillier: I do apologise; I do not speak Welsh.

[24] To set out an initial response to that, I think that it would be fair to say that, because we are currently in the stage of providing a consultation response, and the deadline for that is the middle of December, that is exactly the sort of question we are currently asking ourselves so that our response can be informed. That is one of the fundamentals that a statutory consultee has to consider: are those assessments reasonable—the major and minor, both positive and negative? So, it is probably premature to come out with a conclusion to that at the moment, certainly from our perspective. You are right that that is exactly the sort of thing that has to be observed and reported upon as a statutory consultee.

[25] **Llyr Gruffydd:** A ydych yn teimlo ei bod yn rhesymol bod yr asesiad blaenorol a oedd wedi dod i'r casgliad bod *major negative impacts* wedi cael ei israddio, mewn gwirionedd, yn y meysydd bioamrywiaeth, pridd, dŵr, asedau materol ac yn y blaen, yn yr asesiad presennol?

Llyr Gruffydd: Do you feel that it is reasonable that the previous assessment, which came to the conclusion that there were major negative impacts, has been downgraded, really, in the fields of biodiversity, soil, water, material assets and so on, in the current assessment?

[26] **Mr Hillier:** That is why I said that commenting on that assessment is what we are currently in the process of doing now. We have not provided that response, and we have not formulated our collective view. However, that is what we are looking to do.

[27] **Ms Poole:** To pick up the point that you are making, as Graham said, we are still assessing, but, of course, there are a lot of significant environmental issues and biodiversity issues. We are obviously fully aware of the route passing through sites of special scientific interest, et cetera. So, that is what we are currently assessing.

[28] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Awgrym arall sy'n cael ei wneud ynglŷn â'r asesiadau amgylcheddol strategol yw y gallai fod her gyfreithiol oherwydd y ffaith bod cymaint o wahaniaeth, efallai, rhwng yr asesiad blaenorol a'r gwaith sy'n digwydd ar hyn o bryd, a hefyd, i ddod yn ôl at y cwestiwn blaenorol gan y Cadeirydd, y methiant, efallai, i gynnig ystod digon eang o opsiynau i edrych arnynt gan fod yr opsiynau sydd o'n blaenau yn debyg iawn o safbwynt y cynlluniau sydd ar y bwrdd. Fel mater o

Llyr Gruffydd: Another suggestion being made about the strategic environmental assessments is that there could be a legal challenge because of the fact that there is such a difference, perhaps, between the previous assessment and the work happening at the moment, and also, coming back to the previous question from the Chair, of the failure, perhaps, to offer a wide enough range of options to be considered, because the options before us are very similar in respect of the plans on the table. As a matter of

gwrs, a fydddech yn disgwyl mewn sefyllfa o'r course, would you expect in a situation such
fath bod opsiynau ehangach ar gael ar gyfer as that that wider options would be available
cynllun o'r raddfa hwn? for a plan of this scale?

[29] **Mr Hillier:** Indeed. The earlier point that I was making is that we have observed that there does not appear to be a link between the wider remit of previous work, looking at that wider range of options, and leading straight into a draft plan that focuses just on a subset of those plans. So, it would be helpful, I think, if the committee could seek clarity from the Welsh Government on what assessment was made to lead to that position. That would be very helpful.

[30] **Mick Antoniw:** I would like to carry on in that vein, because I understand the limitations that you have with regard to what you can tell us today. However, by any stretch of the imagination, this is a major project. It is the top of the range of the projects and therefore requires a root-and-branch approach to all of the environmental and economic issues that are relevant. Is that a fair assessment as far as this project is concerned?

[31] **Mr Hillier:** Yes, I think so. In terms of the earlier work that I was referring to, I was not involved, but I believe that it was referred to as the CEM work, which stands for the corridor enhancement measures programme. We were engaged in that, in our predecessor organisations, through consultation, and that was looking at a wider set of options. It looked at the broad width of what might be sustainable and strategic alternatives.

09:15

[32] **Mick Antoniw:** In going through this process, do you agree that it is desirable that you do not start on the basis of core assumptions as to what you are going to do, and that you pull together all the economic data—the best information that you have—and try to include within that all the potential options in a comprehensive manner? Is that the right approach to adopt to this process?

[33] **Mr Hillier:** I believe so.

[34] **Mr Evans:** I am getting the feeling that this may be a matter of conjecture or opinion as to what ought to be in the plan, and how many alternatives and options need to be considered. It is a matter of best practice, really, because the directive itself sets out the twin purposes that are required. There is a range of best practice guidance documents around, including the Welsh Government's one, which set out best practice. Best practice is the best way of achieving a sound, robust plan that is less open to challenge. NRW's role, as it is for a number of plans and programmes provided by plan-makers, is to improve those plans to make them sound and less open to legal challenge. That is our role. So, there is best practice around that ought to guide every plan and programme-maker.

[35] **Mick Antoniw:** In pursuing that aspect of best practice, when we want to, in such a process, take account of the economic case and assessment of the best data that you have on the nature of the problem, but also to look at other options, such as public transport options, other plans that may be in existence with regard to integrated transport and how those impact, and so on, all those are really quite fundamental matters that have to be, I suppose, within the hat in order to have a proper overview of what you are proposing or what options you have and how you might consult over that. Is that a fair assessment?

[36] **Mr Hillier:** Yes.

[37] **Mick Antoniw:** The evidence that I have seen, submitted by the South East Wales Transport Alliance and other bodies, suggests that proper consideration of public transport

options, and the plans in respect of the metro integrated transport on those, have not featured as part of the development of the plan so far, or, indeed, the consultations. Is that a fair assessment?

[38] **Mr Hillier:** I think that it is, because, as I said earlier, having had knowledge of the previous work that was done under this SEA programme, that is where those consultations were happening. What we are now being consulted on, and, as a statutory consultee, are in the process of providing a response on, is a subset, if you like, of those options. That is where it would be helpful, I think, to have clarity on how the SEA has informed the production of that particular draft plan.

[39] **Mick Antoniw:** Would you say that the natural consequence of that is that we are probably not at a stage where we are considering things that have gone through best practice?

[40] **Mr Hillier:** Do you want to take that, Martyn?

[41] **Mr Evans:** I think that we probably need to take full stock of the environment report, but, having heard and responded to the discussion and the questions about the consideration of options and alternatives, probably a bit more could have been done.

[42] **Mick Antoniw:** I appreciate the difficulty perhaps in putting it. Perhaps the way to put it is that it would not be unreasonable for persons not in your position to say that, quite frankly, it does not look as if best practice has occurred in respect of where we are now and how we are going about this process.

[43] **Mr Hillier:** I would perhaps answer that by saying that it is about the clarity between the previous work and the fact that, had that produced an SEA of its own, that might have led to drilling into a more refined set of alternatives, for example. However, we have not seen that clarity, because what we are now commenting on is, essentially, a separate proposal. As that proposal goes, we can comment on that in its own right, but I think what you are referring to is the gap between the previous work that looked at a wider set of options, and what we are now presented with, which is a smaller set of options.

[44] **Mick Antoniw:** Is it fair to say, then—this is my final question—that that is a gap that needs to be closed in order to give proper consideration to these issues?

[45] **Mr Hillier:** I think that it would be helpful to have clarity as to how that link was made.

[46] **Mick Antoniw:** Okay, I will not pursue that further.

[47] **William Powell:** Antoinette Sandbach is next.

[48] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I am going to carry on in the same sort of vein. You have already identified in your evidence that you were disappointed that the Welsh Government had only consulted with statutory consultees and not with wider stakeholders, as is considered best practice. You have referred to the European regulations that set out the requirements, particularly with regard to these very important sites of special scientific interest around the Gwent Levels and Newport. Have you asked the Welsh Government for clarity as to why it has not followed best practice? I know that you suggest that we do so, but have you asked it? You are the regulator, as well as the statutory consultee.

[49] **Mr Hillier:** In our response to the scoping stage, we were responding to the SEA for that particular programme. In that response, we did say that we were disappointed that a wider range of consultees had not been included. That was the opportunity for us to put that point to

the Minister.

[50] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Can you answer my question as to whether you, as the regulator, have asked for clarification from the Welsh Government as to why it is that options have been ruled out? Have you asked to see the evidence as to why they have been ruled out?

[51] **Mr Hillier:** I do not believe that we have asked for that in our response to the scoping, but we have not yet provided our response to the consultation.

[52] **Antoinette Sandbach:** That does not answer my question, with the greatest of respect.

[53] **Mr Hillier:** Well, in the first part of my answer I said that I do not believe that we have.

[54] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Right, okay. As the regulator of the Welsh Government, you are both policeman, if I can put it that way, and consultee. There might be concern from other organisations—in particular, I think that the Friends of the Earth evidence states that it has put in freedom of information requests that have not been complied with by the Welsh Government. Under the environmental information regulations, have you been asked to put information into the public domain about why options have been ruled out? Have you asked for that—well, have you have asked for specific information? I think that there is a blue route—it is variously referred to as the blue route or the steelworks road—that seems to have been discounted, and nowhere in the evidence can I see any reason or explanation for why that has been discounted.

[55] **Mr Hillier:** I will try to make sure that I do answer your question—but, in doing so, perhaps I will just explain that, as we are regulator and statutory consultee and adviser—the three roles that the Chair set out—there is case law, the Seaport case law, which has defined that organisations that find themselves in multiple roles, such as ours, have to ensure that we properly separate out our functions. We have done so, guided by that case law. So, for example, where we are producing or putting forward, as a responsible authority, plans of our own, we have to make sure that the work that we are doing on that is completely functionally separate from our role as a statutory consultee to that. We have different directorates and those functions are kept separate. Hopefully, it is clearly accountable and transparent as to how those are established. It was set out by our board that that was how we needed to be established.

[56] What we have done in the case of the M4, because it is a large and a complex project—and we have worked in a strong advisory role with the proposer to the plans—is that we have used that same separation of duties for that particular case. So, for example, our statutory consultee element is part of our governance directorate, whereas the advice and engagement through the advisory role has been done through our other directorates.

[57] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Is it because you are from a different directorate that you cannot give me that answer? I am asking the wrong directorate.

[58] **Mr Hillier:** I am afraid that we do not have cross-representation here today.

[59] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Okay. That is fine. That may be something that we can follow up through other means. I have one final question to Mr Evans, perhaps. You said that you headed up the ecosystem services section. I wonder whether you would tell me how you are measuring and quantifying the ecosystem services that are provided by the Gwent Levels and the associated SSSIs.

[60] **Mr Evans:** Perhaps I ought to say first that I am in a new post in a new organisation, where we have a new purpose, which is to take an ecosystems approach to everything that we do. That was given to us by the Welsh Government, and in part, I think, by the Assembly as well. That is very much welcomed. So, we will be taking that approach to looking at the evidence that is in the environment report. You will be aware that the Gwent levels functions as a functioning, albeit heavily influenced by man, ecosystem in its own right; cutting a road through there is bound to have some impact on that, not only in terms of the physical footprint of whichever route is going to be taken, should the project go ahead, but in terms of the wider permeability of things like water, habitat connectivity, landscape interruption, and so on. So, yes, we will be very much taking that approach to it, and I ought to say as well that the SEA directive itself is up for amendment, and we are already working with the Welsh Government to help it influence Europe to make sure that the new iteration of the SEA directive is very much focused on the ecosystems approach. So, we are already plugged in at the policy level, but on the plan itself, yes, we will be very much looking at those services and, if you like, embracing the individual topics of soils, air, water, biodiversity, landscape, and so on in a broader sense.

[61] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, will you be quantifying that, and if you will, are you prepared to disclose that information to us so that we can use it, perhaps for other parts of Wales, as part of this consistent approach and so that we know what value you are putting on x and y, or soils and air? I do not know whether you are attributing an economic value to them or quantifying them as a—

[62] **Mr Evans:** We will try. I know that you are getting some advice from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which has picked up on the UK's ecosystems assessment report in 2010, which estimates the ecosystems services provided by the Gwent levels to be in the order of £67 million. We need to go back to look at that as part of our assessment and appraisal of the ecosystem services that are currently provided and maybe the impact that the new plan might have on those services. Obviously, it is not for us; it will be for the decision-making body, the plan-making body—the Welsh Government in this instance—to take that into account, as part of the advice that we give it in any decisions that it makes about the road.

[63] **William Powell:** I am conscious of our ambitious timings this morning. I call upon Joyce Watson, and Julie has also indicated that she wants to speak.

[64] **Joyce Watson:** We have two minutes left, but what I am going to ask follows on quite nicely. Could you explain the status and legal protection that are offered to sites of special scientific interest, or SSSIs, and could you set out at which point any impacts on an SSSI would be considered within that planning process?

[65] **Ms Poole:** Sites of special scientific interest—SSSIs—are nationally designated sites, so they are sites that are of importance at the Great Britain level. The legislation that allows them to be designated is the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and that has subsequently been amended by the additional protection given through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. In this context, if this plan was to proceed to a project-level road scheme, the Welsh Government would be the planning authority; it would not go to a local authority planning application for consideration. It would be taken forward as a trunk road Order. So, as part of that work, there would need to be consideration—and this is through the legislation, but it is taken forward into Welsh policy through 'Planning Policy Wales' and technical advice note 5 on nature conservation—of the responsibilities of that body, in this case, the Welsh Government, in determining impacts on SSSIs. The presumption is that development should not proceed if it is likely to significantly damage SSSIs, and that body, namely the Welsh Government, needs to take reasonable steps through its planning process to further the conservation and enhancement of those sites. So, as we touched on earlier, what we need to consider at this strategic stage is whether such a development could proceed in that context,

namely whether it is likely to be able to conserve and enhance the special features of those SSSIs or not.

09:30

[66] **Julie Morgan:** I am aware of the time; I have a very quick question. I am very aware, and I notice that you also mention this in your document, that any of these schemes may have implications for the Newport wetlands reserve, which, of course, was there as compensation for what happened to the Cardiff bay barrage, which I campaigned strongly against. Would it be taken into consideration that the reserve was compensation for a previous building project?

[67] **Ms Poole:** Yes. We are certainly considering that in our deliberations at the moment. The routes within the plan are not within the Newport wetlands; they are some distance to the north. However, as we touched on earlier, the Gwent levels area, with its connected drainage system on the Caldicot side where the Newport wetlands is, is all one big connected network of water drainage. There is the possibility of effects on the Newport wetlands, so we would be taking that into account in our submissions, which will be coming in in December.

[68] **Mr Evans:** I will briefly remind everybody that the plan at the moment, which may end up as a proposed project, will be subject to the environmental impact assessment regulations, at which point, the issues of SSSIs will be scrutinised and we will be a statutory adviser. The issue about compensation and mitigation will focus everybody's attention at that point. So, there is a third level, because if it goes ahead, the project, being a major project, will be subject to an environmental impact assessment.

[69] **William Powell:** Diolch yn fawr am y sesiwn y bore yma. **William Powell:** Thank you very much for this morning's session.

[70] We really appreciate the candour and fullness of your answers. Clearly, we are at a relatively early stage, and, obviously, there is some delicacy around such a huge test case, particularly in the face of a fairly robust governmental proposal of this kind. We appreciate that, but, as a committee, we have the function that we have and we shall ensure that we carry it out with due diligence. So, thank you very much indeed and thank you for your time this morning.

09:33

**Ymchwiliad i Gynigion Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer yr M4 o amgylch
Casnewydd—Tystiolaeth gan yr Athro Stuart Cole
Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Proposals for the M4 around Newport—
Evidence from Professor Stuart Cole**

[71] **William Powell:** Bore da, Athro. **William Powell:** Good morning, Professor.

[72] **Yr Athro Cole:** Bore da. **Professor Cole:** Good morning.

[73] **William Powell:** It is good to see you here on this moist November morning to discuss these important matters. Would you like to introduce yourself briefly in order for us to check the sound levels and maybe make a brief introductory statement? We will then get straight under way with questions, because I think that we are all conscious of the pressure of time this morning with such a huge topic and a full morning's worth of sessions.

[74] **Professor Cole:** I am Stuart Cole, Emeritus Professor of Transport at the University of South Wales.

[75] **William Powell:** Excellent. We are going to kick off straight away with—

[76] **Professor Cole:** Chair, do you want me to make a short statement?

[77] **William Powell:** Yes, go ahead.

[78] **Professor Cole:** I will just make a few points to outline the area that I am able to answer questions about. I am not an expert on the environment; there are others who have already been here, and who are coming, who are better at that than me. There are several issues, in terms of economics, that need to be considered. One is the relative cost of options. The Government option is £936 million. The option that I have suggested, which was a Government option at one point, some time ago, is £380 million. Integrated transport has already been raised a little earlier and will no doubt come up. There is the whole question of whether there should only be a road or whether there should also be a consideration of the electrification of the south Wales main line, which runs parallel to this proposal. The sparks effect, as it is known, always attracts people from their cars—at least it has in every other scheme in the UK and elsewhere—and the proposed metro and the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 are also intended to bring people away from their cars and to either public transport or walking. The consultation document specifically excludes the issue of the metro, because it is being considered in a report at the moment, which strikes me as being quite the wrong way to look at that particular piece of work that is being done.

[79] The forecasting issue also comes into it, where there are questions to be asked about the elements in the forecasting model being used, and indeed, we are seeing, and have seen over the last eight years, a flattening out of the usage of the motor car, and evidence suggests that there is going to be little change, but there will be some.

[80] My final point is that I do not disagree with the need for a road, or for additional capacity on the M4 in the general area of Newport. It is the size and cost of the new piece of infrastructure proposed by the Government that is open to question, which is why this inquiry is being held, but that question revolves around how much traffic there will be in the next 25 years. I think that a lot of it revolves around that.

[81] **William Powell:** I am very grateful for that initial statement, which covered a couple of the questions that I wanted to kick off with, so I will move straight away to Russell George, followed by Julie Morgan.

[82] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. I want to understand a bit more about how your proposal links with public transport enhancements. Could you just talk a bit more about that?

[83] **Professor Cole:** Yes. What I am suggesting, even on the capacity that is needed for the growth that is being anticipated by the Government, let alone that there might be questions about that level of growth, is that, whereas the M4 on its own might—I say ‘might’—be an acceptable solution, I think that even there that piece of road is too big. The four-lane highway that I am proposing is not particularly new. It takes the steelworks road, as it is called, which had space on it for up to a six-lane motorway when it was purchased in 2010. On top of that, if you put all the other issues that I have mentioned to do with public transport together, that is where the linkage comes, because it is an integrated transport assessment that we need, and what we have is a set of options that are built around what appear to be three options, but, in fact, are only one.

[84] The purple route and the black route deviate slightly from one another in the Duffryn area, west of Newport, and the red route is a very expensive piece of roadway, which one would not build anyway; one would go for an upgrading of the A48. So, in fact, we do not

have any options in there. What I am suggesting is that we take the whole lot as a package: my proposed blue route; the A48 upgrade with grade separated junctions; the steelworks road built to motorway standards; the metro system that is coming in—Mrs Hart has announced that she has plans to bring that in and has started spending money on it; and the electrification scheme, which is going ahead and will have an effect. If you bring all of those together, you will have an integrated transport approach, and that is not what has been taken here.

[85] **Russell George:** In your answer, you talked about the Government's expectation of growth in traffic over the next x amount of years. Could you talk about whether you are satisfied that your blue route will provide a long-term solution? I am sure that you are, but if you could just talk about that—

[86] **Professor Cole:** Right. What I am suggesting is that the forecast of traffic growth suggested in the consultation document in figure 5 has not taken into account all of the necessary criteria, which it ought to have. The forecasting model being used looks at population, household numbers, workforce numbers and employment. What it does not do is look at other factors, which I would suggest from my own experience, but I thought it better to bring in the experience of other leading academics in the field—Professor Goodwin and Professor Jones. There are other factors that determine the flow of traffic, and have done so over the last eight years. We cannot ignore the fact that traffic usage on the M4 has plateaued out. Part of that is to do with the economic downturn. The Government, I think, is trying to suggest that it is all to do with the economic downturn and that, once the downturn upturns, growth will start again. However, there are other factors, to do with traffic congestion and the costs of petrol and diesel, and more people are using the railway than have ever used it before, and improvements on the railway that we know about will assist that transfer. Company-car ownership has plummeted—there is no other word for it—in the last two years, since the new taxation regime came in. So, the number of cars using the road over the next 20 to 25 years, which is the period under consideration, will not grow at the kind of rate that the Government is suggesting.

[87] **Russell George:** This is my last question. Thank you for that answer, which was very useful. Option C in the initial consultation is very similar—as I understand it—to your proposal, and the WelTAG report concluded that it would provide 'very little relief to the motorway'. Could you just talk to that point?

[88] **Professor Cole:** The WelTAG report on option C suggested that there will be between 6% and 10% transfer. The proposal that I am putting forward is not option C but is in addition to option C, with a much higher quality access road, if you like. Instead of coming off at junction 24, the traffic would come off at junction 23A, east of Magor, and then come down southwards onto the steelworks road. I have added in the steelworks road, hence the costs being higher than the option C costs. That piece of roadway has the capacity, and the land had—and I will say why I have used the word 'had'—the capacity to take a motorway standard road. That includes intersections, grade separated junctions, and the same thing on the A48, which is what option C had. I used the word 'had' because there are a number of questions. I am more than happy to send the answers to these questions in as supplementary information. There are a number of questions to be asked about why the steelworks road has recently been rebuilt as a county A dual carriageway with roundabouts and traffic lights, rather than that piece of land having been purchased for £7.7 million in 2010, which was, at that time, stated as, 'This is the way forward. That is why we bought this piece of road'. So, there were then questions such as, 'Why was the piece of road bought?', and subsequently, 'Why, instead of building a motorway standard road on it—for which it had plenty of space—was a county A dual carriageway built on it?'

[89] **Julie Morgan:** Why do you think the Government has put forward such limited options?

[90] **Professor Cole:** It is one of those things that, as Sir Humphrey would say, you should ask the Minister. [*Laughter.*]

[91] **Julie Morgan:** You have an overview of these things.

[92] **Professor Cole:** Yes. Thank you, Julie. [*Laughter.*] I think that what has happened here—and I may stand hopelessly corrected—is that this M4 construction is an engineer's dream; it is the grand highway. I have been saying all the way along in this discussion that it is not a grand highway that we are looking for; we are looking for the Brynglas tunnels bypass. We need an extra piece of capacity to try to take some of the traffic away from the current M4. Looking at the engineers' photographs, it is a very smart piece of construction, whereas my proposal is functional rather than attractive in terms of physical appearance. That is the only reason that I can suggest. I really do not know why the Government has decided to go for this road. I would like it to do the analysis again, but to do it with a forecasting model and looking at the factors that have been suggested not just by me, as I say, but also by Professors Jones and Goodwin.

09:45

[93] **Julie Morgan:** When you made your introduction, your first point was about expense, and you said that what you could offer was a much cheaper alternative. Since you have written that, we have now had borrowing powers agreed by the Westminster Government. Do you think that that has any links to these proposals?

[94] **Professor Cole:** The use of borrowing powers is really quite interesting and, perhaps, not to be fully expounded today. Borrowing powers are one thing, but the amount that you are allowed to borrow is something quite different. It is a bit like, if you go to get a mortgage from the bank for a house, you have the powers to borrow, but it is up to you and the bank to decide how much is affordable in terms of, sadly, having to repay any loan with interest. There are two impacts to that in terms of Government expenditure. First, the Treasury will have to approve everything, because the Welsh Government, in legal terms, is subservient to the UK Government—as you know, it refers to it as a 'devolved administration' and that is how it sees the Welsh Government. So, it can only borrow money up to a limit set by the Treasury in the public sector borrowing requirement, so there will be negotiations with the Treasury, as there clearly have been in terms of the borrowing powers. The borrowing limit is the other thing that the Welsh Government will have to face, and it will have to decide whether this is a priority scheme or not and, indeed, how much money the Treasury will allow the Welsh Government to spend. That is the big difficulty. The big difficulty, initially, was borrowing powers. The next hoop to jump through is how much we can actually borrow and will be allowed to borrow. The public sector borrowing requirement is one of the limitations, the other is the amount of money that has to be repaid, and we have seen in the past that—I am not saying that the Welsh Government would do this—public authorities elsewhere have borrowed money in order to get schemes going very quickly and then found that the repayments and the interest charges, in fact, take up an awful lot of their revenue account expenditure.

[95] **Julie Morgan:** I have just one last question, very quickly. You said that you were not going to address the environmental issues, but does your proposal avoid some of the dangers that we see with the consultation proposals—the SSSIs et cetera?

[96] **Professor Cole:** Yes. I can answer that, but if you start asking me about biodiversity and things, I am not your person. There is a part of the route that will affect part of the Redwicks and Llandevenny SSSI. I have spoken to the wetlands trust, which owns a piece of that land, and there is a section of the route that I am suggesting that is identical to both the

purple route and the black route at the eastern end, coming down from junction 23A. That, unfortunately, is the only way to get a road down from junction 23A on to the steelworks road. Representatives from the trust are coming later, so I guess that they will be able to say what they think of that, but I discussed it with them and, certainly, many of the other concerns further down the route going westwards are not part of the blue route. The blue route basically builds on existing roadways, in particular through the ex-steelworks site and also on the A48 road footprint.

[97] **Antoinette Sandbach:** First of all, your evidence, in effect, looks at value for money and outcomes, if I have read it correctly. If I can summarise it in this way, what you are saying is that the blue route would provide the best outcomes and the best value for money for Welsh Government and it would also free up significant funds for investment in infrastructure elsewhere within Wales.

[98] **Professor Cole:** I could not have put the answer better myself. Yes, this is exactly what I am trying to suggest. Let us look at what we are trying to solve—a problem of too much traffic on the existing M4 north of Newport. Let us look at the options. At the moment, we have only one option in the consultation document, but the other options, as I mentioned, are not just the blue route, but also the metro, electrification and trying to encourage people to walk and cycle. So, while it is to do with value for money, it is also to do with solving the problem and with looking at all the alternatives that are currently being considered. When I read in the consultation document that they were not going to consider the impact of the metro because a report was being written on it at present, it just struck me as being strange, to say the least, because one would think that the logic is that, if there is a report coming out, and one part has already been produced, and the second part is under way, one should surely wait for those reports to come out to show what kind of traffic transfer there will be onto the metro. Indeed, we know from experience that there will be traffic transfer onto the electrified railway, given that two of the stations are within the area of operation of the proposed M4.

[99] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, really, the consultation process is fundamentally flawed, because it is not looking at the best value for money or the best outcome, and it is not looking at an integrated approach.

[100] **Professor Cole:** I do not think that it is looking at any of those. It should do so, fundamentally, given that there is an ongoing plan for electrification, and given that there is a plan being considered by the Minister at the moment for a major investment in public transport. The original pieces of work that were done on this scheme had fairly minor pieces of public transport in them, and one could have said, ‘Well, they will make a bit of a difference, but not much’. However, here we are talking about £500 million on electrification of the existing railway, and £1.9 billion, I think, that Mark Barry suggested in his initial report, published recently, for the investment in the metro. You do not put those investment proposals to one side when considering another very substantial piece of investment; you look at them altogether.

[101] **Julie James:** Just taking you back a little bit, but on the same theme of the economic cost and so on, one thing that you said was that you were not sure how robust the figures were for the current proposals of routes, never mind your route. I wonder if you can just elaborate a little bit on your concerns about those.

[102] **Professor Cole:** I think that my main point there is that we have a set of figures that take the same basis for my assessment—my estimate of the blue route—but they will all be completed by 2020. That is what is stated in the consultation document, so I take the same approach. We are not likely to get this new M4 by 2020. There is a simple reason, and I am sure that the environmental groups that will be coming in later this morning will be able to give more insight into what their plans are, unless they are keeping their plans secret for the

moment; but there will be a lot of opposition to this scheme. I have seen schemes in the past take five years of public consultation. The Birmingham north relief road, as it used to be called—the new M6—was in that category. The M40 north of Oxford to Birmingham fell into about three years' worth. I met engineers on that route at the time who were tearing their hair out because they could not get anything done; every time they took just one step, people came in on the other side. The environmental groups are very well organised. Swampy you may remember from the third battle of Newbury, on the A34 dual carriageway west of Newbury. The same thing will happen here. It will be interesting to know what timescale has been put in. I believe it to be a fairly short timescale, but you should be looking at at least three years' worth of argument about this new proposal.

[103] In terms of the costs, the reason I do not think that any of those figures are robust in terms of their finality is that, when the scheme is finished, we will probably be—Take the original proposal before borrowing powers, which was to complete the M4 by 2033. Okay, it may be a little earlier because of borrowing powers, but notwithstanding what I said earlier about the position in terms of borrowing powers, that I think is where the robustness lies. Construction costs are rising by about 10% every year at the moment, so you could see all of these figures being substantially more if there is a delay in building any of the schemes, but of course proportionally, 10% of £900 million is a lot more than 10% of £300 million. So, the total cost of building the motorway will undoubtedly increase as we go along.

[104] **Julie James:** On that basis, in relation to the length of time and so on, do you think that that will have a significant impact on some of the economic forecasts that are being claimed for the benefits that this road will bring?

[105] **Professor Cole:** The economic forecast in terms of traffic flow is one that is based, really, on a set of variables, and it depends on what variables you put into the model. That is one figure. So, you have a forecast that the Government has produced, which I and others in the field have suggested should have other variables put into it. As we progress through time, it will become clear whether that forecast is right or not, but we cannot afford to wait that long. I would suggest that it is not. In fact, if you look quite closely at figure 5 on page 11 of the consultation document, you will see that from 2005-6, we have had the plateau that I mentioned. When we get to 2012, the plateau is still there and yet the forecast has started to increase the demand. We are now in 2013, nearly in 2014, and, according to this forecast, in 2014, the demand should have gone up by something like 3% or 4%, but it has not gone up at all; it is still at a plateau. So, this forecast is incorrect, even before we start, in terms of what the actual figures are.

[106] It is factors such as those that suggest that the forecast should have more elements in it—and I suggested those in my submission. Secondly, if you are asking what people who are using cars will do as the time progresses, it very much depends on what action is then taken by the Government. If the Government proceeds with building the blue route, the steelworks road, which is the A48 upgrade route, then that can start almost immediately. The land is owned either by the Government or by a Government agreement. So, the land is available. What people then do will depend on what is available at the time. Some people will stay with the M4, in terms of driving from one side of Newport to the other, some people will switch to the new route by car, and then when electrification comes in 2018, some people will start to switch to the train, and more people will switch to the train as we go along. One of the issues, as I keep saying, is that that is not taken into account here. If the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 works—and it is your good selves who passed it—then hopefully that whole scheme of trying to get people to do less driving and more walking and cycling will come to fruition and people will start to change.

[107] **Julie James:** I would like to ask one follow-up question on that point. I had the misfortune in my youth to live close to the M25 route, and the forecasts for that—as we all

now know in retrospect—were absolutely hopeless and the M25 is now subject to speed restrictions along its entire 10-lane length. It is widely believed by laypeople such as me that that is because such roads attract more traffic than anybody ever predicted. Do you think that that is likely to happen?

[108] **Professor Cole:** There are at least two reasons for that with the M25. The first is that it is a very easy route for short journeys. Did you live to the west?

[109] **Julie James:** No. I lived inside the London ring, but only just; near Guildford.

[110] **Professor Cole:** That is where I thought you might be talking about. That road was originally going to be an eight or 10-lane highway. It was whittled down to six because it would never have got through any inspector's investigation. The alternative route along there was the A1000, before the M25 was built. When the M25 was built, people were doing these little short hops, which is also what is happening, to a degree, in Newport.

[111] **Julie James:** That is why I asked the question.

[112] **Professor Cole:** Yes, it is a similar phenomenon. Where people find a nice easy route to start with, they start to fill it up with little bits of local traffic. The suggestion has been made, as has happened on the M25, of closing some junctions. I think that a lot of work needs to be done before that action is taken, because it will inconvenience a number of people. However, that is an investigation that needs to be looked at more closely than it has been. Yes, it does happen, and it happened quite severely on the M25, simply because it was a nice, easy route for people to use.

10:00

[113] **William Powell:** Mick Antoniwi is next.

[114] **Mick Antoniwi:** This sort of inquiry is also about getting a record of evidence. You said right at the beginning that the option that you tend to favour now, the one that involves the steelworks road, was originally the Government option—it was under the Government's consideration, but it was subsequently removed. Is there any documentation evidence, analysis or anything of that sort that gives an explanation for that, and a proper analysis of it?

[115] **Professor Cole:** As to why option C was removed?

[116] **Mick Antoniwi:** Yes. As to why the option has been taken out of the picture.

[117] **Professor Cole:** I can send to the clerk the exact dates of the WelTAG reports, which were produced by the Welsh Government. I think that March 2013 is when option C was finally in a WelTAG report on the M4 around Newport. It then disappeared. The odd thing is that the steelworks road, as far as I can see, since it was purchased in 2010, has just sat there. I can provide the committee with a note on the background.

[118] **William Powell:** That would be very helpful.

[119] **Professor Cole:** There are some questions that are very much along the lines of your questions, such as 'Why was the road rebuilt as a county A road, not as a motorway?' It was purchased for a motorway; there is no doubt about that. I was involved in some of the original examination of the road, in 2006, I think, or 2007, when consideration was being given as to what to do about the M4. Was there a solution? The steelworks road almost came out of the blue. It was a disused piece of road. I was on the field site team that went out to see what was happening around there, and there was the steelworks road—a 7 km length of straight road, a

dual carriageway, with land on either side. There was clearly time for negotiation with Corus, as it was at the time, and the land was eventually purchased by the Welsh Government, with the intention of making it a part of the relief road for the M4 north of Newport.

[120] **Mick Antoniw:** At this stage, are you aware of any evidence or explanation as to why that has been taken out of the equation? What is the analysis or the reasoning as to why that would be the case?

[121] **Professor Cole:** I am sorry to say that I do not know. I always try to keep my finger on what is happening, even in places where I should not be—[*Laughter.*] I just cannot see why it was taken out, why it disappeared so suddenly. From March to June, option C—the upgrade, with grade separated junctions, of the A48, going up to junction 24 at the Coldra—is not the scheme that I am putting forward and the scheme that was in the Government’s mind—that was using the steelworks road, taking the intersection back to junction 23A. That is why I think that there would be more opportunity to pull traffic off the M4 at junctions 23A and 28 than there would be at junction 24, simply because, particularly with westbound traffic, there would be more opportunity to get the traffic at an earlier stage.

[122] Another point to make is on signage, and the fact that there is no discussion about it at the moment. For example, if you are coming over the bridge and you come towards junction 23, I would envisage signs saying, ‘Travel time to junction 28 on the blue route is 23 minutes’ and ‘Travel time to junction 28 on the M4 is 22 minutes’, or maybe there should be one that says, ‘M4 motorway: 45 minutes; blue route: 28 minutes’. People can then decide which route to take. We have the electronic technology to measure the speeds and journey times of moving traffic, so that once that A48 steelworks road bit starts to take on more traffic, the sign changes and you start diverting people on to the other piece of highway. Clever bits of technology of this sort can assist in making best use of whatever capacity is available.

[123] **Mick Antoniw:** I asked that question, Chair, because this will obviously now lead us to ask it of other people when we have a further inquiry into this.

[124] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Yn fyr iawn, gan fod amser yn ein herbyn, y ddadl y mae pawb yn ei rhoi gerbron i gyfiawnhau’r project mawr hwn yw’r *bottleneck* a’r twf economaidd yn y de-ddwyrain a thu hwnt ar hyd coridor yr M4. A ydych yn ymwybodol o unrhyw *analysis* economaidd sydd wedi cael ei wneud mewn perthynas â’r tri opsiwn yn y cynllun ar gyfer yr M4 newydd y mae’r Llywodraeth yn eu hyrwyddo?

Llyr Gruffydd: Very briefly, because time is against us, the argument that everybody puts before us to justify this large project is the bottleneck and the economic growth in the south-east and beyond along the M4 corridor. Are you aware of any economic analysis that has been undertaken in relation to the three options in the plan for the new M4 that the Government is promoting?

[125] **Yr Athro Cole:** Mae’r Llywodraeth wedi defnyddio’r hyn mae’n ei alw yn ‘WelTAG’, sef yr un math o *analysis* a ddefnyddir yn Lloegr a’r Alban—mae ganddynt enwau gwahanol yno, ond maent yn edrych ar yr un set o ffactorau. Felly, bydd y Llywodraeth wedi rhedeg y *black route*, y *purple route* a’r *red route* trwy WelTAG. WelTAG *stage 1* yw hwn, sydd yn rhan o WelTAG sydd yn edrych ar bethau mewn ffordd strategol. Rwyf wedi gwneud hyn gyda’r *blue route* yn yr un ffordd, ac yn fy

Professor Cole: The Government has used what it calls the ‘WelTAG’, which is a similar analysis to the one used in England and Scotland—they have different names there, but they consider the same set of factors. So, the Government will have run the black route, purple route and the red route through WelTAG. This is WelTAG stage 1, which is the part of WelTAG that looks at aspects in strategic terms. I have done this with the blue route using the same methodology, and in my response I have

ymateb rwyf wedi cynnwys yr *analysis* o ran y gymhariaeth â'r *routes* coch, porffor, du a glas, er mwyn gweld beth yw perfformiad pob un o'r *routes* yma, a chymharu un yn erbyn y llall. Felly, mae'r Llywodraeth wedi cwblhau WelTAG *stage 1*, ond nid wyf yn gwybod faint arall mae wedi ei wneud.

included the comparative analysis between the red, purple, black and blue routes, so that you can see what the performance of each of these routes is, and draw a comparison between them. So, the Government has used the WelTAG stage 1 methodology, but I do not know how much more it has done on this issue.

[126] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Fe fydddech yn disgwyl, felly, y byddai gwaith helaethach wedi ei wneud erbyn cyrraedd y *stage* hwn.

Llyr Gruffydd: You would expect, therefore, that more work would have been done before it reached this stage.

[127] **Yr Athro Cole:** Gan mai tri opsiwn sydd gennym, sydd fwy neu lai yn un opsiwn, bydd y Llywodraeth yn sicr wedi gweithio mas faint mae'n mynd i gostio, wrth gwrs. Mae *stage 1* o'r WelTAG yn edrych ar bethau fel yr economi, yr amgylchedd a phethau cymdeithasol. *Scoring system* ydyw. Nid oes rhifau. Mae'n +3 i -3 ar y *scale* o beth y credwech sy'n mynd i ddatblygu. Felly, mae'r Llywodraeth wedi gwneud hynny. Nid wyf yn gwybod a oes *cost-benefit analysis* llawn wedi cael ei wneud. Y *transport business plan* ydyw ar hyn o bryd. Mae gan y Trysorlys yn *Westminster* system sy'n edrych, fel gyda thrydaneiddio'r rheilffordd, ar bethau strategol, cyn mynd ymlaen i edrych ar agweddau economaidd, ariannol, yr amgylchedd, ac yn y blaen. Rhaid gwneud hynny yn awr. Rwy'n gobeithio fod y Llywodraeth yn ei wneud ar hyn o bryd, ond efallai mai'r cwestiwn yw pa mor bell y mae wedi mynd gyda'r astudiaeth hon trwy *transport business case* y Trysorlys. Mae gan y Trysorlys *set-up* da—gweithiodd yn dda iawn gyda thrydaneiddio'r rheilffordd, a rhaid i hyn fynd trwy'r un math o system. Os nad fydd yn gwneud hynny, ni fydd y Trysorlys yn fodlon rhoi caniatâd i fenthg yr arian i adeiladu'r M4 newydd beth bynnag.

Professor Cole: Given that we have three options, which is more or less one option, the Government will have worked out what the cost would be, of course. Stage 1 of WelTAG looks at issues such as the economy, the environment and social issues. Essentially, it is a scoring system. There are no numbers as such. It is +3 to -3 on the scale of the potential impact of developments. Therefore, the Government has used that methodology. I am not sure whether a full cost-benefit analysis has been carried out. It is now the transport business plan. The Treasury in Westminster has a system, similar to the system used on the electrification of the railways, which looks at strategic aspects and goes on to economic, financial and environmental aspects, and so on. That will now have to be done. I would hope that the Government is doing that at present, but perhaps the question is how far it has gone in carrying out these analyses through the Treasury's transport business case. The Treasury has a good set-up—it worked very well with the electrification of the railway, and this will have to go through the same sort of system. If it does not, the Treasury will not be willing to give permission to borrow the money to build the new M4 anyway.

[128] **William Powell:** Diolch, Athro, am y sesiwn ddiddorol y bore yma.

William Powell: Thank you, Professor, for this morning's interesting session.

[129] It has been really interesting to have your insights, drawing on years of experience of schemes of this scale and larger. I sense that we shall be in touch again. Thank you very much for what you have contributed this morning.

[130] **Professor Cole:** My pleasure, Chairman; thank you. *Diolch yn fawr iawn*. If one of the clerks or someone can send me a list of what I said I would provide, that would be very useful. I can provide all of them without too much difficulty.

[131] **William Powell:** Thank you. We will have a brief recess, and if we can aim to be

back for 10.15 a.m., that would be great. Thank you.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:10 a 10:19.
The meeting adjourned between 10:10 and 10:19.*

**Ymchwiliad i Gynigion Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer yr M4 o amgylch
Casnewydd—Tystiolaeth gan y Ffederasiwn Busnesau Bach a Chynghrair
Trafnidiaeth De-ddwyrain Cymru
Inquiry into the Welsh Government’s Proposals for the M4 around Newport—
Evidence from the Federation of Small Businesses and South East Wales
Transport Alliance**

[132] **William Powell:** Bore da, bawb. **William Powell:** Good morning to all of you.

[133] We have representatives this morning from the Federation of Small Businesses, and from SEWTA—the South East Wales Transport Alliance. We have a packed morning of evidence, so we will get straight under way. I would ask you briefly to introduce yourselves in order for us to check the sound levels and to say which organisation you come from, and then we will get straight under way with questions.

[134] **Mr Miles:** I am Josh Miles from the Federation of Small Businesses.

[135] **Mr Davies:** I am Iestyn Davies from the FSB.

[136] **Mr Campbell:** I am Clive Campbell, chair of the SEWTA policy group.

[137] **Mr Nicholls:** I am Simon Nicholls, SEWTA transport planner.

[138] **Mr C. Jones:** I am Carl Jones, the vice-chair of the SEWTA policy group.

[139] **William Powell:** Excellent. I would just like to kick off with an initial question. There have been some concerns about the quality of the information that was provided as part of the initial M4 corridor enhancement measure consultation, the so-called CEM consultation. What are your thoughts on that and do you feel that those concerns, if they were real, have been addressed in the current consultation? I do not know who would like to kick off on that.

[140] **Mr Davies:** Members of the committee will be familiar with the Federation of Small Businesses’s concern that sometimes we are not given the information to make an informed decision or to contribute to a consultation process. That is nothing new. I think that that is a fact that lies beyond this committee and this subject, but it is very pertinent to this particular project. As laypeople, we are not environment or transport specialists, we are trying to make an informed decision to help assist our members and to reflect what our members need, not necessarily what they say that they want. It has been very difficult to do that in this context.

[141] **Mr Miles:** I think there are a couple of things that are missing from the current consultation that cause concern. One is the cost of each proposal. That was something that was in the original consultation, but is not in the current one. The next concern that we have is with the modelling that has been used. It does not take into account things like the metro proposal or the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. So, I think that we need a broader look at this to make informed decisions. It is difficult to respond to the consultation on that basis.

[142] **William Powell:** Okay. So, in that sense, you would criticise this for a lack of joined-up thinking?

[143] **Mr Miles:** Absolutely. It looks like it has been drawn up with just this project in mind and it is not taking into account the wider sort of transport—

[144] **William Powell:** The wider impact.

[145] **Mr Miles:** Absolutely, yes.

[146] **William Powell:** Does SEWTA have a view on this particular question?

[147] **Mr Campbell:** Certainly, we would echo those thoughts. One of the main issues that we raised at the time was the limited presence of public transport and active travel measures as alternatives and that it underplayed the role that those measures could play to benefit the whole proposal. We also had our concerns about the funding issue, what the quantum of funding was and how that would possibly impact on bringing forward other public transport measures.

[148] One of the advantages of the CEM proposals was that there was a more effective engagement process. There were workshops with key stakeholders, and they gave us an opportunity to discuss and look at the information in more detail. Unfortunately, under the current proposals, there does not seem to be any proposal for workshops, and we would encourage the Welsh Government to at least reintroduce that measure, because, as a regional transport consortium, SEWTA is keen to be fully engaged with the process and to make sure that we contribute and work with the Welsh Government to maximise the benefits for this significant investment opportunity.

[149] **William Powell:** I am grateful for that. I call on Antoinette Sandbach.

[150] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I was interested in the FSB evidence that indicated that some of the more cost-effective options had been excluded from the current consultation process. We have had evidence from Professor Cole about a potential blue route, and SEWTA may want to comment on this as well. It seems—certainly to me, I cannot speak for the other committee members—that that is the route that offers the best value for money and the best potential outcomes, although it is not included in the current consultation process. The FSB has indicated that that is not an equitable use of resources and that it might impact on other improvements, for example, in west or north Wales. I can think of my colleague Paul Davies, who has argued for the dualling of the A40, and I can think of improvements on the A55 in north Wales. Those are improvements that might be impacted by the fact that the blue route has been ruled out. I wonder whether you could both, perhaps, comment on that.

[151] **Mr Davies:** I think, Chair, that that is a fair reflection of our position. We would not even say that it is south Wales versus north Wales: there is mid Wales too. How do you exploit, in the best possible sense, the natural resource of mid Wales, ensuring that there are viable, sustainable communities there as well, across that very narrow part of Wales? Ultimately, our position is that, as I said, we are not transport experts, we are not environmental experts either, but we genuinely believe in the principle of sustainable development. I think that, ultimately, as the consultation shows, if you say to somebody or a group of people, 'Here is an option that you are very familiar with, that looks attractive and is the only one that we are going to ask you to consider', you should not be surprised, however you consult or however you ask people's opinion, that that is the option they come up with, because you are defining the consultation in those terms. That seems to be very much the case, as we see it.

[152] Fundamentally, even if you rule out adding more value-for-money options and better transport options, the National Assembly and the Welsh Government have a responsibility to consider the sustainable development issue, agenda and impact of this. We would certainly

say that, on two fronts, this is leaving the Welsh Government open to judicial challenge. It also means that we are looking at a long-term project when there is a very acute problem. Any one of us who has travelled along the M4 this morning knows that that is the case. So, there is a whole number of reasons why we should be considering other options, even if we end up in the same place. I think that it is fair to say that we should have a more thorough approach to this than we currently have.

[153] **Mr Miles:** One of the other difficulties we have with this is that we are looking at this project in isolation. We have called for borrowing powers for the Welsh Government and we have been very supportive of that process. There are going to be limits to borrowing powers; you are talking about £1.3 billion in terms of the Silk recommendations. Estimates with this particular project are around £1 billion and upwards. Obviously, that is a large portion of the borrowing that the Welsh Government could have access to, so from our point of view, it is about how we ensure that we maximise the potential that borrowing powers give us to make sure that we improve infrastructure across Wales.

[154] **Mr Nicholls:** I think that, certainly from the SEWTA point of view, after the FSB part, really, the option that is being looked at is just a highway option, but as we demonstrated with the Ebbw valley scheme, we can put other schemes in at a lower cost than a highway. For example, we have 700,000 passengers a year travelling between the Valleys and Cardiff, so those journeys are taken off the M4 by that rail measure. So, looking at just a highway solution in isolation, and a motorway solution at that, is not really making the best use of resources. You have the steelworks access road, which is a dual carriageway, and proposals to build another three-lane motorway parallel to it, so in terms of value for money, we have some major concerns with the proposals as they stand.

[155] **Antoinette Sandbach:** If I can pick up on that point, effectively, what you are saying is that, in the current consultation, it has not looked at an integrated transport approach.

[156] **Mr Nicholls:** Yes, certainly. In the original CEM, as Clive mentioned, there was engagement and, again, we raised some concerns initially that public transport was not really considered in full; I think that it was perhaps a bit of a bolt-on, whereas, as we have both said this morning, it is about looking at a holistic approach. At a time when there are cuts in some areas, getting the best value for money is what we need to see in terms of the transport network.

[157] **Antoinette Sandbach:** We have heard already that best practice has not been followed in terms of wider consultation with stakeholders, and you would be one of those stakeholders that are not statutory consultees. Have you asked the Welsh Government why that wider consultation has not taken place?

[158] **Mr Campbell:** Let us say that we have asked for more engagement and we are waiting for a response.

[159] **Antoinette Sandbach:** How long have you been waiting for that response?

[160] **Mr Campbell:** A few weeks? Let us put it at a few weeks.

[161] **Mr Davies:** I think, Chair, that it is fair to say that our position on the consideration of other options is fairly welcome by the Welsh Government, both through the council for economic renewal and, indeed, through opinions expressed in the Chamber that reflect our opinion as well. It does strike me—I might be jaundiced in this—that it is as if the Welsh Government is seeking to continue with this one option irrespective of any other consideration. That is how it seems. Now, whether that is the case, or whether the evidence points towards that, I suppose is for you as a committee to decide.

[162] **Julie Morgan:** This question is for the FSB. In your letter, you mention quite a lot about the Severn bridge tolls, and in the letter you have written to the Government. Do you want to expand on what your view is about the Severn bridge tolls in relation to the proposed M4—

[163] **Mr Miles:** Do you want me to explain why we included that in our submission?

[164] **Julie Morgan:** Yes.

[165] **Mr Miles:** Obviously we have had a lot of movement this week on things like borrowing powers, but earlier on in the process there was an indication that revenue from tolls might be used to fund an M4 relief road. We were keen to make sure that these issues were disentangled to make sure that we were not using one narrow tax base, namely the tolls, to pay for one particular infrastructure project, and to make sure that the whole Silk process was looked at in the round. So, that is why we included that particular letter in our evidence, just as context, really. However, the debate has obviously moved on a little bit this week, so it is maybe not as relevant as it was before.

[166] **Mr Davies:** I think that, in terms of tolling more generally, we would see it as something that would simply aid the displacement of traffic. If that means pushing more traffic along minor or secondary routes, then that would obviously not be what we were trying to achieve here either, in terms of sustainable transport or, indeed, more effective connectivity between one place and another. Ultimately, our real concern is to look at this much more holistically and we are equally as concerned about linear transport—what we call ‘travel to work’, as a simple distinction—as we are about travel for work, the kind of unscheduled, more casual journeys that our members, particularly, will be making across Wales, not just in south-east Wales. If we cannot have a solution to aid that, then the proposal that we are considering here for the M4 is a wasted opportunity.

[167] **Julie Morgan:** I think that you said in your evidence that 43% of journeys are less than 20 miles, which is an important bit of evidence. I do not know if SEWTA would like to comment on that.

10:30

[168] **Mr Campbell:** I will certainly comment on the tolling issue. It was very much a consideration under the CEM proposals, and it is not clear whether it is still in the background or a potential part of the mix for the funding towards the scheme. If it is, then there will be some significant issues around tolling and the Freight Transport Association has laid out its concerns. However, from a transport perspective, it is also about how that would impact on travel choices and on the surrounding network. One of our concerns about the current proposals is that the scope of the scheme does not really fully consider the impact of the proposals on the wider network, on the surrounding county network and even as far as Cardiff, particularly junction 29. So, unless you look at these things holistically and in an integrated way, you cannot fully assess the impact or the benefits.

[169] **Mr Davies:** Finally, on the issue of tolls, following that letter, we received a reply from the Secretary of State and the First Minister. It was very welcome to see in writing what the First Minister had said at a previous council for economic renewal—should control of the tolling be handed to the Welsh Government, he would not envisage using tolls or raising tolls on the bridge for anything other than maintaining the bridge and for ensuring the cost differentials, just for the maintaining the bridge element. We very much welcome that, and that is something that we have fed back to the First Minister. We have taken it as the expressed policy of Welsh Government, as it stands.

[170] **Llyr Gruffydd:** You have all expressed your disappointment and concerns at the fact that this integrated approach has not been taken, in terms of considering the potential effects of electrification of the south Wales rail line, the south-east Wales metro, the impact of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 et cetera. To what extent would you, therefore, question the validity of these current proposals without taking that broader picture into account? Obviously, it contradicts Government policy, in terms of looking at integrated transport. Would you go as far as saying that these proposals are fundamentally flawed without taking that wider context into account?

[171] **Mr Campbell:** Regrettably, I have to say 'yes'. We have not had a chance to fully assess all of the information, but if you just look at some of the information that has come forward you will see, for example, on the traffic-flow figures, one of our criticisms under the CEM proposals was that the data were fairly old. They had taken more recent traffic surveys, and they have shown that the traffic flows have either plateaued or reduced, in some cases. There will be a number of reasons for that, partly the downturn in the economy and fuel prices, but also improvements in public transport has a part to play in that. Simon has already mentioned the success of the Ebbw valley railway scheme, but there are other measures as well. Over recent years, you have seen declining car ownership and car journeys and increases in public-transport journeys and walking and cycling. So, that is certainly part of the mix. The other issue, as well as traffic flows, is the type and mix of the journeys. Part of the information shows that over 40% of the journeys on that section of the M4 network are short journeys of less than 20 miles. Essentially, those could be targeted by public transport and change the modal shift.

[172] **Mr Nicholls:** One of the things that the evidence shows is a variation in journey times. At peak hours, that issue could be addressed by public transport, to take some travel-to-work journeys off the road. For the bulk of the operating day, the M4 has sufficient capacity; it is just about that peak issue. Our concern is about investing in the right way to address that peak issue, rather than in a whole new motorway.

[173] **Llyr Gruffydd:** The other gaping hole, as far as I can see, is that there has not been a business case for the project, outlining the costs of the current congestion and the economic benefits of investing in the way that the Government is proposing. Are you aware of any work that has been done around that?

[174] **Mr Miles:** We are not aware of anything at the moment, but it goes back to a wider issue that we mentioned in our submission to the Silk commission. With borrowing powers, there needs to be capacity to make sure that this sort of cost-benefit analysis is done, published and out there, so that everybody can scrutinise what the borrowing powers could be used for and come to informed decisions. We would very much hope that, moving forward, as the Minister for Finance moves towards creating a Welsh treasury, these kinds of schemes come under that remit, to make sure that we are aware of the cost benefit of these kinds of issues.

[175] **Mr Nicholls:** In terms of the consultation document, there is a fairly high level of Welsh assessment. I think that Professor Cole outlined the process earlier, but that is a very high-level strategic outcome and one that is, effectively, three scale. So, without knowing what the inputs are, it is very difficult to comment on the output of that.

[176] **Llyr Gryffudd:** You would agree then, that without a cost-benefit analysis around these proposals, the value of these proposals is severely undermined.

[177] **Mr Nicholls:** Unfortunately, yes.

[178] **Mr Campbell:** I would agree with that. Look at the simple finances, as well. We have heard that borrowing powers could be about £1.3 billion. We have, potentially, a £1 billion M4 corridor enhancement type programme, and, potentially, £1.9 billion of metro proposals.

[179] **Mick Antoniw:** What would you say is the most effective way of sorting out the Newport problem and promoting your interest in integrated planning?

[180] **Mr Campbell:** It would be a mix of measures. We fully support highway improvements where they are necessary and targeted—as Simon said, addressing the peak hours problem, but also significantly investing in public transport. We already have the Valleys lines electrification, but the majority of public transport journeys are by bus. So, we cannot omit bus journeys from the equation.

[181] **Mick Antoniw:** What are the implications of the options that have been set out in respect of the ongoing development of plans for integrated transport?

[182] **Mr Miles:** The current proposals have not been phrased taking into account integrated transport policy. That is the problem that we have with some of this. If you look at Welsh Government policy and the national transport plan, there is a clear quotation about the integration of different modes of travel and for using the existing roads and networks

[183] ‘particularly during periods of high use, in ways that encourage more sustainable travel’.

[184] That is quoted from the national transport plan. We have two key policies that are pushing this: the active travel Act, which, in the press release, the Minister was quoted as saying that that would remove congestion on peak points of the infrastructure, and the south Wales metro, which, it has also been suggested, will remove infrastructure bottlenecks. If we are not taking those policies into account, we are missing the picture of what we are trying to solve when we address these problems.

[185] **Mick Antoniw:** For the record, when the announcement was made in terms of the options being presented, was there any specific engagement, either before or after that point, in respect of that option and why that approach was being taken? That is particularly directed at SEWTA.

[186] **Mr Campbell:** Not with us; no.

[187] **Joyce Watson:** I want to come back to the cost-benefit analysis and the fact that, if this road was built, it would drive through the RSPB site and all that goes with that. In your evidence, I did not see—I might have missed it—an analysis about the true cost to the economy of losing what is there. This question is to you, the Federation of Small Businesses, representing the business interests that exist. If we are talking about cost-benefit analysis and building a stronger economy, which is what the argument is, surely those two things should be put together. So, do you have any intention of engaging with other people who might have done that to present that case?

[188] **Mr Davies:** Our colleagues at the south Wales chamber of commerce are, I understand, in the process of doing an exercise engaging on the basis of what their members would like. I would imagine that there will be some crossover between our members and our interests and theirs. What is missing in this process is not, ‘What would you like?’ but, ‘What is the benefit of what we are proposing?’ As you rightly point out, there will be displacement of, largely, small businesses around that southern area of Newport. However, there is already the argument that damage has been done to small businesses that are caught up in the

bottlenecks. It is not a simple equation, but you are right that it does need to be looked at in more detail.

[189] We are picking up some concern directly from some members we have spoken to in the centre of Newport, who see themselves as being completely bypassed to the north and to the south. With the very obvious problems and challenges that Newport faces, we cannot see that as anything that helps those businesses located particularly in the centre of the city, whether they are retail businesses, or other commercial activities. It will be bound by two thick ribbons of motorway, to the north and south.

[190] **Mr Nicholls:** To pick up on that point in terms of access into Newport itself, one of the concerns that we have in terms of the plans is that there is no indication as to where the junctions would be, if there are to be any junctions. Again, it is hard to fully assess the plans without knowing where people actually get on and off the motorway. Again, from the public transport point of view, there may be routes and opportunities on the highway where you could create junction priorities for buses et cetera. I think that we are quite concerned that there is not enough detail so that we can assess it in full.

[191] **Mr Campbell:** I would also touch on freight again, because we do not understand what implications it might have for the freight industry.

[192] **Joyce Watson:** May I further examine that? I remember doing an inquiry some time ago and being told that there was a 20% increase on freight going onto trains. I remember the figure. Have you looked at that? We have all talked about passenger movements, but no-one has really sort of mentioned freight movements in and out of that newly proposed road, and whether that might be an advantage to Wales in terms of the figures that might be put forward.

[193] **Mr Nicholls:** One of the issues, again, and the concern that we have in the evidence that we have submitted is in terms of the port of Newport; if you sever the port in half it reduces the capacity of the port to attract freight and to take freight off the road. One of the advantages of Newport dock at the moment is that it is rail connected, so there is potential there to establish short sea shipping and take some of the freight off the road. There is that argument, which we have just touched on. However, without knowing where the junctions are, it is hard to know whether that will benefit the freight industry or not.

[194] **Mr Campbell:** I would say 'yes', that there are considerable opportunities. I was part of the Wales freight group on behalf of SEWTA and the WLGA when the initial Wales freight strategy was produced. That was a great example of cross-industry, cross-service organisational working and development. We did see an increasing trend in freight transport other than by road, and there were significant opportunities available. I do not know how that is being taken forward. It is being reviewed, but we are not part of that process.

[195] **Russell George:** I have a question for the FSB. You have discussed in your evidence, and also today—other witnesses have also said the same to us today—the significant proportion of spending on a project, and this particular part of the motorway in south-east Wales, and you talked about the consequences perhaps for other projects elsewhere in Wales. Could you expand on that from your members' point of view? What other projects, potentially, are you suggesting could be affected, and what are the implications for projects in north, mid and west Wales?

[196] **Mr Davies:** There are clear examples in north Wales along the A55—the tunnels and the bridge across the Menai straits. Increasingly, there is a consensus starting to emerge about some form of trunk road connectivity into the midlands. Again, I pay tribute to the south Wales chamber of commerce as it is something that it has begun to look at with its members

in mid Wales. The difficulty is that, if you get a roomful of small-business people, or indeed any kind of people, and ask, ‘What would you like?’, the general reaction would be, ‘I’d like something in my back yard’. These major infrastructure projects would probably be third or fourth order, alongside free parking or an improvement to the potholes in their streets. The difficulty that we have is that we are not trying to ask the simple question of ‘What would you like?’ or ‘What would you think will improve your situation?’ We are trying to step back and say, ‘Based on the evidence that we have, based on a depoliticised discussion, what is going to get the best bang for our buck in the economy across Wales?’ That means ruling some projects out, unfortunately.

[197] For those of you who are elected Members, or those of us who represent other constituencies of interest, that is often a precarious place to be, but we have to take that level of leadership, if you like, to ensure that the projects that we are committing to, particularly over the next five to 10 years, are those that will have a benefit and, ultimately, are doable. I daresay that the majority of us in this room will be retired by the time that the large proposal for the M4 is actually realised. In speaking to other business organisations recently, their general feeling is that, because you recognise that there is a problem, and there are, indeed, other infrastructure problems across Wales, we need to press ahead and have some form of immediate relief, rather than hanging on for some grandiose, gold-plated scheme that could provide everything for the future, but, actually, when we look at it, is probably not going to contribute a great deal in the short term.

10:45

[198] **Russell George:** Are there particular infrastructure projects that you are promoting as an organisation?

[199] **Mr Miles:** We are actually doing a bit of research at the moment. My colleague Rachel, who is not here at the moment, is managing that for us, looking at infrastructure projects that could take place across Wales from an SME perspective to see what kind of projects would come out on top. So, we do not have a wish list yet, but we will come back to you with that in the future, I am sure.

[200] **Mr Davies:** Chair, I hear the words ‘electrification of the north Wales mainline’; there is no shortage for a list. It could be anything from trying to connect Pontypridd to Blackwood, for instance, trying to add an extra dimension to the south-east Wales metro, to looking at issues around how you open up the Amman valley. So, there is no shortage of examples of things that would come to the top. Our big concern with this consultation is that if you give largely lay people a set of choices that are leaning in one direction and which include things they understand and appreciate and a version of which they use, it is not surprising that you end up at the conclusion that that is what you are going to invest in.

[201] **Russell George:** When is your piece of work to be completed and made public?

[202] **Mr Miles:** It is probably going to be about six months to a year, so quite a while, but the idea, from our point of view, is to look at these things across the board and to look at where the problems are and what the solutions to those problems could be. I think that that is where we need to go back to, and to look at what the problem is in south-east Wales and how we address that using a raft of measures. That is something that is not really taken into account in the current consultation.

[203] **Russell George:** Iestyn, for the piece of work that you are doing—it is just a shame that it will take six months to a year for us to have a look at that—what is your methodology in undertaking it? How are you doing that?

[204] **Mr Davies:** It starts with trying to separate out the linear, or what we, in lay person terms, call the travel-to-work option, moving people at scheduled parts of the day. I recognise that that is a need, but how do you create a more joined-up, more connected Wales? So, if you are a small manufacturing business and you have two manufacturing sites or you are involved in construction, is it feasible to get more capacity or productivity out of your business by enhancing connectivity in key areas? We do not feel that the question should simply be, ‘How do you solve one problem?’ To us, the problem is how you extract and retain greater value and productivity, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, by creating more options so that, if you are a tradesperson in the Rhondda, it becomes viable to work in the Rhymney valley, for instance, or, indeed, if in the Amman valley, that would be Llanelli, or in Dee, up in north Wales as well. So that is the question that we are starting with.

[205] The second question is: how do you do it in a way that is complementary to the principles of sustainable development? Again, that is because that is what we should do, but, also, we believe that, if any large-scale project is put forward that does not satisfy that consideration, it would be leaving itself open to judicial review or challenge.

[206] **Russell George:** Thank you very much. I will probably make my own representations to your piece of work as well.

[207] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I think that we all will. [*Laughter.*]

[208] **William Powell:** Absolutely. At the risk of engaging in pork barrel politics, I know that I have had a number of concerns expressed in recent times about the possible impact on the Newtown bypass, which, to be fair to him, Russell refrained from raising—

[209] **Russell George:** I was trying not to mention it.

[210] **William Powell:** I realise that, but the status of that scheme and other such important schemes across Wales that you have referenced could be significant in the context of the limitation on borrowing powers that Joshua referred to. Julie James has been very patient.

[211] **Julie James:** Yes, and you have just answered the question that I was going to ask, without me asking it.

[212] **William Powell:** May I ask whether you, as witnesses, feel that the approach that was taken in both of the WelTAG appraisals has been effective and robust?

[213] **Mr Davies:** We are in a different position to experts in the field. We are lay people looking at this on behalf of other lay people, and, with many of these consultations, we find it difficult to be able to engage as specialist-generalists. We are more privileged than perhaps the average lay person in that we have time and resources available to us, but we do not feel that many of these consultation exercises are done in a way to genuinely pull people together and to come to and bring a sense of consensus.

[214] **Mr Nicholls:** One thing I would perhaps add, and, again, we touched on this this morning, is that the consultation shows that the motorway is a magic bullet to solve all the problems, but our concern is that there is no magic bullet. Again, the way the WelTAG is presented, those are the only options that are really being assessed. If it was assessed fully against public transport measures—the original corridor enhancement measures had some of those—then I think people would get a much broader view of what we are trying to achieve, and how best to achieve it. So, I think that, from that perspective, there is a concern with the process.

[215] **Mr Jones:** I would just add personally that, on the benefits, they have looked only at

the motorway; they have not looked at the wider issues, and what they have got down as very beneficial I think is likely to be non-beneficial. I think it has been focused on the new M4 only and not on the whole area.

[216] **William Powell:** It is interesting the way in which this session has echoed many of the themes that we heard earlier from Professor Cole, and we obviously look forward to the rest of the morning in terms of what that will bring.

[217] Diolch yn fawr iawn am ddod Thank you very much for coming today. heddiw.

[218] Thank you very much indeed for contributing to this inquiry. I sense that we shall stay in touch on this issue as it develops.

10:53

**Ymchwiliad i Gynigion Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer yr M4 o amgylch
Casnewydd—Tystiolaeth gan Ymddiriedolaethau Natur Cymru, RSPB Cymru a
Chyfeillion y Ddaear Cymru
Inquiry into the Welsh Government’s Proposals for the M4 around Newport—
Evidence from Wildlife Trusts Wales, RSPB Cymru and Friends of the Earth
Cymru**

[219] **William Powell:** Bore da a chroeso **William Powell:** Good morning and a warm welcome.

[220] It is great to welcome to this important evidence session this morning James Byrne of Wildlife Trusts Wales, Gareth Clubb of Friends of the Earth, and Mike Webb of the RSPB. If you could introduce yourselves just briefly for levels, and maybe make a couple of opening remarks, we will then get straight under way with Members’ questions.

[221] **Mr Webb:** Bore da, a diolch yn fawr iawn am ein gwahodd i siarad â chi ynglŷn â’r mater pwysig iawn hwn. Mike Webb yr wyf i, swyddog cynllunio’r RSPB yng Nghymru. **Mr Webb:** Good morning, and thank you very much for inviting us to speak to you today on this very important issue. I am Mike Webb, the planning officer for RSPB Cymru.

[222] Nid mater o swyddi yn erbyn yr amgylchedd yw hwn. Mae’n bwysicach o safbwynt cynaliadwyedd, a sut mae’n rhaid i ni i gyd yng Nghymru chwilio am opsiynau newydd sy’n gallu datrys problemau’r M4, tra’n osgoi adeiladu traffordd mor enfawr dros lle mor bwysig. Mae’r *Gwent levels* yn ardal bwysig iawn o safbwynt yr amgylchedd. Mae wedi cael ei dynodi fel ardal arbennig ar gyfer bywyd gwylt. Mae’r RSPB yn teimlo ei bod yn bwysig iawn, ac, oherwydd hynny, rydym wedi ei chlustnodi fel ‘*futurescape*’. Hynny yw, ardal sy’n bwysig iawn o ran tirlun ar gyfer bywyd gwylt. Mae’n bwysig, yng nghyd-destun cynaliadwyedd, ein bod yn edrych am ddatrysiadau amgen. Os ydym wir yn credu This is not an issue of jobs versus the environment. It is more important from the point of view of sustainability, and the way that each of us in Wales has to seek new options that can solve the problems of the M4, while avoiding building such a huge motorway over such an important area. The Gwent levels are extremely important in terms of the environment. It has been designated as a special area in terms of its wildlife. The RSPB feels that it is extremely important, and, because of that, we have designated it as a ‘*futurescape*’. That is, an area that is important in terms of landscape for wildlife. It is important, in the context of sustainability, that we seek alternative solutions. If we truly believe in sustainability,

mewn cynnaladwyedd, mae'n rhaid i ni edrych am ffyrdd i ddatrys y problemau gyda'r M4 presennol, ond nid drwy adeiladu traffordd fydd yn gwneud niwed sylweddol i'r ardal hyfryd hon.

we have to seek ways to solve the problems with the current M4, but not by building a motorway that will cause substantial damage to this wonderful area.

[223] Yn fyr, hoffwn sôn am Fil yr amgylchedd. Mae'r syniad o adeiladu traffordd newydd yn yr oes hon yn mynd yn groes, ym marn yr RSPB, i amcanion Bil yr amgylchedd ac yn groes i'r polisiau ar newid yn yr hinsawdd. Felly, mae'n bwysig ein bod ni i gyd yn edrych yn drylwyr ar y materion hyn wrth drïo ffeindio ffordd lai niweidiol i fynd i'r afael â'r problemau ar yr M4.

Briefly, I would like to talk about the environment Bill. The concept of building a new motorway in this age is contrary, in the view of the RSPB, to the objectives of the environment Bill and to policies on climate change. So, it is important that we all look at these issues in detail and find a less damaging way to tackle the problems in relation to the M4.

[224] **Mr Clubb:** Gareth Clubb ydw i, cyfarwyddwr Cyfeillion y Ddaear Cymru. Hoffwn ddweud dau brif beth. Yn gyntaf, mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn dweud llawer iawn o bethau da iawn ynghylch bioamrywiaeth, newid yn yr hinsawdd, datblygu cynaliadwy, ac yn y blaen, ond mae hwn yn mynd yn groes i bopeth y mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn ei ddweud. Yn ail, pe byddai tystiolaeth i ddangos bod angen yr heol hon, efallai y gallwn wedyn cael trafodaeth lawnach ynghylch buddiannau ac anfanteision yr heol hon. Fodd bynnag, nid oes tystiolaeth o gwbl, a byddaf yn dangos hynny drwy'r sesiwn hon.

Mr Clubb: I am Gareth Clubb, the director of Friends of the Earth Wales. I would like to make two main points. First, the Welsh Government has said many good things about biodiversity, climate change, sustainable development, and so on, but this goes contrary to everything that the Government says. Secondly, if there were evidence to show that there is a need for this road, perhaps we could then have a fuller discussion of the benefits and disadvantages of this road. However, there is no evidence at all, and I will demonstrate that throughout this session.

[225] **Mr Byrne:** My name is James Byrne. I am the advocacy manager for Wildlife Trusts Wales. I am here today to discuss issues relating to nature conservation and the substantive national and international importance of the Gwent levels and the River Usk special area of conservation as well. The road would do major ecological damage and would impact upon the £67 million-worth of ecosystem services that the Gwent levels provide. I also want to mention the climate change implications of creating a motorway not just in terms of destroying peat land, which would emit a huge amount of carbon—over 100 ha of SSSI land—but in terms of putting a road on top of that that will generate more traffic and therefore have climate change implications from the transport. Also, the construction could have a huge impact in terms of the embedded carbon within the concrete, et cetera. I would also like to talk about the policy contradictions with regard to the Welsh Government's plans on biodiversity, sustainable development, et cetera.

[226] I would like to finish my opening remarks with some wise words from a very wise man. He once said:

[227] 'Our environment is a key asset. It underpins our health, our economy and our quality of life, but there is mounting evidence that our actions are pushing natural systems beyond their ability to cope.'

[228] That wise man was Carwyn Jones AM. He said that in 2006 when he was the Minister for the environment. He also said in his foreword to the environment strategy:

[229] 'I am pledging my ongoing commitment to delivering the vision set out in the Strategy'.

[230] I would like to point out that, obviously, this scheme would run contrary to that vision and, therefore, contrary therefore to his ongoing support.

[231] **William Powell:** Thank you very much for those concise opening remarks. I would like to kick off with a question on the economic case. One theme that we have heard recurrently this morning is the absence of detail in terms of the economic case and, indeed, the wider business case for the relief road. What would you and your organisations like to see as a minimum in terms of detail for an economic case for this relief road, if you were to be convinced by it?

[232] **Mr Clubb:** Hoffwn weld unrhyw fath o ddadansoddiad economaidd, oherwydd nid oes dim byd. Mae'r prosiect hwn, mewn rhyw ffurf neu'i gilydd, wedi bod ar y gweill ers 22 o flynyddoedd.

Mr Clubb: I would like to see any kind of economic analysis, because there is nothing. This project, in one form or another, has been in the pipeline for 22 years.

11:00

[233] Nid yw'r Swyddfa Gymreig na Llywodraeth Cymru erioed wedi gallu nac erioed wedi mynd ati i ddarparu dadansoddiad economaidd. Felly, pan fydd yn dweud, 'Mae'n rhaid cael yr M4 yma achos mae'n hanfodol i economi de Cymru ac i fusnesau yn ne Cymru', ble mae'r dystiolaeth? Nid oes yna ddim. Felly, byddwn yn dwlu cael rhyw fath o ddadansoddiad.

Neither the Welsh Office nor the Welsh Government has ever been able, or has ever attempted, to provide an economic analysis. Therefore, when it says, 'We have to have this M4 because it is essential to the economy of south Wales and to businesses in south Wales', where is the evidence? There is none. Therefore, I would love to have some sort of analysis.

[234] **Mr Webb:** Rwy'n cytuno â Mr Clubb. Mae diffyg tystiolaeth yn y dogfennau ymgynghorol, yn cynnwys y ddogfen ymgynghorol bresennol a'r un cynt yn 2012. Mae'r ddogfen yn hawlio y byddai twf economaidd yn deillio o adeiladu traffordd newydd ond nid oes ffigurau. Nid oes ystadegau sydd yn dangos pe bai twf economaidd pa mor fawr neu fach y byddai. Mae'r ddogfen yn hawlio y bydd twf ond nid oes tystiolaeth ynddi neu yn unrhyw un o'r dogfennau technegol cefndirol a ddaeth allan gyda'r ymgynghoriad presennol neu'r un cynt.

Mr Webb: I agree with Mr Clubb. There is an absence of evidence in the consultation documents, including the current consultation document and the previous one in 2012. The document claims that there would be economic growth emerging from the building of a new motorway, but there are no figures. There are no statistics that demonstrate, if there was economic growth, what its scale would be. The document claims that there will be growth, but there is no evidence contained in it or in any of the technical background documents that accompanied the current consultation or the previous consultation.

[235] **Russell George:** We have had some very striking evidence this morning. I do not know whether you have had the opportunity to hear the other witnesses this morning, but I would be very interested to hear your views on Professor Cole's alternative options.

[236] **Mr Webb:** Mae'r Athro Cole wedi gosod allan opsiwn o wneud nifer o welliannau i'r rhwydwaith ffyrdd presennol.

Mr Webb: Professor Cole has set out an option to make a number of improvements to the current road network. The RSPB, of

Mae'r RSPB, wrth gwrs, yn gryf iawn o blaid opsiynau nad ydynt yn cynnwys mesurau sydd yn hybu defnydd ceir, ond mae'n ymddangos i ni bod y Llywodraeth yn bendant eisiau ffeindio opsiwn sydd yn cynnwys gwelliannau ffyrdd neu ffyrdd newydd. Felly, yng nghyd-destun ein pryder ynglŷn â newid hinsawdd ac yn y blaen, mae'n rhaid i ni ddweud y byddai opsiwn yr Athro Cole yn llawer llai niweidiol i'r amgylchedd. Byddai'n costio llai na thrydedd rhan cost y draffordd newydd, ac felly mae'n rhaid i ni ofyn i'n hunain pa mor ddoeth a fyddai hi i ddefnyddio cymaint o arian—dros £1.2 biliwn tair blynedd yn ôl; efallai ei fod yn llawer mwy erbyn hyn ac efallai bydd yn fwy eto mewn dwy neu dair blynedd—ar un cynllun? Bydd Mr Clubb yn dangos i chi yn y man fod yr ystadegau sy'n cael eu defnyddio ar gyfer darogan lefelau traffig yn amheus iawn, felly mae'n rhaid i ni ofyn i'n hunain pa mor ddoeth fyddai defnyddio cymaint o arian ar rywbeth sydd â marc cwestiwn enfawr drosto fo.

[237] **Mr Clubb:** O safbwynt cynnig yr Athro Cole, fel y dywedodd Mike, mae bron a bod unrhyw beth yn well na'r cynnig sydd ar y ford gan Lywodraeth Cymru. Mae'r cynllun hwn mor wirion, diangen a drud, byddai bron a bod unrhyw beth yn well. Nawr, o safbwynt Cyfeillion y Ddaear Cymru, nid ydym yn credu bod tystiolaeth bod angen gwneud gwelliannau i'r rhwydwaith. Os oes angen, byddai cynllun yr Athro Cole yn ddatrysiad llawer gwell na'r cynllun sydd ar y gweill gan Lywodraeth Cymru.

course, is very strongly in favour of options that do not include measures that promote car usage, but it appears to us that the Government is determined to find an option that would lead to road improvements or the building of new roads. Therefore, in the context of our concerns about climate change and so on, we would have to say that Professor Cole's option would be far less damaging to the environment. It would cost less than a third of the cost of a new motorway, and therefore we have to ask ourselves how circumspect it would be to use so much money—over £1.2 billion three years ago; it could be far more now and even more again in two or three years—on one scheme? Mr Clubb will demonstrate to you in the course of proceedings that the statistics used for predicting traffic levels are very suspect indeed, therefore, we must ask ourselves how circumspect it would be to use so much money on a single scheme where there is a huge question mark over it.

Mr Clubb: From the perspective of Professor Cole's proposal, as Mike said, almost anything is better than the proposal that is on the table from the Welsh Government. This scheme is so silly, unnecessary and expensive that almost anything would be better. Now, from Friends of the Earth Cymru's perspective, we do not think that there is evidence that there is a need for improvements to the network. If there is a need, Professor Cole's scheme would be a much better solution than the scheme that is on the table from the Welsh Government.

[238] **Mr Byrne:** I would say that we—like the organisations represented by the other two panellists—are in favour of any other scheme than one that spends £1.2 billion on a motorway that will destroy probably 100 ha of SSSI land. We think that—from the point of view of sustainable development and the sustainable development duties, and the future generations who would have to pay for this road in terms of tax—Professor Stuart Cole's option is a lot better, and in terms of the sustainable development agenda and, therefore, the sustainable development duty of the Welsh Government. If the Welsh Government opted for this, as opposed to the current options, it would be more significant and would really highlight the Welsh Government's commitment to sustainable development—as opposed to spending £1.2 billion on a road that would be damaging to the environment, in terms of nature conservation, and also climate change.

[239] I would like to make a point on the last question about the economic case. I was looking at some documents and one very recent one by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, Australia, states that

[240] ‘although highway projects are often justified for the sake of economic development, highway capacity expansion now provides little net economic benefit ... An expert review concluded, “The available evidence does not support arguments that new transport investment in general has a major impact on economic growth in a country with an already well-developed infrastructure”’.

[241] I will forward the paper that I got that from to you, as well as some other papers that I am referring to.

[242] **Russell George:** Thank you for your views on that. James, in his opening comments, talked about the Gwent levels, I would be interested to hear about the latest SEA—perhaps Gareth could also talk about this—and whether that takes into account the potential impacts on the protected areas within the Gwent levels.

[243] **Mr Clubb:** Specifically on the SEA, there are substantial problems with it, not least that it curtails the available options either to a motorway or to nothing. We think that that is a restriction on the alternatives, when there are clearly reasonable alternatives, including Athro Cole’s analysis. We consider that the Welsh Government has not taken into account the reasonable alternatives and that the SEA is potentially flawed.

[244] **William Powell:** Thank you for that.

[245] **Mr Webb:** To add to that, the SEA underplays the large number of measures that are already taking place that are aimed at reducing traffic levels on the M4. They consist of a plethora of both direct and indirect measures, including measures that have been consented, but not yet constructed. I could name-check, for example, the south Wales metro, improvements to the Brynglas tunnels, the dualling of the A465 and the opening of the former Tata steelworks road. There are a number of measures that have been brought forward, quite rightly, by the Welsh Government, but they do not figure in the Welsh Government’s estimate of the extent to which an M4 relief road is required.

[246] **William Powell:** Would you like to come in briefly, James?

[247] **Mr Byrne:** In relation to the Gwent levels, the motorway option would impact directly, through land-take, on four SSSIs. The documents and the SEA downplay the nature conservation importance of the Gwent levels. In the other document, it says that 60 ha of land will be taken from the Gwent levels, but that does not include any junctions, any compounds, or any set-down areas, et cetera. We think that the land-take of the SSSIs is likely to be at least 100 ha. However, we also know that Tata Steel, which owns some of the land north of the proposed route, has put that down as proposed development land in terms of the Newport local development plan. Therefore, if such an M4 relief road came about, there would be a justification then, almost, to build—‘The roads are already there; we might as well. They are already fragmented; we have already ecologically and hydrologically separated them from the rest of the levels, so we might as well build on them’. So, we think that there will be an impact on probably 200 ha, perhaps 300 ha, as a direct consequence of this, but also there will be indirect impacts on the Gwent levels.

[248] The hydrology of the Gwent levels is very interrelated, so we think that it will also impact hydrologically on probably another four SSSIs, not just by changing the water table and the flows of the interconnected reens and ditches, but also in the pollution events from the road. I have set down in my arguments the heavy metals and the accidental spillages, which always happen on motorways, that we think will significantly harm the unique qualities of these SSSIs. They are unique qualities, because the only other place in the UK that has the same level as this area is the Somerset levels. They are the only two places in the UK where

these areas exist in great numbers. They have been around since Roman times, so they have developed their own unique ecology as well. So, we think that this road would have a majorly adverse impact on the biodiversity of the Gwent levels, in contradiction to the Welsh Government's stated response to the 'State of Nature', in which Alun Davies said,

[249] 'We need to take urgent action to halt these declines.'

[250] The Assembly—the predecessor to this committee, in fact—two years ago, in the inquiry into biodiversity and the reasons for the failure to hit the target to halt the loss of biodiversity in 2020, made a number of recommendations, including,

[251] 'To ensure that biodiversity is mainstreamed across Government',

[252] and this proposal shows that it is not; and

[253] 'To ensure that biodiversity is a central plank of the Welsh Government's sustainable development policy'.

[254] Once again, this proposal shows that this is not a sustainable development policy.

[255] **William Powell:** I will now call on Julie Morgan and then Antoinette Sandbach.

[256] **Julie Morgan:** I asked this question to an earlier witness. I campaigned very strongly against the building of the Cardiff bay barrage, which, of course, resulted in the Newport wetlands centre being set up after the barrage was built. It just seems very ironic that that was given to compensate for what happened in Cardiff. Do you have any comments on how that would be affected? What are your views on that?

[257] **Mr Byrne:** The Newport wetlands compensation site—compensation for Cardiff bay—is likely, and this is from the evidence that Natural Resources Wales gave as well, to be affected by the hydrological changes because the reens are interconnected. Therefore, any pollution events and hydrological impacts will flow into there. There will also be noise impacts. There have been many studies that show that transport noise, especially from major infrastructure, can have a negative impact on breeding bird success rates and, in fact, birds not even settling or breeding, with up to 80% decline from a kilometre or 1.5 km up to 2 km. There is significant potential for this development to impact upon the compensation site for the Cardiff bay barrage, which in itself, therefore, raises potential legal implications.

[258] **Julie Morgan:** I have just one more question. Basically, do you think that there are any circumstances that would justify taking 100 ha of SSSIs?

[259] **Mr Byrne:** Not for this scheme and not when there are alternatives that are vastly superior—they do virtually the same job at a third of the price, and then the rest of that money could be used in sustainable transport options. So, I do not think that this scheme justifies taking 100 ha or 200 ha of SSSI land. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, as amended by the CROW Act, the Welsh Government is a section 28G authority, which means that it not only has a legal obligation to protect these sites, but it also has a legal obligation to further the enhancement of these SSSIs. We do not believe that taking 100 ha or 200 ha of SSSI land qualifies under that duty in the CROW Act.

11:15

[260] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Gareth, I was very interested to read about the efforts that Friends of the Earth Cymru had undertaken in terms of putting in FOIs to get information. Are you aware of why there has been a change in the assessments between March and June

and why the option was ruled out in relation to what I call 'Professor Cole's blue route' or 'the sea route'? I appreciate that they are slightly different, but has any information come forward to you?

[261] **Mr Clubb:** Na, nid oes unrhyw beth, hyd y gwelaf i. Nid oes unrhyw gyfiawnhad dros beidio â chynnwys unrhyw ffordd amgen yn bodoli, ar wahân i mewn rhai dogfennau technegol, lle, efallai, ceir rhyw baragraff bach yn dweud, 'Nid yw'r cynllun yma'n cydymffurfio â'r amcanion trafndiaeth'.

Mr Clubb: No, there is nothing, from what I can see. Any justification for not including any alternative route does not exist, unless there is, perhaps, in some technical documents some small paragraph that says, 'This scheme doesn't comply with the transport objectives'.

[262] Hefyd, mae problem sylfaenol iawn ynghylch yr holl brosiect. Yn y lle cyntaf, pan wnaethon nhw fwrw ati i osod allan y problemau honedig, cawson nhw ryw fath o gyngor ymhlith grŵp dethol o bobl, ac fe ddaethant allan gydag 17 o broblemau. Rwyf wedi edrych ar y problemau honedig hyn. Mae pump ohonynt yn gwbl amherthnasol. Nid oes tystiolaeth ar gyfer saith ohonynt. Ar gyfer pedwar ohonynt, gallech chi ddweud union yr un peth am unrhyw heol, ac yn sicr am unrhyw draffordd. Mae un ohonynt yn gwbl anghywir. Felly, o'r 17 o broblemau, nid oes un y byddem ni, fel Cyfeillion y Ddaear Cymru, ddim yn herio ac yn holi, 'Ble mae eich tystiolaeth?' a 'Pam ydych chi'n credu bod hwn yn berthnasol?', ond nid oedd gennym gyfle i gael mewnbwn neu i ymgynghori ar hynny. Ar sail y problemau honedig hynny, rydym wedi cael yr holl syrcais, gyda Llywodraeth Cymru yn talu cannoedd o filoedd o bunnoedd i Arup wneud lot o waith technegol ar gyfer rhywbeth sydd wedi ei seilio ar rith.

Also, there is a basic problem in terms of the whole project. First, when they went ahead with setting out the alleged problems, they had some sort of council with a specific group of people, and they came out with 17 problems. I have looked at these alleged problems. Five of them are completely irrelevant. There is no evidence for seven of them. For four of them, you could say exactly the same for any road, and certainly for any sort of motorway. One of them is completely incorrect. Therefore, from the 17 problems, there is not one of them that we, as Friends of the Earth Cymru, would not challenge and ask, 'Where is your evidence?' and 'Why do you believe that this is relevant?', but yet we had no opportunity to provide input or consult on that. On the basis of those alleged problems, we have this whole circus, with the Welsh Government paying hundreds of thousands of pounds to Arup for undertaking technical work for something that is based on a mirage.

[263] **Mr Webb:** Rwy'n cytuno â phopeth ddywedodd Mr Clubb. Mae marc cwestiwn dros yr holl broses o ymgynghori, cyn belled ag y mae'r ymgynghoriad presennol, yr un cynt ac, i ddweud y gwir, yr un cyn hynny yn y cwestiwn.

Mr Webb: I agree with everything that Mr Clubb said. There is a question mark over this whole process of consultation, as far as the current consultation, the previous consultation and, to be honest, the one before that are concerned.

[264] Y penderfyniad pwysicaf a wnaeth y Llywodraeth oedd peidio â pharhau â nifer o opsiynau o ran gwella'r rhwydwaith ffyrdd presennol, ac ni wnaeth ystyried trafndiaeth gyhoeddus yn opsiwn ynddo'i hun. Cafodd y penderfyniadau hynny eu gwneud mewn dogfen dechnegol, sef yn nogfen WelTAG ym mis Mawrth 2013. Nid oedd y ddogfen dechnegol honno yn rhan o'r broses ymgynghorol; dim ond dogfen a wnaeth

The most important decision that the Government took was not to proceed with a number of options in terms of improving the current road network and not taking into account public transport as an option in itself. Those decisions were taken in a technical document, namely in the WelTAG document in March 2013. That technical document was not part of the consultation process; it was just a document that appeared on the Arup

ymddangos ar safle we Arup oedd hi. Nid oedd gan y cyhoedd na'r elusennau gyfle i wrthwynebu'r penderfyniadau hollbwysig hyn. Felly, mae marciau cwestiwn dros y broses i gyd. Enghraifft arall yw'r ffaith i'r Llywodraeth orfod cynhyrchu dogfen gyfranogaeth. Yn ôl y ddogfen ymgynghorol ei hun, mae'r Llywodraeth yn dweud hyn:

[265] 'the consultation resulted in public support for the provision of an additional high quality road to the south of Newport.'

[266] Fodd bynnag, wrth edrych ar y ddogfen gyfranogaeth, ymddengys mai dim ond 27% o'r bobl a roddodd ymateb i'r ymgynghoriad a oedd yn gefnogol, neu hyd yn oed yn rannol gefnogol, o'r draffordd arfaethedig. Mae'r datganiad yn y ddogfen ymgynghorol yn mynd yn hollol groes i'r ystadegau sy'n ymwneud â pha mor amhoblogaidd yw'r opsiwn hwn. Hefyd, wrth sôn am y ddogfen bresennol, mae map yn y ddogfen sy'n dangos llinell y ffordd arfaethedig. Mae hwnnw'n cynnwys ffin yr SSSI, ond mae llinell y draffordd yn wahanol i'r llinell sy'n ymddangos ar fap cynllun datblygu Casnewydd, sef y map swyddogol. Mae map y Llywodraeth yn creu'r argraff nad yw'r ffordd yn mynd trwy gymaint o'r SSSI ag y mae. Felly, mae hwnnw'n bwynt arall.

[267] Hyd yn oed ar lefel ymarferol, mae'r Llywodraeth wedi trefnu nifer o *drop-in sessions* yn y pentrefi sydd yng nghyffiniau'r ffordd, ond pan mae aelodau o'r cyhoedd yn mynychu'r sesiynau hyn, nid oes ganddynt yr hawl i fynegi gwrthwynebiad i'r draffordd. Yr unig beth maent yn gallu ei wneud yw mynd â ffurflen gymhleth iawn i ffwrdd a'i llenwi i mewn a'i hanfon at y Llywodraeth. Fe fyddai wedi bod yn rhywbeth syml iawn i gael system fel bod y cyhoedd yn gallu mynegi gwrthwynebiad yn y fan a'r lle. Felly, mae nifer o farciau cwestiwn uwchben y ffordd y mae'r Llywodraeth wedi trefnu'r ymgynghoriad.

[268] **Antoinette Sandbach:** May I follow that up and ask whether you have seen any evidence of Natural Resources Wales, as the regulator of the Government in this instance, stepping in to require the Government to act in accordance with its legal obligations, and to raise the concerns that you have raised in your evidence?

[269] **Mr Clubb:** Gan nad yw Llywodraeth Cymru wedi gofyn am ymatebion ynghylch

website. The public and the charity sector had no opportunity to submit objections to these crucially important decisions. Therefore, there are question marks over the whole process. Another example was that the Government had to produce a participation report. According to the consultation document itself, the Government states that

However, in looking at the participation report, it appears that only 27% of the people who responded to the consultation were supportive, or even partially supportive, of the proposed motorway. The statement in the consultation document is entirely contrary to the statistics that relate to the popularity or otherwise of this option. Also, in looking at the current document, there is a map in it showing the route of the proposed road. That includes the border of the SSSI, but the motorway route is different to the route shown on the map for the Newport development plan, which is the official map. The Government's map gives the impression that the road will not cross as much of the SSSI as it actually does. So, that is another important point.

Even on a practical level, the Government has arranged a number of drop-in sessions in villages near the proposed road, but when the public attends these sessions, people do not have a right to express their objection to the motorway. All they are able to do is take a very complex form away, fill it in and send it to the Government. It would have been very simple to have a system whereby the public could express objections there and then. Therefore, there are a number of question marks over the way in which the Government has conducted this consultation.

Mr Clubb: I think that the problem is that, because the Welsh Government has asked for

naill ai cael traffordd neu beidio â chael traffordd, rwy'n credu mai'r broblem yw bod hynny wedi llyffetheirio Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru. Nid oes ganddo gyfle i fynegi barn ynglŷn ag a oes ffordd well i amddiffyn yr amgylchedd a hefyd i ddatrys y problemau traffig honedig yn yr ardal. Felly, mae'n amhosibl iddo; yr oll y gall wneud yw newid lliw'r paent ar y draffordd. Mae mewn lle amhosibl.

responses only in relation to having a motorway or not having a motorway, that has fettered NRW. It does not have the opportunity to express an opinion on whether there is a better way of protecting the environment and solving traffic problems in the area. So, it is impossible for it; all that it can do is change the colour of the paint on the motorway. It is in an impossible situation.

[270] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Given the Seaport case—as it was explained to us in evidence this morning, there are three branches of NRW looking at this. Its governance branch is, as it were, providing the regulatory aspect of it. In other words, have you seen evidence to show that it is not complying with its European obligations in relation to SSSI sites? Have you seen any evidence of enforcement by NRW against the Welsh Government to say that these options have been taken out unjustifiably and it is not complying with its European obligations?

[271] **Mr Clubb:** Mae gennym bryderon ynghylch yr hyn sydd wedi digwydd yn y gorffennol, yn bennaf gyda chylchdaith rasio ym Mlaenau Gwent. Mae hynny'n hysbys yn barod. Rydym yn gobeithio'n fawr fod Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru wedi dysgu o'r wers honno ac y bydd yn gweithredu fel corff annibynnol cryf sy'n gallu ac sydd wedi ymrwymo i herio Llywodraeth Cymru pan fo angen. Dyna yw'n gobaith ni yn yr achos hwn.

Mr Clubb: We have concerns about what has happened in the past, mainly with the racing circuit in Blaenau Gwent. That is known already. We greatly hope that the NRW has learnt a lesson from that and that it will act as a strong, independent body that can commit and has committed to challenging the Welsh Government when required. That is our hope in this case.

[272] **Antoinette Sandbach:** In effect, your evidence is that, at the moment, it is not. I see James Byrne nodding, which, of course, will not be picked up by the transcript, but your evidence is that you are not seeing NRW act in accordance with its Seaport obligations and impose its enforcement or regulatory arm on—

[273] **Mr Byrne:** We have not been involved in conversations between the Welsh Government and NRW, but, certainly from our point of view, we have not seen NRW express strongly to the Welsh Government that this really should be a no-go area. We would like to see it, as an independent body, express its concern, which has been expressed privately to us, that this is a horrendous scheme. We have not seen that being made public.¹

[274] In terms of the consultations to date, it is worth mentioning the history of the consultations. Consultation on the corridor enhancement measures started when the previous Minister, Ieuan Wyn Jones, serving in 2009, said 'No, we're not going ahead with this option. I direct you to look at alternative options.' So, what came about was stakeholder engagement et cetera on corridor enhancement measures, which I and Professor Cole were involved in. Through that process, various options were discussed—this, that and the other—and a load of things were put on pin boards et cetera, and then they narrowed them down to different things. I stood up, Professor Cole and a few others stood up and said, 'No, you're actually going back on what you have been asked to do. You are actually proposing a motorway again on the same route. Drop this', yet, suddenly, the consultation started on which of these three options of motorway across the Gwent levels would you like to do. So, that was in direct contradiction with what the Minister at the time had asked them to do through the process. So, we would like to know how it went from 'Don't do it; look at alternatives' and stakeholder

engagement where it was said ‘No, that’s a bad option, get rid of that’ to ‘Here’s our three motorway options’.

[275] We do not think that there is a public appetite for it either, because as soon as the idea of tolls is mentioned, there is a willingness-to-pay argument, and there is no willingness to pay from the public or from the business sector. However, as soon as tolls are taken away, we are borrowing money to pay for a road scheme and, therefore, everybody pays for the road scheme. So, it has dismissed—

[276] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Will that, in your view, potentially affect infrastructure projects, such as electrification projects, elsewhere in Wales—in north, mid and west Wales?

[277] **Mr Byrne:** I think that, undoubtedly, if you are spending £1.2 billion on a highly over-engineered solution to the Brynglas tunnels in south-east Wales, it is obviously going to have a knock-on effect on infrastructure or any other things that the Welsh Government wants to do anywhere across Wales.

[278] **Mr Clubb:** Nid yn unig ym maes trafnidiaeth, ond, wrth gwrs, ym meysydd addysg, iechyd a llywodraeth leol, ac rydym yn gweld yn gyson fod pob un o’r meysydd hynny wedi cael setliad ariannol sydd yn anodd iawn iddyn nhw ymdopi ag ef. Os ydych yn benthg £1 biliwn, mae hynny yn rhwym o gael effaith andwyol ar y gwasanaethau eraill. **Mr Clubb:** Not only in the field of transport, but, of course, in the fields of education, health and local government, and we see consistently that all those areas have had a financial settlement that is very difficult for them to cope with. If you borrow £1 billion, that is bound to have a negative impact on other services.

[279] **William Powell:** Reference was made earlier by Mike Webb to the June 2013 WelTAG report, could I ask you what your response is to the reference that that report made to a slight benefit in terms of emissions that this proposal would apparently bring to bear? I would very much appreciate your thoughts on that, because it seems to run contrary to most of what we have heard so far.

[280] **Mr Clubb:** Dechreuaf drwy ddweud bod canfyddiad Llywodraeth Cymru yn gwbl anghywir. Yr hyn mae wedi seilio’r canfyddiad hwn arno yw rhyw dybiaeth bod traffig sy’n teithio 70 mya yn cynhyrchu llai o nwyon tŷ gwydr na thraffig sy’n teithio rhyw 40 mya. Mae hynny yn anghywir ac mae’r Llywodraeth yn gwybod bod hynny’n anghywir, nid yn unig achos ein bod ni wedi dweud wrthi yn yr ymgynghoriad diwethaf ei fod yn anghywir ond achos y dyfynnodd, yn anghywir, o’r union un ffynhonnell ag a ddefnyddiais yn ymateb Cyfeillion y Ddaear Cymru. Felly, mae’n gwybod hyn ac, eto, mae’n dweud yn gamarweiniol ac yn fwriadol y bydd allyriadau newid hinsawdd yn lleihau. **Mr Clubb:** I will start by saying that the Welsh Government’s perception is completely wrong. What it has based this perception on is some assumption that traffic that travels at 70 mph produces fewer greenhouse gases than traffic that is travelling at some 40 mph. That is wrong, and the Government knows that it is wrong, not only because we told it in the last consultation that it was wrong, but because it quoted, incorrectly, from exactly the same source that I used in the Friends of the Earth Cymru response. So, it knows this and, yet, it says misleadingly and deliberately that climate change emissions are going to reduce.

11:30

[281] **Mr Byrne:** I have looked into this and it is exactly as Gareth says—the reason behind the increase in the climate change and greenhouse gas implications is what they have said in

the consultation analysis, but that goes contrary to, well, logic, apart from anything else. I have looked into the research, and it says that, apart from generated traffic that a new motorway creates, its analysis of urban motorway expansion impacts on total emissions indicates that

[282] ‘emissions from construction and additional vehicle traffic quickly exceed any emission reductions from reduced congestion delays’.

[283] It also states that

[284] ‘Generated traffic often increases downstream congestion’,

[285] and

[286] ‘Air emission and accident rates per vehicle-mile may decline if traffic flows more freely, but these benefits decline over time and are usually offset as generated traffic leads to renewed congestion and increased vehicle travel’.

[287] So, the claim that roadway capacity expansion reduces fuel consumption, pollution emissions and accidents is because they measure impacts per vehicle mile, ignoring increased vehicle miles. As a result, they significantly exaggerate roadway expansion benefits and underestimate the total costs. I have been told by the Arup engineers that they have not factored in the significant embedded carbon within motorway construction. I have a figure here for the widening of the M25, which was 272,000 tonnes of carbon in motorway expansion. Something of that scale has not been factored into their thoughts, even. Also, if you are ploughing up peat land, which is what the Gwent levels are—they are peat land, and it has been there since Roman times—you can be releasing a lot of carbon into the atmosphere as well. That has not been factored into it either.

[288] So, we believe, from a climate change point of view, that this is contrary to the Welsh Government commitments within the climate change strategy to reduce climate change emissions by 3% a year and to reduce them by 40% by 2020.

[289] **William Powell:** Thanks for that clarification.

[290] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning; yes, it is still morning. You sort of touched in various parts on your belief about the latest SEA and the account of potential impacts of the proposals on the protected sites within the Gwent levels. So, what I want from you for the record, really, is for you to clarify whether you think that that SEA does take full account of the potential impact on the proposed site in the Gwent levels.

[291] **Mr Byrne:** No.

[292] **Mr Webb:** No.

[293] **Mr Clubb:** Mae pwynt ychwanegol—hynny yw, mae’r dadansoddiad sydd wedi cael ei wneud ar gyfer yr ymgynghoriad hwn wedi israddio’r pryderon ynghylch yr amgylchedd ers yr un diwethaf. Felly, mae rhywbeth wedi digwydd yn fewnol i drïo gwneud i’r cynllun hwn edrych yn llai niweidiol i’r amgylchedd nag yw e.

Mr Clubb: There is an additional point—that is, the analysis that has been undertaken for this consultation has downgraded the concerns in relation to the environment since the last one. Therefore, something has happened internally to try to make this scheme look less harmful to the environment than it is.

[294] **Joyce Watson:** Do you know what that might be? Do you know what the evidence

base was for that downgrading?

[295] **Mr Clubb:** Nac ydw. Rwy'n trio darganfod hynny wrth y Llywodraeth, a bydd hyn yn ffurfio rhan o'r ymholiad pellach sydd gennym i Lywodraeth Cymru yn y man.

Mr Clubb: No, I do not. I am trying to find that out from the Government, and that will form part of a further enquiry from us to the Welsh Government.

[296] **Mr Byrne:** I am afraid that we do not know why it failed to take into account not only the nature conservation issues, but, as NRW stated in its evidence, the significant flooding issues. Also, from 'Sustaining a Living Wales', it has not taken into account the ecosystem services that the Gwent levels provide. We estimate, from using Government figures from the UK national ecosystem assessment, that the Gwent levels per year give £67 million of benefits, including flood protection to the residents of Newport. Considering that ecosystem services are supposed to be incorporated into the cost-benefit analysis—that is what the plans or proposals are in these documents—we find it very strange that certain parts of Government are suggesting certain things and other parts of Government are ignoring them.

[297] **Joyce Watson:** You talked about flooding, and I have a particular interest in surface water and the creation of it. Will you be looking at assessments that other people are doing in terms of the creation of surface water, which will undoubtedly be the outcome of such a project, and the impact that that might have on the wetlands and, possibly, on surrounding properties?

[298] **Mr Byrne:** We shall certainly be working with NRW staff, as they are the flood specialists. We shall be working with them on our concerns, to make sure that we feed into their considerations.

[299] **Mr Webb:** There is a question mark over the impact of a future M4 relief road on flood issues. There is reference in the documentation to the need for a new highway, a new motorway, to be on an embankment, and that would imply a hard edge to flood incidents—that is, both riverine and coastal flooding issues. Therefore, there are lots of question marks as to the flood implications of such an enormous construction of several kilometres in length on a solid embankment. There are also engineering questions about how such an enormous structure would be constructed on a soft sub-base—Mr Byrne has referred to the presence of peat deposits throughout the Gwent levels. The RSPB is therefore of the view that there are a lot of questions to be asked about flooding issues not just with regard to wildlife on the Gwent levels, but with regard to the knock-on impacts of the changes on coastal and riverine processes over a far wider area.

[300] **Llyr Gruffydd:** A fyddech yn cytuno, felly, fod elfen ddifrifol o ddewis a dethol tystiolaeth ar ran y Llywodraeth pan ddaw i gyflwyno'r opsiynau? Rydym eisoes wedi clywed am y diffyg sylfaenol o ran achos busnes i ddangos y budd economaidd efallai a ddaw yn sgîl datblygiad posibl. Rydym eisoes wedi clywed nad oes ystyriaeth wedi ei roi i drafnidiaeth integredig, a dim ystyriaeth—sy'n anghredadwy, yn fy marn i—i drydaneiddio'r rheilffordd yn y de, y metro yn y de-ddwyrain, a'r Ddeddf *active travel* a'r impact y byddai honno'n ei chael ar lefelau traffig ac ar yr angen am y prosiect hwn. Rydych chi

Llyr Gruffydd: Would you therefore agree that there is a serious element of picking and choosing evidence on the part of the Government when it comes to presenting the options? We have already heard about the basic lack of a business case to show the economic benefits that would perhaps follow a possible development. We have also heard that there has been no consideration of integrated transport, and no consideration—unbelievably, in my view—of electrification of the railway in the south, the metro in the south-east, and the active travel Act and the impact that that would have on traffic levels and on the need for this project. You have

wedi sôn am y dystiolaeth a roddwyd gan y Llywodraeth—yn anghywir, yn eich barn chi—ynghlŷn ag allyriadau carbon. Rydych yn sôn am y modd y mae'r asesiad amgylcheddol strategol wedi cael ei newid o'r naill asesiad i'r llall, ac mae honiadau difrifol, a dweud y gwir, yn yr awgrym bod rhyw 'massaging the criteria or boundaries' fel y'i dywedir ym mhapur Cyfeillion y Ddaear. A yw polisïau'r Llywodraeth yn cael eu tramgwyddo o safbwynt edrych ar drafnidiaeth integredig, datblygu cynaliadwy, a'r Bil amgylcheddol y soniasoch amdano ar y dechrau, Mike, ac yn y blaen? A ydych chi felly'n poeni bod diwylliant amheus yn cael ei amlygu yma o fframio'r holl dystiolaeth mewn modd nad yw hyd yn oed yn *subtle* pan ddaw i drïo hyrwyddo un opsiwn penodol?

[301] **Mr Webb:** Rwy'n cytuno bod cwestiynau dwys i'w gofyn am sut y fframiwyd amcanion arfaethedig y broses—nid un unig yn yr ymgynghoriad diwethaf, ond yn yr un cynt hefyd. Mae'n amhosibl i aelodau'r cyhoedd ac elusennau amgylcheddol wrthwynebu yn blwmp ac yn blaen yr opsiwn o gael traffordd newydd ar y *Gwent levels*. Mae'r problemau honedig wedi eu fframio ddim ond ym maes trafnidiaeth. O safbwynt rhywun sydd yn gwerthfawrogi byd natur, mae'n amhosibl ymgymryd â'r ymgynghoriad drwy ddweud, 'Na, sori, nid wyf eisiau traffordd ar y *Gwent levels*.'

[302] **Mr Clubb:** Yn bendant, mae hynny'n wir. Mae fel petai Llywodraeth Cymru wedi penderfynu, 'Iawn, traffordd amdani', gan fynd i chwilio am dystiolaeth i gyfiawnhau'r dewis wedi hynny. Mae hynny yn glir iawn drwy'r broses yn gyfan gwbl. Mae'r Llywodraeth yn yr ymgynghoriadau diwethaf wedi dewis a dethol ystadegau er mwyn ceisio dangos rhywbeth—mae llawer o'r ystadegau yn hollol anghywir—ac mae wedi dewis a dethol a chamddyfynnu papurau gwyddonol yn llwyr er mwyn cyfiawnhau'r heol newydd.

[303] Mae'r Llywodraeth wedi defnyddio amcanestyniadau—yr un amcanestyniadau y mae'r Adran Drafnidiaeth wedi eu defnyddio ac sydd wedi methu dro ar ôl tro dros 25 o flynyddoedd—i ddangos y bydd cynnydd

mentioned the evidence that has been provided by the Government—inaccurately, in your view—on carbon emissions. You have mentioned the way in which the strategic environmental assessments have been changed from one assessment to the next, and there are serious allegations, in fact, in the suggestion that there has been some sort of 'massaging of criteria or boundaries', as it says in Friends of the Earth Cymru's paper. Are Government policies being contravened in terms of integrated transport, sustainable development, the environment Bill that you mentioned at the beginning, Mike, and so on? Are you therefore concerned that there is a dubious culture coming forward, of framing the evidence in a way that is not even subtle when it comes to promoting one specific option?

Mr Webb: I agree that there are some very serious questions to be asked about how the proposed objectives for the process were framed—not only in the previous consultation, but in the one prior to that, too. It is impossible for members of the public and environmental charities to openly express opposition to the option of having a new motorway on the Gwent levels. The alleged problems are framed only in terms of transport implications. From the point of view of someone who appreciates nature, it is impossible to participate in the consultation by saying, 'No, I am sorry; I simply do not want a motorway across the Gwent levels.'

Mr Clubb: That is certainly true. It seems to as though the Welsh Government has decided, 'Right, it is going to be a motorway', and then went to seek evidence to justify that choice. That can be seen very clearly throughout the whole process. The Government, in the latest consultations, has been very selective in terms of the statistics in trying to demonstrate something—many of the statistics have been completely incorrect—and it has been very selective in entirely misquoting scientific papers in order to justify the building of a new road.

The Government has used projections—the same projections that the Department for Transport has used and which have failed time and again over a period of 25 years—to show that there will be an increase in traffic

mewn trafniadaeth. Y llynedd, fe ddywedodd Cymdeithas Cynllunio Trafniadaeth fod amcanestyniadau'r Adran Drafnidaeth—yr un amcanestyniadau y mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn awr yn eu defnyddio: levels. Last year, the chair of the Transport Planning Society said that the Department of Transport's projections—the same projections that the Welsh Government is now using:

[304] 'Are now so far from reality, that there must be an urgent review.'

[305] Dyma'r union fodelau y mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn eu defnyddio. Yr hyn y mae'n ceisio dangos yw bod cynnydd enfawr yn mynd i fod. Yr hyn sydd wedi digwydd dros y pum mlynedd diwethaf, flwyddyn ar ôl blwyddyn, yw gostyngiad yn y traffig ar heolydd Cymru. The Welsh Government is using exactly the same modelling, to try to show that there will be a huge increase in traffic. What has happened over the last five years, year after year, is a reduction in the traffic levels on Welsh roads.

[306] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Diolch. **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you.

[307] **William Powell:** James, did you want to come in?

[308] **Mr Byrne:** In terms of the consultation, the paper, which I will supply to the committee, on the consideration about framing the question, has a really nice, highlighted section, which says,

[309] 'If you ask people, do you think traffic ingestion is a serious problem, they will say 'yes'. But if you present the choices more realistically by saying'—

[310] and I am quoting directly—

[311] 'Would you rather spend a lot of money to increase road capacity to achieve moderate and temporary congestion reductions, and bear higher future costs from increased motor vehicle traffic, or implement other types of transportation improvements, the preference for that road might disappear.'

[312] That is what we have seen. I mentioned earlier, in terms of the economics, that the Treasury's Green Book looks at trying to get best value for money. Again, we do not think that this scheme is best value for money.

[313] **William Powell:** I am conscious of time pressure. We now have Julie James, and then Mick Antoniw. Mick has indicated that his issues have been addressed. We will turn to Julie James for the final group of questions.

[314] **Julie James:** This question is for the record, as I do not think that there would be any prizes for guessing what your reaction to it will be. The Institute of Civil Engineers has given us evidence that it considers—and I will read it to you—

[315] 'it may be possible for the project to include further environmental measures that could even enhance the SSSI areas, i.e. instead of a detrimental effect, the project could have net positive benefits by enlarging the area of the SSSI.'

[316] I would just like to know what you think of that.

[317] **Mr Webb:** Mae'n anodd credu bod hyn yn bosibl. Mae'r *Gwent* yn ecosystem. Mae'n ddarn o dir integredig sydd **Mr Webb:** It is difficult to believe that this is possible. The Gwent levels are an ecosystem. It is an integrated piece of land that includes

yn cynnwys yr holl brosesau sydd yn cadw bywyd gwyllt i fynd ac i ffynnu. Felly, mae'r cysyniad o adeiladu traffordd ar safle sydd wedi ei ddynodi fel safle sy'n bwysig i Brydain Fawr oherwydd ei fywyd gwyllt yn amhosibl, ac mae nifer fawr o resymau dros hynny. Pe baech yn adeiladu traffordd yma, byddai'n rhaid suddo concrit yn ddwfn iawn o dan y ddaear. Byddai hyn fel argae ac yn stopio dŵr rhag llifo ar draws y safle. Mae'r safle'n hollol ddibynnol ar symudiad y dŵr ar draws yr ardal i gyd. Felly, nid yw'r syniad o arllwys miliynau o dunnelli o goncrit ar safle dynodedig yn gwneud unrhyw synnwyr i mi o gwbl. Ar yr ail ran o'r cwestiwn, hyd yn oed pe bai'n bosibl gwneud hynny, mae topograffi yr ardal yn amhosibl i'w ailgreu yn rhywle arall yn y cyffiniau. Felly, hyd yn oed o safbwynt ymarferol, sut y byddech yn mynd ati i greu ardal felly? Mae'n amhosibl i mi feddwl sut y byddech yn mynd ati i wneud y math hwnnw o beth.

all the processes that keep wildlife alive and flourishing. So, the concept of building a motorway on a site that has been designated as an important site on a British level because of its wildlife is just impossible, and there are a number of reasons for that. If you were to build a motorway here, you would have to sink the concrete very deeply underground. This would be like a dam stopping water from flowing across the site. The site is completely dependent on the water flow across the whole area. Therefore, the idea of pouring thousands of tonnes of concrete onto a designated site makes no sense to me at all. On the second part of the question, even if it were possible to do that, the area's topography is impossible to recreate anywhere else in the environs. Therefore, even from a practical point of view, how would you go about creating such an area? It is impossible for me to think of how you would do such a thing.

11:45

[318] **Mr Byrne:** In terms of enhancing the area, the Gwent levels have been around since Roman times, which is roughly 1,500 to 2,000 years. So, over geological time it might be possible, but I do not think that in our lifetimes it would be easy to enhance these areas. The reasons for designation, including the unique invertebrates and plant life, which have developed over those 2,000 years, would be impossible to recreate and enhance. You mentioned that it was a remark by the Institution of Civil Engineers. I have recently come across the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, which, based on principles of sustainable development, has devised a sensible and practical hierarchy for transport interventions, which starts at priority 1, which is minimise demand, priority 2 is to enable modal shift, priority 3 is optimise system efficiency, and then priority 4, the final bit, is to promote or increase capacity. So, the Institution of Mechanical Engineers is saying that increasing capacity is the final straw.

[319] **William Powell:** We will have a final focused question from Russell George, then we must conclude.

[320] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. I think that it was James who mentioned earlier that no economic benefit has been brought forward for the proposals. Nod if that is correct, James, I do not want to misquote you; I see that that is fine. We are taking evidence from the Institution of Civil Engineers next, and it stated in its evidence to us that the construction of the new M4 will

[321] 'provide major benefits to the economy of South Wales'.

[322] It refers to a piece of research commissioned by the UK Contractors Group. Are you aware of that at all, and do you have any views on that before we take evidence from our next witness?

[323] **Mr Webb:** Rwyf wedi cael cip bach **Mr Webb:** I have had a quick look at the sydyn ar y ddogfen mae'r Institution of Civil document that the Institution of Civil

Engineers yn cyfeirio ati. Mae'n rhoi ffigur o 2.84 neu rywbeth ar gyfer budd honedig o isadeiledd. Fodd bynnag, os ydych yn dilyn y linc yno, mae'r ddogfen mae'n cyfeirio ati yn sôn am isadeiledd yn ei gyfanrwydd. Hynny yw, mae'n cynnwys adeiladu ysgolion, ysbytai ac yn y blaen. Felly, mae tystiolaeth yr *Institution of Civil Engineers* yn trio creu dolen gryf iawn rhwng y ffigur honedig honno a'r draffordd unigol hon, ond nid oes dolen uniongyrchol—mae'r ddogfen mae'n cyfeirio ati yn sôn am isadeiledd yn ei gyfanrwydd.

Engineers refers to. It gives a figure of 2.84 or something for the alleged benefit from infrastructure. However, when you follow the link there, the document that it refers to talks about infrastructure as a whole. That is, it includes building schools, hospitals, and so on. Therefore, the Institution of Civil Engineers's evidence is trying to create a very strong link between this alleged figure and this individual motorway, but there is no direct link—the document to which it refers talks about infrastructure as a whole.

[324] **Mr Clubb:** Hefyd, os ydych yn mynd i wario £1 biliwn, byddech yn dychmygu y byddech yn creu cwpwl o swyddi. Mae hynny'n cydfynd ag unrhyw wariant. Pam fod hyn yn arbennig? Wel, nid yw ef.

Mr Clubb: Also, if you are going to spend £1 billion, you would expect to create a few jobs. That would be the case with any expenditure. Why is this an exception? Well, it is not.

[325] **Mr Byrne:** I agree with those comments. Spending £1.25 billion will generate something—there will be some economic case to it—but it has constantly been shown by the post-project evaluation from the Department for Transport that the cost-benefit ratio is vastly exaggerated. One scheme that I have in front of me, which is the A43 improvements, had a cost-benefit ratio of 4.2. That was before the scheme was built. Then, the post-opening forecast changed dramatically to 1.4 as a cost-benefit ratio. So, we are not saying that it will not have a benefit for business, but what we are saying is that £1.2 billion can be better used to help the economy of south Wales and the rest of Wales. Also, the paper from the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, which I will submit to you, cites a study that concluded that:

[326] 'By exaggerating the economic benefits of road capacity increase and underestimating its negative effects, omission of induced traffic can result in overallocation of public money on road construction and correspondingly less focus on other ways of dealing with congestion and environmental problems in urban areas.'

[327] **William Powell:** Diolch yn fawr iawn am y sesiwn hon.

William Powell: Thank you very much for this session.

[328] It has been really useful in contributing to the investigation that we are carrying out. I sense that we will probably be in contact again before too long. Thank you very much indeed.

11:52

**Ymchwiliad i Gynigion Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer yr M4 o amgylch
Casnewydd—Tystiolaeth gan Sefydliad y Peirianwyr Sifil Cymru
Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Proposals for the M4 around Newport—
Evidence from the Institution of Civil Engineers Wales Cymru**

[329] **William Powell:** Welcome. Is it Keith Davies or Keith Jones?

[330] **Mr K. Jones:** I am Keith Jones. My report is in the name of Keith Jones, but, somewhere along the line, my name has become Keith Davies.

[331] **William Powell:** You have morphed into Keith Davies. Croeso cynnes, Keith Jones. Thanks for clarifying your correct identity. We welcome Keith Jones from the Institution of Civil Engineers Wales Cymru. It seems opportune, given that you were present when your organisation was name-checked a few moments ago, to allow you to comment on the response and indeed maybe answer the original question. Therefore, I ask you to do that and we will then get under way with the rest of our Members' questions.

[332] **Mr K. Jones:** Do you want me to introduce the Institution of Civil Engineers? Would that be helpful for context?

[333] **William Powell:** Yes, please, that would be very helpful for context.

[334] **Mr K. Jones:** The Institution of Civil Engineers was formed in 1818 and was granted a royal charter in 1828, so it has been around rather a long time. As part of that royal charter, we have a duty to give independent advice to Governments of the day. Part of what I am doing today is to give you that independent advice. There are no pressure groups. We have examined the situation, and I am here to give the best advice. I am not a part of the design or the investigation; my role is to overview and to give you that independent advice.

[335] Shall I go back to that original question?

[336] **William Powell:** Yes, could you comment on the initial question that Russell George asked?

[337] **Russell George:** I was going to add that it is a very good opportunity for you to perhaps respond to the last five minutes of the previous session.

[338] **Mr K. Jones:** There are various figures that are used in relation to the benefits of investment in infrastructure. The last report that I have quoted in my report is a study that shows that that cost benefit is about 2.84, in general, in infrastructure. An earlier study by the same organisation, but within a different context, showed it to be about 2.8. Our studies have shown that the variation can be as high—such as in the context of transport in Australia—as up to 14. So, a range of numbers can be used, and the range runs from 1.5, 2.5 and 2.8 up to about 10 or 14. All I say in my report is that our last 'State of the Nation' report, which is the flagship report of the Institution of Civil Engineers, in which we look at a range of topics, quoted 2.84, and I felt that that was the most applicable in this context.

[339] **William Powell:** Excellent. Mick Antoniwi is next.

[340] **Mick Antoniwi:** Thank you for your report. It is succinct and comes very much to the point on a number of issues. I would like to explore those with you and get those down on the record. You say in paragraph 3.1 of your report:

[341] 'there is a proven need for the provision of a new motorway'.

[342] Are you saying there that the only option is the new motorway, as proposed within the Welsh Government's plan, or are the options, such as those suggested by Professor Cole, an alternative? Do they fit within that option of dealing with the proven need?

[343] **Mr K. Jones:** No. In my view, and in the institution's view, there is a proven need for up-to-date, current, modern motorway access into Wales. We do not have that now, and we feel that there is a need for it, and a proven need. The proof is in the state of the nation report that I have quoted.

[344] **Mick Antoniwi:** However, in his evidence, Professor Cole said that he had been given

no reason, or was not aware of any specific analysis or evidence, that explained why the option that he was proposing, which involved the steelworks road and so on, had suddenly been removed. Are you aware of any evidence as to why that has been removed?

[345] **Mr K. Jones:** I cannot comment in detail, except to say that our view is that a motorway into Wales is needed, from England into Wales. It is our main corridor into Wales. One of the options, which Professor Stuart Cole has commented on, is, effectively, a grade separated trunk road alongside the existing sub-standard motorway. The existing motorway around Newport was never really designed properly—hindsight is wonderful. It has almost been designed, if you like, as the Newport northern inner bypass—something equivalent to Eastern Avenue in Cardiff. It is used locally around Newport as a way of getting from one house to the next. If you are taking your child to school, or if you are going shopping, you will use the motorway in Newport, to such an extent that the access from England into Wales and out again—our main economic corridor—is not available; it is too congested and it is over capacity.

[346] **Mick Antoniw:** Are you aware of any evidence, analysis or detailed work that has been done that establishes that in respect of those options?

[347] **Mr K. Jones:** The capacity at the moment is a real indicator in itself. There are existing capacity problems. There have been various measures to try to alleviate them in the short term, such as a managed motorway. They do not really work, and they will not work in time with the capacity that we have now. You only need a slight problem, such as someone braking a little hard, because it is so fragile, that there can be enormous tailbacks. This is not the message that we want to give to the rest of the world: that you cannot get into Wales.

[348] **Mick Antoniw:** I am sure that others will explore that, but I wanted to go on to another part of your evidence. In part 3, you state:

[349] ‘This has been supported by ICE Wales Cymru in the past and it is considered to strike a balance between the sometimes differing needs/objectives of transport infrastructure, business needs, economic regeneration, the needs of the travelling public’

[350] and so on. You will have heard some of the evidence about the fact that there has been no consideration, or there has been a separation, of the planning in respect of the integrated transport proposals, the metro and so on. Do you consider that separating out that element of transport planning and policy is a flaw in the consideration of this project?

[351] **Mr K. Jones:** I do not wish to criticise, but, if you look at my report, you will see that the creation of a new or replacement motorway around to the south allows opportunities to go back into the existing route and to carry out those very much needed local transport improvements.

[352] **Mick Antoniw:** Do you consider that in actually planning, consulting and preparing the plans around the three options that are put forward, it would be a pretty basic requirement that significant plans in respect of integrated transport, the metro, electrification and so on would need to form a significant and core part of those considerations?

[353] **Mr K. Jones:** I think that there should be a package that includes all of those, and that is part of my evidence.

[354] **Mick Antoniw:** The consequence of not considering them as a package means that you are actually only considering half of the relevant evidence and options, and you cannot come to a proper conclusion without doing that.

[355] **Mr K. Jones:** I do not agree. I think that there are opportunities there. If you give your go-ahead for the motorway scheme, the opportunity is there to allow better development around the junctions, to modify the junctions, to get better bus and other transport options, including taking into account electrification. I would question Professor Stuart Cole's figures. He is a fellow of our institution, and he is a friend of mine, but, nevertheless, I would really question a 15% reduction. I do not think, really, that you will get that amount of reduction with people travelling by train. It is not there.

12:00

[356] **Mick Antoniw:** Is it not a contradiction when you say that they should be taken together as a package, but that we should go ahead with one and then go on to consider how that may fit in later on? If they are to be considered as a package, that means that they complement each other and enable a better decision to be taken. The natural flow on from that is that, if you do not take them together, you may end up taking bad decisions, not getting value for money. Therefore, they must go hand in hand. Otherwise, you could well end up with a very expensive project that does not have a comprehensive approach to planning as regards transport and long-term needs.

[357] **Mr K. Jones:** No. I think that the motorway is a given and that the opportunity should be taken to address the other issues at the same time. It will allow the opportunity to develop around the existing junctions.

[358] **Mick Antoniw:** So, you do not think that they need to be taken as a package.

[359] **Mr K. Jones:** They do need to be taken together.

[360] **Mick Antoniw:** For what purpose?

[361] **Mr K. Jones:** The motorway itself is needed. You cannot have Wales falling backwards such that you are already curtailing development. If you were a developer and you had to decide to develop one side or the other of the Severn bridges, I do not think that, nowadays, you would decide to develop in Wales, because of the poor access. We need to improve it.

[362] **Mick Antoniw:** I will allow others to pursue that.

[363] **Antoinette Sandbach:** In your evidence, you do not look at the issues around cost, because, of course, detailed costings were not given and neither do you consider the environmental impacts. Have you looked at other infrastructure projects elsewhere in Wales, in terms of value for money, to compare with this one, in coming up with your evidence? I am thinking of the electrification of the north Wales main railway line, the dualling of the A40 to west Wales or, indeed, a bypass around Newtown.

[364] **Mr K. Jones:** Yes. In our 'State of the Nation' report on transport, we considered all of what you mentioned as required, but in terms of priority, we consider replacing the M4 as the first priority, because of the direct benefits and the hindering of development into the whole of Wales.

[365] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I am sorry, but there are no direct benefits in north Wales of a massive motorway that takes up an enormous amount of funding. Can you explain to me where, in your 'State of the Nation' report, you can demonstrate, on an evidence basis, direct benefits to north, mid or west Wales?

[366] **Mr K. Jones:** Okay. Certainly the benefits of the replacement M4 would directly link

into south-east Wales, south Wales and south-west Wales. We need to take the motorway further into south-west Wales, but that is not part of this evidence. I am not addressing what you mentioned about north Wales, because that is too far. I agree with you that there is no link there. There are other improvements, such as improvements to the A55, electrification of the north Wales and Valleys lines. So, no; I am not comparing one with the other.

[367] **Antoinette Sandbach:** In terms of your environmental expertise, I know that you state that you believe that there is a correct balance in the environmental expertise, but what actual environmental input has there been into your report? Are you able to explain why there was such a difference in position in the WelTAG reports from March to June of this year?

[368] **Mr K. Jones:** No, I cannot comment on that. However, I can say that, from the environmental and sustainability point of view, we must go back to the three pillars of sustainability—economic, environmental and social—and balance the three together. The Institution of Civil Engineers believes that the correct balance is there. It also allows us to go back, perhaps, to look at the SSSI to see whether there are any improvements. You can see that in my report; there are even possibilities of extending the SSSI, addressing all of the environmental issues. When I was listening to some of the evidence on screen, many of the questions that were raised were technical questions that can be addressed by the engineers designing and building this, taking due account of all of these matters.

[369] **Antoinette Sandbach:** The WelTAG reports consider the much more technical aspects of it, and you have stated that you are unable to comment on those. Is that because you have not seen them?

[370] **Mr K. Jones:** I have not seen them. I have talked about this now.

[371] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, your report is not based on the evidence that has been contained in more than two or three WelTAG reports that have been produced.

[372] **Mr K. Jones:** My evidence is based on what I have seen in the proposals.

[373] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I wonder if you could write to the committee to tell us which documents were considered. Is it just the consultation document?

[374] **Mr K. Jones:** It is just the consultation document, yes.

[375] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, you have not looked beyond the consultation document.

[376] **Mr K. Jones:** I have been involved over the years in the consultations and have taken them into account. What I have commented on today is what I was asked to do, and what the institution was asked to do: to comment on the consultation.

[377] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I am very grateful, thank you.

[378] **William Powell:** Thank you for clarifying that.

[379] **Joyce Watson:** May I just explore paragraph 2.6 of your paper? You talk about the 'fragile nature' of an existing through road. I suppose that we have all been affected at some point when there is an accident and the road gets shut, and the rest that goes with that. How do you see that being improved by this new proposal, which is one of three—they do not look much different to me? How do you see that not being the case in the future? I cannot get my head around that.

[380] **Mr K. Jones:** The problem that we have now is that, effectively, you have a peak

period, and it is going to merge into one, and from first thing in the morning until perhaps 8 p.m. it will be a constant stream under managed motorway conditions where everybody is travelling at perhaps 50 mph as a kind of plug moving along. It only takes one incident, whether that is somebody—I am sure that you know the term—rubber-necking, or looking at something, braking, something happening, or a puncture, and it will have terrible consequential back-up, but by the time you are in the back and you come to that, there is no evidence, there is no sign of any problem, and you have probably seen this yourself. It is so fragile now because it is at or above capacity. By constructing a new motorway that is designed properly to allow for capacity, then any problem or delay is a built-in factor of safety, such that they can accommodate it. This is why you have three lanes on the motorway and a hard shoulder—so that, if there is a problem, there is spare capacity there. What we have there now is over-capacity.

[381] **Joyce Watson:** If we had a serious accident, we would still only have one route. This is what I am trying to explore. If we went through with, say, Professor Cole's scheme, it would be possible, would it not, to take some of that traffic around?

[382] **Mr K. Jones:** No, because there is not enough capacity in the alternative route. It needs a new motorway to totally provide the capacity. I had the misfortune of being stuck in one of the fires in the Brynglas tunnels, and the whole of south Wales was gridlocked. There is not sufficient capacity in an upgraded docks access road to provide the full capacity of a correctly designed motorway to the south. You need that capacity. That road will still be there, and what you will find if there is not capacity is that diversions will take place and people will peel off and go everywhere. There is not the capacity there, even with that upgraded road.

[383] **Joyce Watson:** Professor Cole did talk to us, Chair, about a new technology that could say that journey times on the existing road would be whatever, and that journey times on his proposed route would be whatever, which seemed to be suggesting to us that there was room to take capacity away from this main route, the continuum, which is what was on the table. You are saying that you do not believe that that is the case.

[384] **Mr K. Jones:** No, I do not agree. I believe that we need a new access that will correctly address the issues that we have here.

[385] **William Powell:** Mr Jones, how can you substantiate the belief that is stated in your paper that the morning and evening traffic peaks will eventually merge when the statistics that we have received suggest that volumes of traffic have been pretty flat since about 2001-02, with no real suggestion that there will be a major upturn? What is the basis of that contention?

[386] **Mr K. Jones:** I think that we have seen, and are seeing, a steady increase in traffic. That is general, and is established. We have a peak time now in the morning and a peak time in the afternoon, and unless we do something to alleviate the additional traffic growth, those peaks will merge. That is my view.

[387] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, you do not think that the multimillion pound metro for south-east Wales will help to alleviate that.

[388] **Mr K. Jones:** It will help, of course it will, and I support the—

[389] **Llyr Gruffydd:** However, it is not sufficient.

[390] **Mr K. Jones:** It is not sufficient; you need motorway access into Wales.

[391] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I want to ask just a few questions around the statement in 3.4, which

has been touched on previously, where you say that it might be possible for the project to enhance the SSSI area. Could you elaborate, please?

[392] **Mr K. Jones:** Yes. The SSSI is quite rightly determined and established, and the proposed motorway would traverse that. If there is any concern or any need to look at the environmental measures that could or should be included as part of the overall package, then additional protection could enhance the environmental area, so that you would have a bigger and better SSSI. That is not prohibited; it is not stopped.

[393] **Llyr Gruffydd:** But how do you do that? When you say ‘enhanced’, it does not take into account the direct impact that the road will have on those sites.

[394] **Mr K. Jones:** You need to weigh up the impact, look at the measures that you need to take, and perhaps do a little more.

[395] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, what types of measures are we talking about?

[396] **Mr K. Jones:** There is no reason you cannot declare further SSSIs.

[397] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, you recognise that there will be damage to the existing site, and it is just a case of shunting the sites around, to alternative sites.

[398] **Mr K. Jones:** No. What you need to do is to make sure that the correct environmental mitigation measures take place, but as part of the proposals—

[399] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So what are they?

[400] **Mr K. Jones:** You go further than that.

[401] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So what are those mitigating measures?

[402] **Mr K. Jones:** It depends on what they are. If you are addressing the wildlife or the impact on air quality and all that, you need to correctly address them, but—

[403] **Llyr Gruffydd:** How do you do it? You say that it is possible for this to be done, but how?

[404] **Mr K. Jones:** Well, if, for example, you are going to areas of—

[405] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Peat.

[406] **Mr K. Jones:** Yes, there you are; let us talk about peat. You can correctly design on peat. There is no reason whatsoever you cannot design a road on peat. I myself, in my formative years, designed roads on peat. They can very successfully be designed and built. So, there is no loss to the peat; you just declare a wider area.

[407] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I fear that, in my book, it seems quite a sweeping statement to say that you would enhance the SSSI areas. Do you recognise that the hydrology of the Gwent levels is intricate, sensitive and fragile?

[408] **Mr K. Jones:** Yes.

[409] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Is it not unavoidable that there will be an impact when you develop on that scale?

[410] **Mr K. Jones:** I formerly used to look after the development in south Glamorgan of the Wentlooge areas, so I know in detail about the drainage there. In fact, I designed the highway that leads into the Wentlooge areas without any detriment whatsoever. If we can do that, as engineers, there are no problems whatsoever. It is a challenge, not a problem, as you can simply redesign them. When you design the drainage to run off from the highway, you make sure that it is catered for and allowed for, and you design to allow for the existing flora and fauna and without any detrimental impact. It is not a problem. I have done it before. I have done that myself in my life. I can comment as an independent, but I can also say that I have done it myself.

[411] **Llyr Gruffydd:** With all due respect, the evidence that we had from people who are more involved, let us say, in environmental interests directly contradicts what you are saying. For example, we have just heard from the RSPB that you cannot replicate the topography of that site. It seems to me that you are contradicting that totally.

[412] **Mr K. Jones:** What I am saying is that there are environmental issues that can be correctly addressed.

[413] **Llyr Gruffydd:** What you are saying is that, actually, the environment can be enhanced.

[414] **Mr K. Jones:** Yes, it can. You can go back and you can see that, as part of the overall package, you can enhance the environmental areas. There is no reason that the existing scope of the SSSI cannot be improved and widened.

[415] **Llyr Gruffydd:** What cost implications would that additional consideration have?

[416] **Mr K. Jones:** I do not know the details of that, but it can be costed. I do not have those costs today.

[417] **William Powell:** Julie Morgan is next.

[418] **Julie Morgan:** I will be very quick, because I have to leave, I am sorry.

[419] It seems to me that your belief that we need this new M4 motorway is based on the fact that we need a big road coming into Wales and that it is very important for the economic state of Wales. Do you have actual evidence that developers choose to go elsewhere because the road is as it is?

[420] **Mr K. Jones:** We have anecdotal evidence. We have talked to developers—house builders and developers involved in all kinds of construction—and they have told us that, yes, if there is a choice of developing either side of the border—and the bridge—then they will choose to develop in Bristol.

12:15

[421] **Julie Morgan:** Do you have any studies or research on that, rather than anecdotal evidence?

[422] **Mr K. Jones:** By talking to developers, such as the Civil Engineering Contractors Association, the Home Builders Federation, then yes. In fact, you will have seen comments in the press over the last weeks about house builders perhaps looking again at where they should develop in Wales. It is part of the study and the bigger picture—it is not just the motorway; it is the tolls and it is part of the overall package.

[423] **Julie Morgan:** The comments about house builders have nothing to do with the motorway or the tolls.

[424] **Mr K. Jones:** No, but when choosing where to live, you want to have access in and out of your house and to where you live. The institution believes that, as part of that development, we have to make sure that you have good highway access.

[425] **Julie Morgan:** How do you measure that—if I may ask it again—against the electrification of the main line coming in and the Valleys lines, which has already been referred to? Why would that not make the difference?

[426] **Mr K. Jones:** It is part of an overall package. The Institution of Civil Engineers fought long and hard for the electrification of the line right through to Swansea. I went to see the Secretary of State myself, who was totally in favour of it. It is part of the package that we want to see. We want to see the Valleys lines electrified and the north Wales valley lines. However, it is part of the overall package. We have a real problem here now with the current condition of the M4 that we must address now. It is easy to say that we should have done this 10 years ago. Let us not put ourselves into the position in 10 years' time of saying, 'We should have done it 10 years ago'. We need to do it now.

[427] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you. I am sorry, but I have to leave now.

[428] **William Powell:** I understand. Time is now against us. We have a final question from Russell George.

[429] **Russell George:** Do you believe that the costs identified in the consultation of between £830 million and £936 million are realistic?

[430] **Mr K. Jones:** Yes. In fact, I believe that it probably will come in slightly lower than that.

[431] **Russell George:** Thank you. Earlier this morning, the Federation of Small Businesses gave evidence. You are very much linking the need for the motorway into Wales to the economy, but the Federation of Small Businesses, which is representing businesses, had a very different view. In the evidence provided to us, it stated that such a large investment in one section of motorway in south-east Wales will not be beneficial for businesses across Wales, and it was concerned about other projects—and it did not identify any specifically, but there are the improvements to the A55 in north Wales, improvements in west Wales and, in the area that I represent, there is the Newtown bypass, which is a very important link north-south and east-west. So, what is your response to the view of the Federation of Small Businesses that it will take away from other important projects in Wales?

[432] **Mr K. Jones:** I fundamentally do not agree and I do not really understand its concerns. This is vital to the development of the economic growth of Wales. So, I really do not understand where it is coming from.

[433] **Russell George:** I very much agree with many of your views about the need to have good links into Wales. I agree with that because, in my constituency, I have businesses that are not moving in to mid Wales because of the poor transport network. However, the concern of some people, including the Federation of Small Businesses, is that if you put such a large amount of money into one project, it takes away from other projects. I very much agree with your view, but it will take away from links in north and mid Wales as well.

[434] **Mr K. Jones:** I do not agree. I believe that the priority is to do this road.

[435] **William Powell:** Mr Jones, your friend and colleague Stuart Cole said that this project was an engineer's dream and, in coming today, you have shared your enthusiasm, which has not necessarily been reflected by many of the previous witnesses in the evidence sessions that we have had. However, the committee and I are grateful to you for coming and sharing your views robustly. Thank you very much indeed. We shall doubtless be in touch in the future with regard to this, and we will have a transcript of today's session to share with you so that you have that for your records.

[436] **Mr K. Jones:** Thank you very much for your time. Diolch.

12:19

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[437] **William Powell:** Under this item, we have papers to note before we move into private session to evaluate the evidence that we have received. I see that you are happy to note them.

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod

Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

[438] **William Powell:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

[439] Are there any objections? I see that there are none.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 12:19.

The public part of the meeting ended at 12:19.

¹ The witness has offered the following clarifying statement: *The above statement may give a misleading impression of my intention. My intention was to state that 'from our conversations with NRW we are aware of its concerns of the scheme (on designated sites, hydrology et cetera) and that the consultation process would/will benefit from knowing NRW concerns'. The term 'horrendous scheme' was my interpretation not its words.*