

LLANDEILO & DISTRICT CIVIC TRUST SOCIETY
Report on a Public Meeting about Protection of Llandeilo from Heavy Traffic
in the Civic Hall, Llandeilo, on Thursday November 17th 2005
from notes by Gwilym Hughes

The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the L&DCTS, Dr. David Townsley-Hughes, who began by briefly outlining the efforts of the Llandeilo Civic Trust Society actively campaigning for over 30 years to get a solution to Llandeilo's trunk road traffic problems, since the Welsh Office issued its first report about a Choice of Routes for a Bypass, in 1974. He introduced the invited speakers, in turn, to make short presentations as follows :

1. **Dr. Matthew Griffiths, Director of Civic Trust Wales**, gave a brief review of the role of civic societies in community work.
2. **Mr. Ray Hooper, Head of Transport Wales's New Roads Unit**, summarised the Welsh Assembly's Babbie Report about Llandeilo Planning Objectives and pre-appraisal recommendations for Llandeilo District's traffic

Mr Hooper provided a brief history of the proposed Llandeilo Eastern Bypass including the Public Inquiry of 1993 during which the Inner eastern Bypass scheme was rejected. The issue has now become a Priority 2 for the Welsh Assembly Government and the current objective is to begin work on the preferred scheme in 2010. The recent study, conducted by Babbie consultants, has confirmed that a relief road is the only realistic solution to the current traffic problems. However, all the alternative routes for this relief road were problematic. The current proposal was to hold a public workshop in the near future, highlighting the problem areas and revisiting all the options including the 1993 scheme. After the workshop, a way forward will be decided and a preferred route will be considered. If the 1993 scheme is the preferred option, the issues raised at the public enquiry would be revisited.

3. **Mr Rhodri Glyn Thomas, our local Assembly member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr**, recognised that the heavy traffic levels are unacceptable for the local community. Mr Thomas confirmed that there was general Welsh Assembly Government acceptance of the realities of traffic problems facing Llandeilo . He was pleased that there did now appear to be some effort towards resolving the problems, and welcomed the proposed plan for public participation in the debate about choice of bypass route.

4. **Mr Richard Workman, Director of Technical Services for Carmarthenshire County Council** reported that the County Council also saw an urgent need for the bypass. He urged everyone to engage in the process being provided by the workshop. There needed to be a clear, coherent view coming forward from the community. He also reported the intention to de-trunk the Ammanford-Ffairfach road and trunk the Cross Hands-Ffairfach road. Air pollution was being continuously monitored and Llandeilo has been found to have some of the highest levels of air pollution of places in Carmarthenshire..

6. **County Councillor Ieuan Jones** reviewed Llandeilo Traffic problems and prospects of getting government action.

He informed the meeting that he had been promised six-monthly reports from the previous Minister for the Environment, Sue Essex. He was now writing regular letters to her successor, Andrew Davies. He was reassured to hear that the Welsh Assembly Government were now addressing the problem. He also wondered what impact the proposed change in trunking of the A-roads would have on the alternative options and also wondered about the likely effect of recent house building on the line of the 1993 scheme.

He also encouraged further expression of community views to help get decisions to implement action as soon as possible.

7. **Ms Christine Gwyther, Assembly Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire, Chairman of the Welsh Assembly's Economic and Transport Committee**, pointed out that any bypass proposal needed to have community backing and she urged people to attend the proposed workshop.

8. **General Discussion : questions to the Panel and comments of information and views of the audience**

Q = questions from the audience – not individually named
C = comment from the audience – not individually named
RH – R Hooper (Welsh Assembly Government)
IGJ = Cllr I G Jones
MR – Mike Rees
CG = C Gwyther
W = Mr Richard Workman (Carmarthenshire County Council)
RGT = Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
DT-H = David Townsley Hughes
GW = Geoffrey Williams

Notes in square brackets [] represent the writer's interpretation of what was being said.

(1) C – On behalf of the residents of Llanfihangel Yr Arth, I would like to express extreme concern about the proposed option that was being considered for a 'Outer Western Bypass'
RH – The maps that had been distributed were simply illustrating all possible alternative route corridors worthy of consideration. The only definitive route included was the one that had been rejected by the Public Inquiry in 1993 [the 'Inner Eastern Bypass'].

(2). Q – Will the proposed trunking of the Ffairfach to Cross Hands road effectively reduce the distance of the proposed 'Inner Eastern Bypass' route [the 1993 scheme]? What precisely were the objections raised by the Inspector to the 1993 scheme

RH – There were two principal concerns. The first problem was, in the area of the station; the scheme would have required the construction of a 12m high retaining wall, and access to the station would have been problematic. Secondly, the scheme would have exacerbated the flooding problems.

MR – the Welsh Office had subsequently identified solutions to both these problems.

RH – agreed that a solution could be found to alleviate the additional flooding problem.

(3). C – A particular problem has been parking in Rhosmaen Street. The parking regulations needed to be more strongly enforced. There was also a need for a Pelican Crossing in Rhosmaen Street.

IGJ - I fully agree with the need for a Pelican Crossing

(4) C – There needs to be a weight restriction on the bridge – at least in the short term

(5) D T-H – There is a need to consider the economic impact of restrictions on north-south traffic flow.

MR – there is no obvious alternative route that traffic can take other than passing through Llandeilo.

(6) Q – Why not move the railway?

RH – This had been considered.

(7) C – The wider perspective also needed to be considered. The construction of new roads, such as the proposed bypass, was not a sustainable long term energy option. The real issue facing the future was how to develop more sustainable lifestyles.

(8) Q – There was a need for much greater detail for the alternative routes that were being considered [not just broad corridors, as outlined in the Babtie Report]. Such information to be provided?

RH – All the routes that had been previously considered would be illustrated at the workshop, in as much detail as would be available.

(9) CG – It would be useful to have all the options that had previously been considered included in the range of alternatives.

(10) C – There was a need to be given advance notice of the details of all the options [ahead of the workshop].

(11) C – There was a concern about the proposed roundabouts in Ffairfach [part of the Inner Eastern Bypass route]

(12) IGJ – The trunking of the Ffairfach – Cross Hands road would take 5 years. Will the Transco pipeline further delay the scheme?

GW – Suggested that the Transco pipeline route would not be known in time for the workshop.

(13) Q – Once the workshop has been held, how will the subsequent decision be made?

RH – The views expressed at the workshop would be taken into account. If the preference is for the 1993 route [the Inner Eastern Bypass] then the timescale for construction is likely to be significantly shortened.

(14) Q – How will the ‘view’ be reached. How can we be sure that the ‘view’ will be reached in a democratic way? What form will the workshop take?

RH – the workshop is likely to be held over several days with all the options presented. There is likely to be a questionnaire.

(15) C – Unless a solution is found soon, especially to the problem of heavy goods vehicles, there is a strong likelihood that a child will be killed in the area of Bridge Street while walking to or from school. We desperately need some interim measures, such as a reduction in the speed limit and better railings.

RH – the situation in the town is under review.

MR – Issues of health and safety have been raised previously. The construction of railings has previously been rejected on the basis that they would restrict disabled access.

(16) Q – Where do Carmarthenshire County Council sit in all this?

W – CCC were well aware of the issues confronted by the public and by schoolchildren.

(17) CG – Environmental problems should not be seen as insoluble.

(18) RGT – Any solution will be problematic – but they can be addressed. Ultimately, the final decision will be taken by the Minister.

(19) Dr Matthew Griffiths and the Chairman commented on the legal responsibility of the government for public health and safety in Llandeilo.

Q – Is the government required to take urgent action under their legal obligations of health and safety legislation to protect Llandeilo from the hazards of heavy traffic, which they are permitting to build up unimpeded? Is the government obliged to pay compensation for traffic accidents or damage to health? The panel could not directly answer the questions, which should be followed up.

(20) C – Wheelchair access on Rhosmaen Street is currently a critical problem.

(21) MR – Please can we have further information on current pollution levels within the centre of town?

W – The information from the most recent pollution survey can be circulated.

(see attached air pollution report)

(22) Q – Can we have some further feedback on some of the questions and issues that have been raised at the meeting.

(23) CG – We could produce a joint response [?on behalf of the Assembly] and produce a proposal for how the workshop will be presented.

(24) C – The Disability Act needed to be addressed in relation to meeting the needs of disabled people for transport and pedestrian use of the roadways and pavements.

(25) Q - How is the workshop going to be advertised?

RH – Information will be circulated through posters and other publicity.

(26) The Chairman DT-H – asked the meeting whether they were in favour of having a Llandeilo bypass. There was a consensus among those present that a bypass was the favoured option for the protection of Llandeilo from heavy traffic. The Chairman thanked the Panel of Speakers for their contributions and everyone for their attendance and participation in discussion.