

I understand that you sit on the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee, which is presently collecting evidence for the State of Roads in Wales's inquiry. I hope that it is appropriate for me to send you this letter, where I specifically refer to the Caernarfon-Bontnewydd bypass scheme, and in particular the stages leading up to the Public Inquiry.

The behaviour of the WG leading up to the Inquiry was aloof and generally unfriendly towards the general public, who were to find themselves in a totally new, complex and threatening environment. The evidence of many objectors rested upon challenging WelTAG. There was significant evidence that WelTAG was not adhered to, and that many of the findings early on were erroneous. However, it was only at the Pre-Inquiry meeting that we were informed by the WG barrister that because of a complex legal argument such evidence could not be used, and that indeed WelTAG could not be mentioned in cross-examination. Objectors had spent considerable time and effort in producing their evidence. It needs to be questioned why objectors were not made aware of this ruling at a much earlier stage, which would have enabled them to prepare appropriately for the Inquiry, and even consider seeking legal advice. This was not within the spirit of a public meeting, and is a paradox to the very ethos of such an event.

From previous discussions and consultation, it would have been clear to the WG for some time that WelTAG was a difficult issue for them, but to withhold the above declaration until this point of the Public Inquiry was unfair to say the least. Surely this issue had arisen in other cases and previous Inquiries? The WG barrister's suggestion that WelTAG should have been challenged some 6 or 7 years earlier was beyond the realms of reality for ordinary members of the public, if only for financial reasons. There is no clarification as to what would have been the deadline when WelTAG matters could have been questioned in the Public Inquiry. Furthermore, the reason for such a long period of time between public consultations and the Public Inquiry surely lies with the WG. Though I have no proof of this, I understand that objectors had been advised early on by WG representatives that WelTAG could be challenged during a Public Inquiry. Despite their ruling however, the WG through their expert witnesses were still responding to objectors' comments on the early stages of WelTAG in their rebuttals, even those produced during the Public Inquiry. These responses are of course well documented. Why mislead objectors at such a late stage, knowing full well that the latter could not comment further on these matters during the Inquiry?

As the above comments suggest, the public were frustrated by the WG's late responses to queries and objections leading up to, and during the Inquiry. It seemed that the WG were barely able to respond with answers, nor prepare

additional papers in good time during the course of the Inquiry. It is probably documented that the Inspector was frustrated too by the late submission of documents from the WG.

Many of the objectors (if not all) were highly critical of the delay by the WG in responding to their objections. As an example, in my case I duly submitted my objections by the closing date in October 2016. The response of the WG was sent to me on 21 April 2017, days only before the Pre-Inquiry meeting of 25 April 2017. I received a very large volume of the WG's expert witnesses' proofs of evidence in mid-May. Consequently, I had to prepare my proof of evidence by the closing date of 23 May 2017. The WG's rebuttal to this was sent to me well after the Public Inquiry had started on 13 June 2017. This gave me very little time to prepare for my opportunity to cross-examine the expert witnesses, and be cross-examined, on 22 June 2017. Other objectors were less fortunate than me in that the WG responses were even later, giving them even less time to respond in return. The attitude of the WG towards, and responses to the public need to be questioned.

In this instance I believe the WG failed in the delivery of enhancement on the trunk road network in Wales. It follows therefore that what is being delivered is not value for money. Furthermore, the budget for the project was officially quoted as £124.7m at the time of the Public Inquiry, which has escalated significantly over a long period, and which far exceeds what has been quoted in the media. Surely the costs will have escalated considerably more in the event that the project may come to fruition some time in the future, arguably resulting in even less value for money.

It should be noted that objectors to the scheme out-numbered supporters by 8:1. Four supporters only represented businesses in attending and giving oral evidence at the Public Inquiry, none of them associated with a business within 20 miles of Caernarfon. If this was a gauge for the support from local businesses in Caernarfon, then it was telling, and casts a doubt as to whether the planned scheme is value for money for them.