

## REPORT TO THE CABINET

17 JANUARY 2017

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Dafydd Meurig

**Subject:** Changing Preferred Route - Improve Llanbedr Road/Access

**Contact Officer:** Dafydd Wyn Williams - Head of Regulatory Department

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### Decision sought

Not to protect the original route for the Llanbedr by-pass and support the new access road scheme in the area.

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### Local member's views

I've held discussion with members of Llanbedr Community Council regarding the matter and they have asked me to note that it was not possible for them to support extinguishing the original route for the Llanbedr bypass until there is guarantee that the proposed new scheme receives planning permission.

Once planning permission has been received it will be possible to re consider releasing the old scheme.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 For many years now, the route for a by-pass to the village of Llanbedr has been protected from other types of development. The original route was protected by former County Councils in their Development Plans and, more recently, by the Gwynedd Structure plan.
- 1.2 The reason for protecting the route originally was in order to comply with guidelines to prepare Development Plans after the Second World War, and the need to identify where would be possible to build by-passes to facilitate the development of the local economy. By today, as there have been substantial changes in highway construction standards, the suitability of the current route to create a new road is dubious.
- 1.3 In 2012, Llanbedr Airport, which now trades as the Snowdonia Airspace Centre, became part of the Snowdonia Enterprise Zone. It was identified very early on that transport links were one of the obstacles for developing the Enterprise Zone. This was mainly as heavy vehicles found it difficult or, at times, impossible to turn off the highway in the village of Llanbedr.

- 1.4 Although a by-pass route has already been established and that it could overcome some of the access problems, it was believed that there was a need to re-examine plans with the specific aim of improving transport links to the airport. Substantial work has been undertaken to consider different options to meet the need, as well as a number of consultation sessions with the community.
- 1.5 Work to consider different options was undertaken by using an evaluation process known as WelTAG. Simply, WelTAG is a set of guidelines for the evaluation and planning of Transport schemes. The guidelines were developed by Welsh Government, with the intention of them being used for every transport strategy and a plan which promotes, or requires funding from Welsh Government. The WelTAG documents are formal background documents to this report and are available for inspection if required.
- 1.6 This work resulted in recommending a new access road in the area as demonstrated in schedule B. It is noted that this road also creates a by-pass for the village.

#### **Summary of the background - timeline**

- 1.7 The former route, which is approximately 1 mile long, was protected in 1953. While most of the route crosses agricultural land, about a third runs through the northern end of the village.
- 1.8 In 1971, land was purchased in the Llanbedr area. The vast majority of the land has been sold but a piece of land was retained as the intention to create a new by-pass in the area was identified.
- 1.9 A public consultation on the route was held in 1992 to decide whether or not the protected route was the best under the circumstances at the time. However, as local government reorganisation was on the horizon, nothing was done with the outcome.
- 1.10 In 2006, it was decided to retain Llanbedr's protected route with an intention to re-assess the need to retain it for the future.
- 1.11 In 2012, Welsh Government established Enterprise Zones. The aim of the Enterprise Zones is to create the best possible conditions for businesses to prosper, with every area focussing on specific sectors. As part of the Snowdonia Enterprise Zone, two sites were identified, namely the Trawsfynydd Site and the Snowdonia Airspace Centre.
- 1.12 The Snowdonia Airspace Centre is located on a coastal peninsula. This site has a separate airspace, which is unique in Britain. It has three landing paths, a Maintenance, Repair and inspection area, a Remote Controlled Air Vehicle System, and a business park which is committed to Research and Development Technology and industrial uses. The site is also one of six chosen locations for the UK's first Spaceport.

- 1.13 In 2014, a WelTAG report was commissioned to establish the objectives and to examine different options to improve infrastructure and access to the Snowdonia Airspace Centre. This work involved consultation with the local communities.

## **2 OBJECTIVES AND OPTIONS**

- 2.1 The WelTAG study was completed to research potential transport access improvements for a part of the Snowdonia Enterprise Zone, namely the Snowdonia Airspace Centre.

- 2.2 In order to address transport problems in the area, the following Transport Planning Objectives (TPO) study was established;

- Reduce traffic congestion on the Mochras Road junction / A496
- Reduce the negative impact of traffic on the community of Llanbedr
- Improve transport connectivity to and from the Snowdonia Airspace Centre
- Improve efficiency and reliability of all transport to and from the Snowdonia Airspace Centre
- Improve safety for all passengers in Llanbedr and along Mochras Road
- Improve access for heavy vehicles to and from the Snowdonia Airspace Centre
- Improve transportation opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists in Llanbedr and along Mochras Road
- Reduce the impact of transport improvements on local environmental and heritage features
- Create infrastructure that can withstand local impacts of climate change, especially an increase in future flooding incidents.

- 2.3 The solutions noted during the Planning stage of WelTAG have been put together to produce options that have been consulted upon and evaluated in more detail as part of the WelTAG Evaluation process. The public's contribution had been included at different stages of the WelTAG process, such as noting local transport problems and restrictions and evaluating options.

- 2.4 The following options, which are elaborated further upon in Schedule C, have been evaluated against the TPO and the Welsh Impact Areas in terms of economy, environment and society, as well as the acceptability of the public and stakeholders, financial affordability and technical and operational feasibility:

**Option 1:** Provide two new link roads that connect Mochras Road to the north of the A496 and to the south of Llanbedr.

**Option 2:** A by-pass to the west of Llanbedr (between the A496 and the railway), with a part of Mochras Road open to all traffic between its junction and the A496 and the junction of the new by-pass.

**Option 3:** The Llanbedr By-pass that follows the route of the previous by-pass which was announced in 1992.

**Option 4:** The Llanbedr By-pass from the A496 from the southern side to Llanbedr, then following the railway route and track to the north from Mochras Road.

**Option 5:** Better parking facilities and double yellow lines in Llanbedr (which would be implemented jointly with options 1 - 4), and;

**Option 6:** Do nothing and continue to maintain the current situation.

### **Outcomes of the WelTAG Evaluation**

- **Options 1, 3, 4 and 6** are not being recommended for any further assessment as a result of the substantial disadvantages associated with them.
- **Option 2** is considered to be the best potential route which also offers the greatest contribution towards achieving the TPO which are associated with Options 1, 3 and 4; Therefore, it should be researched further with a view to defining the alignment of an optimum route.
- **Option 5** should be considered in more detail, jointly with Option 2.
- Once the use of the airport will be confirmed, an assessment of potential impacts (positive and negative) on the local economy of Llanbedr and the nearby area should be completed.

## **4. RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 Remove the former protected route for the Llanbedr by-pass

4.2 Approve the new Plan as the selected route for the access road to the airfield and a by-pass for Llanbedr

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### **Views of the statutory officers**

#### **The Chief Executive:**

*"It is clear from the report that the history on this issue is long and complex. However, the recommendation in the report offers a way forward that can be approved. "*

#### **The Monitoring Officer:**

*No comments with regard to propriety*

#### **The Head of Finance Department:**

*Nothing to add with regards to financial propriety on the options, but I note it will require significant investment from the Welsh Government to realize the road improvement plan in Llanbedr.*

## **Appendices**

**Schedule A**- Route for a by-pass that is currently protected

**Schedule B** - Llanbedr New Access Road Plan

**Schedule C** - Options that have been assessed in the WeITAG report