

ITEM

COMMITTEE:	Council Board
DATE:	20 March 2007
TITLE:	Review of Trunk Roads
RECOMMENDATION:	To accept the recommendation
PURPOSE:	To respond to the Welsh Assembly Government's Proposals for Trunking/De-Trunking in Gwynedd
AUTHOR:	Strategic Director of Environment
PORTFOLIO LEADER:	R H Wyn Williams

1) INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2002 the Welsh Assembly Government conducted a review of trunk roads in Wales. The review was to establish whether the existing trunk road network fulfilled the requirements for an effective, efficient and sustainable transport system to support local communities and the creation of prosperous economy. Several proposals were suggested which involved trunking specific county roads and de-trunking sections of the existing trunk road network.
- 1.2 A report was presented to the Environment Committee and Council Board in November 2002 and the Council's response to the review was presented to the Welsh Assembly Government.
- 1.3 Following the consultation exercise, the Welsh Assembly Government submitted their proposals and for Gwynedd these were:-

Road No.	Section Affected	Approx. Length (km)
A470	Section between Gellilydan and Blaenau Ffestiniog to be detrunked	10
A496	Section between Maentwrog and Blaenau Ffestiniog to be trunked	8
A497	Section between Porthmadog and Pwllheli to be trunked	21
A499	Section between Llanwnda and Pwllheli to be trunked	28

Their proposal was reported for information to the Environment Committee in January 2004 and it was explained that the Welsh Assembly Government had further requested a report on the issues and costs associated with each proposal.

1.4 It appears that following the conclusion to the Review being made by Welsh Assembly Government, the matter was not pursued due to other priorities and it was not until November last year that the Welsh Assembly Government reopened dialogue and requested the Council's formal views on the trunking/de-trunking proposals.

1.5 The purpose of this report is to obtain a formal decision from the Board on the proposal detailed on Section 1.3 above.

2) THE COUNCIL'S INITIAL RESPONSE

2.1 When the Environment Committee considered the matter in 2002, their recommendation to the Board was as follows:-

A496 – Trunk from Maentwrog to Blaenau Ffestiniog

Agreed subject to an improvement to the A496/B4391 Allt Goch Junction.

A470 – De-Trunk From Gellilydan to Blaenau Ffestiniog

Agreed subject to:

- (i) that the Tan y Manod schemes be fulfilled;
- (ii) that a de-trunking financial package be made available in order to carry out environmental improvements to the highway at Llan and Blaenau Ffestiniog;

A499 – Trunk from A487 Llanwnda to Pwllheli

No recommendation was made as there was insufficient information in the consultation document regarding the financial arrangements for the future or certainty about the important schemes programmed on these roads.

A497 – Trunk from A487 at Porthmadog to Pwllheli

No recommendation was made as there was insufficient information in the consultation document regarding the financial arrangements for the future or certainty about the important schemes programmed on these roads.

2.2 The Board's resolution in 2002 included not to express an opinion on the proposals described in 2.1 above without receiving more information about the detailed arrangements for transferring funds from the Authorities to the Assembly where roads were to become trunk roads.

3) DEVELOPMENT SINCE 2002

3.1 Since making the response in 2002, substantial funding has been secured from the Welsh Assembly Government in the form of transport grant to undertake improvements to the A497 and A499. The improvement between Llanystumdwy and Abererch was completed in 2006 and the site clearance work and diversion of statutory apparatus has been initiated on the section of the A499 between Aberdesach and Llanaelhaearn. Had this commitment been made at the time of the review, the Environment Committee's recommendations and the Board's decision may have been definitive.

3.2 There are numerous considerations which need to be addressed before concluding whether or not to support the Welsh Assembly Government proposals. The main financial consideration is the loss (or gain) of grant through the Standard

Spending Assessment (SSA) as a direct result of the transfer of a county road to trunk road status (or vice versa). The secondary financial consideration is the reduction (or increase) in expenditure on county road maintenance etc., likely to arise from the same change of status. The non-financial consideration is the expected level of workload arising from the change and the staffing implications arising from this change. Further additional non-financial consideration is the impact of upgrading the network from county to trunk status.

4) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 In 2009/10 the SSA for highway maintenance will be based on “enhanced population”, “traffic flow” and weighted road length (3.2 x length of class 1+1.0 x length of other county roads). Currently the SSA is based 50/50 on “population” and “weighted road length” (2.7 x length of class 1 + 1.0 x length of other county roads). During 2007/08 and 2008/09 a “damping” arrangement will apply.

4.2 For street lighting, the SSA is based on the number of lighting units on all county roads and there are no proposals to change this in the near future.

4.3 For comparison purposes the new SSA (09/10) for highway maintenance is used together with the latest available figures for Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) service allocation and service IBAs. The fact that the WAG additional £15m grant funding for highway maintenance may be affected by the proposed trunking changes is also taken into consideration.

4.4 A total length of 57km would be trunked under the WAGs proposal and 10k de-trunked. The estimated financial effect of the decrease (increase) in the network can be summarised as follows (it has been assumed that the A470 de-trunked section is re-classified as Class 1 road):-

	£000
Estimated Average savings on maintenance cost	(304)
Reduction in SSA and loss of grant	<u>261</u>
NET saving	(35)

Whilst the net effect appears to be a saving of £35,000, there may be a possible one off for at least 3 years loss of additional road maintenance grant of £64,000.

4.5 There may be additional work through the Trunk Road Agency to the value of £335,000. The following assumptions have been made when calculating the above figures:-

- ♦ Gwynedd would remain responsible for the day to day maintenance of the trunk road network;
- ♦ Gwynedd works unit could expect to carry out approximately 30% of the work on the trunked sections.
- ♦ The level of trunk road expenditure will be similar to other rural single carriageway trunk roads and hence more than the current class 1 spending level.

- 4.6 Additional to the possible income referred to in 4.5 above, the Council may be successful in targeting further investment by the Welsh Assembly Government in the trunked sections. The desirable works on the A497 and A499 would amount to around £8m and the estimated expenditure on the A470 and A496 around £1.2m and £4.5m, respectively. This could bring significant workload for the Highway and Maintenance Division, the Consultancy Service and the works unit.

5) NON-FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 There could be advantages to the Council as an employer especially in light of the financial difficulties facing the Authority over the next 3 years and possibly beyond, to transfer some personnel from the county highways staff onto trunk road work, if additional workload is secured from the Agency. Such staff could even be transferred into the North Wales Trunk Road Agency.
- 5.2 There are advantages and disadvantages of trunking the A497 and A499. If they were trunk roads then it could raise the profile of Pwllheli and the Llyn Peninsula. Pwllheli would be signed further afield on the trunk road network. The trunk roads would be maintained to a higher standard than Class 1 routes and the possibility of undertaking improvements would be higher because of the availability of funding within the Welsh Assembly Government.
- 5.3 The downside to trunking the A496, A497 and A499 could be the loss of maintenance and management of the route. There would be a dependency on the Welsh Assembly Government through its Agency, to administer the principal network.
- 5.4 If the detrunked section of the A470 is classified below Class 1 status then this will result in an additional loss in the SSA settlement and the local businesses might view this as downgrading the town as a shopping centre with possible loss of passing trade. This however needs to be weighted against the opportunity of using de-trunking money to improve the street scene and introduce environmental improvements along this section of the highway. The traffic volume should reduce on the road as a result of de-trunking and thereby improving safety for pedestrians.

6) CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The financial loss of £29,000 in the short term, takes into consideration the reduction in the additional grant committed by the Welsh Assembly Government over the next years. If however Gwynedd secures additional work through the Trunk Road Agency then there could be a financial benefit of accepting the Welsh Assembly Government's proposal. Since Gwynedd are the lead authority for the North Wales Trunk Road Agency, it is hoped that the anticipated level of workload will be forthcoming. It should however be recognised that the continuation of the workload beyond the next 4 year period could be jeopardised if the Agency work was to transfer from Gwynedd's control.
- 6.2 It is vital that a firm commitment can be given by the Welsh Assembly Government to carry out improvements to the trunked sections before Gwynedd

agrees to their proposal. A similar commitment would need to be given to bring up to standard the structures, cellars, street lighting, columns, pavement and road condition etc., on the A470 de-trunked section. In addition, one would hope to secure funding for environmental improvements.

- 6.3 Additional work from the Trunk Road Agency could allow the transfer of staff onto income generation functions which would assist the Directorate during the present difficult financial climate.
- 6.4 The level of funding to maintain and improve the highway network is higher for trunk roads than county roads.
- 6.5 A trunk road status could have a positive economic impact on Pwllheli and the Lleyn Peninsula.
- 6.6 Reducing traffic flows and enhancing the street scene will improve the environment and road safety in Llanffestiniog and Blaenau Ffestiniog.
- 6.7 Weighing up the benefits and disbenefits of the Welsh Assembly Governments' proposal, it is evident that re-classifying the A496, A497 and A499 to trunk road status and de-trunking the A470 will be in the Council's interest as a highway authority. As for the timing of the changes, this has yet to be discussed with the Welsh Assembly Government.

7) **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 The Board is requested to:-

(i) approve the Welsh Assembly Government proposals to trunk the A496 between Maentwrog and Blaenau Ffestiniog, the A497 between Porthmadog and Pwllheli and the A499 between Llanwnda and Pwllheli and to de-trunk the A470 between Gellilydan and Blaenau Ffestiniog subject to the conditions of transfer being agreeable to the Council.

and

(ii) to authorise the Strategic Director of Environment in consultation with the Senior Portfolio Leader, the appropriate heads of service and Head of Legal Service to agree conditions with the Welsh Assembly Government for the de-trunking and trunking of the above roads.

8) **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- ◆ WAG – Review of Trunk Roads 2002
- ◆ WAG – Review of Trunk Roads, Report of Consultation, Final Report (January 2003)
- ◆ Report to the Environment Committee 14 November 2002
- ◆ Minutes of the Environment Committee 14 November 2002
- ◆ Report to the Council Board 26 November 2002
- ◆ Minutes of the Council Board 26 November 2002

- ◆ Report to the Environment Committee 22 January 2004
- ◆ Report to the Environment Committee 22 January 2004

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A. Views of the Local Member:

B. The Views of the Statutory Officers:

1. Chief Executive:

“As is evident from the report, there are wide ranging considerations affecting these decisions. On the whole, the recommendation submitted is sensible in terms of improving the road network and regulating any possible financial loss and advantages of any opportunities arising from the change.

No doubt the Board will give special consideration to the observations of the local members”.

2. Monitoring Officer:

"Nothing to add regarding propriety."

3. Chief Finance Officer:

"Contained here is an attempt to assess the financial effects and implications to the Council, the Assembly's proposals for changing the status of some roads, that is, county roads and trunk roads, from the current status.

Based on the assessment of the savings made on the costs of maintaining county roads and the associated loss in the settlement, it is estimated that there is a net loss, but in all purpose, it appears that the general effect is approximately cost neutral. However, in situations like this where a reduction appears in the settlement level, it means a direct loss of resource which afterwards naturally, is a matter for the Welsh Assembly Government to decide (through the Trunk Road Agency) to redirect similar sums back to Gwynedd”.

C. Background Papers:

CH. Policy Implications:
