

## **WELSH GOVERNMENT**

### **A465 HEADS OF THE VALLEYS DUALLING SECTION 3: BRYNMAWR TO TREDEGAR**

The Neath to Abergavenny Trunk Road (A465) (Abergavenny to Hirwaun Dualling and Slip Roads) and East of Abercynon to East of Dowlais Trunk Road (A4060), Cardiff to Glan Conwy Trunk Road (A470) (Connecting Roads) Order 1999, (Brynmawr to Tredegar) (Amendment) Order 201\_\_

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## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Welsh Ministers are responsible for trunk roads in Wales. The A465 Heads of the Valleys trunk road is a route of strategic importance linking south and west Wales to the Midlands and the north of England in addition to serving local communities.

The Line Order for upgrading the 40 km length of the A465 between Abergavenny in Monmouthshire and Hirwaun in Rhondda Cynon Taff to dual carriageway standard was made in 1999 following a Public Local Inquiry in 1998. The scheme consists of a phased construction programme made up of the following six sections.

- Section 1: Abergavenny to Gilwern
- Section 2: Gilwern to Brynmawr
- Section 3: Brynmawr to Tredegar
- Section 4: Tredegar to Dowlais Top
- Section 5: Dowlais top to A470 Junction
- Section 6: A470 Junction to Hirwaun

Since the making of the Line Order in 1999 Sections 1 and 4 have been completed.

The Welsh Ministers have published proposals for improving Section 3 of the A465 trunk road between Brynmawr and Tredegar in the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent. The overall length of the scheme is approximately 7.8 km. Approximately 4.7km of the proposed scheme departs from the line of the existing trunk road passing to the north of Ebbw Vale.

## **2. THE WELSH MINISTER'S PROPOSALS**

The published proposals comprise of:

- (a) a draft Order to amend the 1999 Line Order in respect of the new length of trunk road between Brynmawr and Tredegar, its new slip roads, and the length of existing trunk road which would cease to be trunk road.
- (b) a draft Side Roads Order to stop up some lengths of superseded trunk road and to stop up, improve or alter other roads, footpaths, cycle routes, byways, bridleways and private accesses, construct new highways and provide new private means of access, and
- (c) a draft Compulsory Purchase Order, which provides for the acquisition of all the land and rights required for the construction, operation and maintenance of the new trunk road and its associated side road proposals.

An Environmental Statement and a Statement to Inform an Appropriate Assessment of the potential likely effects of the scheme on the Usk Bat Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC) have been prepared in association with the above Orders and are available for inspection.

Subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures and the availability of finance, it is intended to start construction in late 2012 and would take approximately two years to complete.

## **3. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The existing single three lane carriageway was constructed in the 1960s with generally two lanes in the uphill direction. Traffic flows are restricted by the road width, the at-grade nature of the junctions and the limited opportunities for safe overtaking. In many areas the alignment of the existing road results in poor visibility.

Accident concentrations occur on some sections of the existing road such as the Nant-y-Bwch roundabout and the A4046 Ebbw Vale roundabout. Forecasts of traffic growth, which take into account development in the vicinity of the road, indicate that traffic levels could reach the capacity of this section of the route by the year 2015. If nothing is done traffic congestion and traffic-related problems, including collisions, are likely to increase.

## **4. THE ENVIRONMENT**

An Environmental Statement has been prepared and is published with the draft Orders. It includes a Non-Technical Summary which is also available as a separate document.

The proposed scheme has been designed to minimise the anticipated adverse environmental factors from its construction and operation, whilst still considering other factors such as road safety, engineering design and cost. The Environmental Statement reports on the findings of a detailed environmental assessment carried out to assess the likely effects the scheme would have on the environment of the area.

## **5. CONSULTATION INCLUDING PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Local Planning Authorities and Statutory Environmental Bodies have been consulted and an Environmental Liaison Group set up. This brings together representatives from Cadw, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Environment Agency (Wales), Countryside Council for Wales, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, Gwent Wildlife Trust, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Sustrans.

The public have been informed by a series of Public Information Exhibitions, supported by newsletters and a Scheme website.

Landowners and persons whose properties or private accesses would be directly affected by the Scheme have been visited and have been made aware of the proposals.

## **6. THE NEED FOR THE SCHEME**

The A465 Heads of the Valleys Road is recognised in the National Transport Plan (March 2010) as a strategically important route. On an international level, it forms part of the Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T). On a national level, it is the strategic link between the industrial centres of the midlands and south west Wales as well as providing an alternative to the M4 during periods of congestion. On a local level it provides an east-west link across the northern end or “heads” of the South Wales coalfield valleys between Abergavenny in the east and Neath in the west where it joins the M4 motorway.

The existing A465 carries a high number of vehicles and the unimproved sections do not meet current design standards.

The improvement of the A465 is seen by the Welsh Government as an important part of its programme for economic regeneration providing access to jobs, safer reliable journeys and improved resilience for the trunk road network in south east Wales. It would also provide opportunity to reduce community severance where a section of the existing A465 would be down-graded from a trunk road to a local road.

## **7. SCHEME OBJECTIVES**

These proposals support the objectives of the Welsh Government set out in the Wales Transport Strategy April 2008, the National Transport Plan March 2010 and the People, Places, Future: Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update.

The over-arching objective is to improve the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road between Brynmawr and Tredegar from a single 3-lane carriageway to a dual 2-lane carriageway in accordance with the made Line Order [as amended] and its associated Environmental Statement and to deliver the scheme to programme and budget.

In addition to the Welsh Government’s policy objectives, the scheme specific objectives are:

- To maintain the current level of service and to carry out improvements.
- To reduce journey times for private and commercial road users.
- To facilitate economic regeneration.

- To bypass congested towns and villages.
- To enhance road safety and reduce casualties.
- To do all this with proper care for the environment.
- To deliver a scheme that is sustainable.
- To promote cycling and walking and provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles.
- To deliver a scheme which minimises future maintenance and disruption to the network.
- To reduce journey time variability and improve resilience on the A465.
- To use the A465 to manage traffic effectively and improve resilience on the strategic road network in South East Wales.

## 8. THE PROPOSED SCHEME

The scheme would extend between Brynmawr and Tredegar for 7.8km. It would depart from the existing A465 road line for 4.7km from the highest point north of Brynmawr to Dukestown Cemetery at Tredegar. The new road would be a dual carriageway with three grade separated junctions and one at grade junction.

It would include a climbing lane from Brynmawr roundabout up to the highest point (Ebbw Vale East Junction).

Junctions would be provided at:

- i. Ebbw Vale East: for access to and from Ebbw Vale from the east,
- ii. Rassau Industrial Estate: for access to and from Rassau Industrial Estate from the east,
- iii. Ebbw Vale West: for access to and from Ebbw Vale and Rassau Industrial Estate from the West
- iv. Tredegar: for access to and from Tredegar, Nant-y-Bwch and Waundeg.

At each junction, drivers on the A465 would pass through uninterrupted with bridges separating the junction slip roads from the A465.

The scheme would cross the Sirhowy River on a new bridge. The Rivers Clydach and Ebbw would be crossed by earth embankment with culverts to accommodate the waterways and accesses below.

Llangynidr Road, Alan Davies Way and Crown Avenue would pass over the scheme on new bridges. New underpasses would be provided at Rassau and in front of Blaen-y-Cwm reservoir. Walls to retain the ground and reduce land take would be built at Dukestown cemetery and Tredegar Junction.

As part of the legacy of the Scheme, a rest area would be provided at Garn Lydan. This would include extended parking, a view point and associated interpretation materials, visual screen mounding and ecological enhancement. There would be views towards the Valleys Regional Park to the south and Brecon Beacons National Park to the north.

The carriageway would have a low noise emitting surface with additional skid resistant surfacing on the approach to certain junctions. Safety barriers, road

markings and signage would all be provided in accordance with current design standards.

The scheme would affect a number of public rights of way and routes used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. During construction, some would require stopping up and where practicable diversions would be put in place. Following completion, public rights of way would be restored and grade separated crossing points would be provided.

At Tredegar Junction, controlled pedestrian and cycle facilities would afford safe routes for walking and cycling between the Waundeg area and Nant-y-Bwch, including Bryn Bach Primary School. A new section of footway alongside the A4048 in front of the petrol service station would complete the safe walking route.

National Cycle Route 46 across the River Sirhowy on the 'Nine Arches' viaduct would be maintained. New cycleways would be provided at Crown Business Park, Rassau and Carno to assist Sustrans' plans for the wider cycle network.

Road lighting would be provided at roundabouts only. Existing lighting along the A465 would be removed after construction of the scheme.

## **9. THE DRAFT ORDERS**

The Welsh Ministers do not require planning permission to carry out the proposed scheme. The powers to construct the new sections of trunk road and to de-trunk parts of the existing trunk road would be obtained through 'The Neath to Abergavenny Trunk Road (A465) (Abergavenny to Hirwaun Dualling and Slip Roads) and East of Abercynon to East of Dowlais Trunk Road (A4060), Cardiff to Glan Conwy Trunk Road (A470) (Connecting Roads) Order 1999, (Brynmawr to Tredegar) (Amendment) Order 201-' now published in draft.

The Welsh Ministers are now empowered as the Highway Authority to undertake improvements to the existing trunk road under section 62 of the Highways Act 1980. The power to stop up, alter and improve highways, footpaths and private means of access and to construct new highways, public footpaths and private means of access would be obtained through 'The Neath to Abergavenny Trunk Road (A465) (Abergavenny to Hirwaun Dualling and Slip Roads) and East of Abercynon to East of Dowlais Trunk Road (A4060), Cardiff to Glan Conwy Trunk Road (A470) (Connecting Roads) (Brynmawr to Tredegar) (Side Roads) Order 201-' now published in draft.

In drawing up the proposals, regard has been given to the interference with the rights of all those with interests in the order lands and who would otherwise be affected by the scheme.

A draft Compulsory Purchase Order will be published shortly and this would enable the Welsh Ministers to acquire the land and rights over the land, necessary for the proposals.