



# OUR APPROACH

OCTOBER 2019

# Chair's foreword

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The First Minister of Wales has asked this Commission to consider all the issues relating to congestion on the M4 in South East Wales and provide recommendations on potential measures to tackle it.

I wholeheartedly recognise the scale and importance of this task, the history of its past consideration and the weight of feeling of those with an interest in the issues.

A Terms of Reference for the Commission was provided by Welsh Ministers in June 2019. I have formed an excellent team of Commissioners and this document sets out the approach we shall adopt in preparing our recommendations.

## Lord Burns

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.  
This document is also available in Welsh.

## Introduction

1. Welsh Ministers have set the Commission a remit to consider the full range of issues relating to congestion on the M4 in South East Wales and provide recommendations on interventions to tackle it. The Terms of Reference are set out in Annex A.

2. The Commission believes transport to be a vital part of a functioning and thriving society and economy – allowing people to access services and widen their lives. The transport network facilitates some of the most important parts of our lives, be it travelling to work, school, hospital or place of leisure.

3. There is clearly an acute transport problem which is affecting the lives of people who live, work and travel in South East Wales. Given the complexity of the issue, the impact of the current road and the impacts of the potential solutions, we intend to take a broad approach to addressing the issue.

4. Our vision as a Commission is to recommend a set of measures which will alleviate congestion in a sustainable way that supports the wider well-being of people who live, work and travel in the area.

## Members

5. The following members have been appointed to the Commission:

- Lord Burns (Chair)
- James Davies
- Stephen Gifford
- Jen Heal
- Peter Jones
- Beverly Owen (Newport representative)
- Lynn Sloman
- Elaine Seagriff

6. The inclusion of a specific Newport representative reflects the particular impact of the issues on the city of Newport. The Newport Representative will have access to all the Commission's work and will participate in discussions, but not decision-making.

7. The Commission will be supported by a small secretariat of Welsh Government civil servants, led by a Senior Civil Servant and managed separately from the Welsh Government's Transport Department.

## Principles

8. The Commission has agreed the following principles to guide its work. We will:

- approach the problem afresh, considering the root causes of congestion;
- be evidence-based;
- explore options across all forms of transport, including integration between modes;
- not limit ourselves to the conclusions of previous studies of the problem;
- not evaluate the costs and benefits of a replacement section of motorway south of Newport (the 'Black Route' M4 project), or compare measures to that project;
- involve a diverse range of people in our work, including those that live, work, commute or have an interest in the area; and
- operate collaboratively and transparently, providing regular updates on our work.

## Structure of our work

9. The Commission will structure its work around six broad phases:

- I. Understanding the problem
- II. Setting objectives
- III. Establishing a baseline
- IV. Identifying options
- V. Assessing options
- VI. Producing recommendations

10. This approach is consistent with the Welsh Government's Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) process. This will also align the Commission's work with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and UK Treasury Business Case guidance.

### Phase I: understanding the problem

11. We will begin with a thorough and wide-ranging exploration of congestion on the M4 in South East Wales, including the extent to which congestion is symptom of broader problems. The Commission intends to understand the precise nature of the problem and its root causes, which is likely to extend to matters beyond transport.

12. This process will be evidence led. Much evidence already exists; it needs to be corralled, analysed and summarised. We will also identify opportunities for new research evidence and may commission it.

13. We will involve stakeholders to contribute to the evidence base. This extends to both representative bodies and members of the public. In particular, we want to learn and listen to the experiences of people who travel regularly in the area.

14. Wherever possible, evidence and reporting will be made available publicly.

### Phase II: setting objectives

15. Phase I will allow the Commission to set out the problem as it understands it. From this, we will produce objectives that we think potential interventions for alleviating congestion should aim to meet.

16. In doing so, we will have a strong regard for improving the efficiency and quality of the transport system in South East Wales. Given the Welsh context, it will be important for our objectives to reflect the principle of sustainable development.

### Phase III: establishing a baseline

17. Options will be assessed for their contribution to alleviating the problems we have identified. To do this, a clear baseline will be established of the traffic situation both now and in the future.

18. We will consider what could alter that baseline in the future, for example new technology, changes in the way we travel, responses to climate change and demographic changes.

19. As part of this, the Commission will provide the Welsh Government with an opportunity to state what planned policy and projects the Commission should assume in the baseline.

### Phase IV: preparing a long list

20. A long list of potential measures will be prepared. Options for all transport modes will be considered, including active travel, road, bus and rail.

21. Some options may have been considered by the Welsh Government in the past. If this is the case, we will assess each measure afresh and independently.

22. Reflecting our broad Terms of Reference, the options may not be limited to transport measures. However, they must have a meaningful connection with the problems identified.

23. Interventions will be approximately costed so the Commission is in a position to consider value for money. This is distinct from affordability, which is a matter for Welsh Ministers should they decide to take an option forward.

24. In light of the First Minister's decision not proceed with the 'Black Route' M4 Project, the Commission will not be considering options for a replacement section of motorway south of Newport.

## Phase V: assessing options

25. The long list of measures will be assessed on the basis of their impacts and their ability to meet the objectives.

26. We expect there will be a significant degree of interaction between some of the options. This will need to be understood and considered. We also intend to test the robustness of the package in different future scenarios.

## Phase VI: making recommendations

27. The assessment process will allow the Commission to make clear and structured recommendations to Welsh Ministers in a final report.

28. We envisage recommending a package of measures. We will consider recommendations across the short, medium and long-term. To support delivery of the measures, we expect to make recommendations on wider matters such as policy, funding and governance (including issues relating to the devolution settlement).

29. Overall, we are seeking to recommend a set of measures which will alleviate congestion in a sustainable way that supports the wider well-being of people who live, work and travel in the area.

## Geographic scope

30. While the Commission is tasked with considering South East Wales, it will take a broad view of the study area and will be open-minded to how trips starting or finishing outside of the region affect it. This is consistent with the Commission's desire to take a holistic view of the issues.

31. We appreciate the particularly acute issues in the Newport area and will give these due attention.

## Stakeholder engagement

32. Stakeholders and members of the public have expressed a broad range of views on the issues over many years. At different stages, many have been involved in various engagement events and consultations.

33. The Commission intends to closely involve stakeholders in its work. As part of this, one of our priorities is to understand the transport choices of people living, working and travelling in South East Wales, in particular users of the M4 around Newport.

34. In broad terms, the Commission will communicate through:

- discussions with the public
- stakeholder meetings and workshops
- social media
- reports and letters to Welsh Ministers

35. While the Commission does not intend to undertake a formal call for evidence, it will consider ideas which people or organisations wish to put forward.

## Reporting

36. We aim to publish a progress update by the end of this year, an interim report in Spring 2020 and a final report around the end of 2020. The Commission's work will end shortly after it produces its final report.

## Fast-track recommendations

37. In June 2019, Welsh Ministers announced a set of measures for immediate implementation. The Commission will work on the basis these are being put into effect.

38. Part of the Commission's task is to produce recommendations for fast-track implementation. We will therefore undertake a rapid review of options which could be feasibly delivered quickly. We will provide an update on this work by the end of the year.

39. In doing so, we will need to ensure any fast-track recommendations do not pre-judge or negatively affect our final recommendations. This may limit what can be recommended at this early stage.

40. Given the timetable, and the work required for the other phases described above, we will consider this in parallel to our main work.

## Independence and accountability

41. The Commission is operationally independent of the Welsh Government.

42. Through its Chair, the Commission is accountable to the Welsh Ministers for its performance. The Commission also welcomes scrutiny from the National Assembly for Wales, including its committees.

## Contact

43. The Commission can be contacted through its Secretariat at:

[SEWTransportcommission@gov.wales](mailto:SEWTransportcommission@gov.wales)

44. Updates on the Commission will be made available through:

Webpage: <https://gov.wales/south-east-wales-transport-commission>

Twitter: @SEWTCommission

# Terms of Reference as Published by Welsh Ministers June 2019

The Commission will consider the problems, opportunities, challenges and objectives for tackling congestion on the M4 in South East Wales, and make recommendations to the Welsh Government on a suite of alternative solutions in the light of the First Minister's statement of 4 June 2019 that the 'Black Route' proposal should not proceed.

The Commission will consider the views of all stakeholders including the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales, the Future Generations Commissioner, business groups, social partners, environmental groups, transport users' groups, local and national political representatives and of course, the public.

The Commission will consider the needs of current and future generations, taking into account immediate problems and future trends, such as the impact of alternative fuels, and connected and autonomous vehicles.

The Commission will take into account the report of the Commission on Climate Change and other social, economic, cultural and environmental issues, including air quality.

The Commission will consider the behavioural issues which lie behind the continued growth in road-based transport in Wales, and how solutions might respond to those factors.

The Commission will advise on innovative interventions and funding solutions. It may consider any issues, including governance, costs, financing, planning approach and programme/project management and may recommend improvements to statutory processes.

The Commission will have access to the South East Wales Transport Planning Model, and to the full library of information available to the M4 Project Public Inquiry.

The Commission will operate independently of the Welsh Government. It will be supported by a Secretariat comprising Welsh Government officials and secondees as required.

The Commission will report on its interim findings, with recommendations for immediate practical interventions, within six months of its formation.