

THE FISHGUARD TO BANGOR TRUNK ROAD (A487) (CAERNARFON AND BONTNEWYDD BYPASS AND DE-TRUNKING) ORDER 201-

THE FISHGUARD TO BANGOR TRUNK ROAD (A487) (CAERNARFON AND BONTNEWYDD BYPASS) (SIDE ROADS) ORDER 201-

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Welsh Ministers, as the relevant highway authority, are responsible for all trunk roads in Wales. The A487 trunk road is an important part of the Welsh Government's (WG) strategic road network and it serves as the major north/south route along the west Wales coast linking Fishguard, Cardigan, Aberystwyth, Machynlleth, Dolgellau, Porthmadog, Caernarfon and Bangor.

The proposed scheme will provide a new 9.70km highway commencing at the most north westerly point of the existing A487 trunk road roundabout, known as Goat Roundabout (A499/A487 junction) and terminating at the Plas Menai Roundabout. It forms a western bypass to Llanwnda, Dinas and Bontnewydd before crossing the existing A487 to pass south of Caernarfon Quarry. It then crosses the Afon Seiont, passes south of the Cibyn Industrial Estate to a junction with the A4086. After crossing the B4366 the route drops steeply to the Plas Menai Roundabout. A Wide Single 2+1 standard has been adopted, consisting of two lanes of travel in one direction and a single lane in the opposite direction providing overtaking opportunities in the two lane direction, while overtaking in the single lane direction is prohibited. There are 29 structures within the scheme comprising 7 bridges (including a crossing over the Welsh Highland Railway, a 260m bridge over the Afon Gwyrfai and a 148m bridge over the Afon Seiont), 8 culverts and 14 large diameter pipes.

The proposals comprise:

- a. The draft Line and De-Trunking Order, now published, to provide for the construction of a new length of Trunk Road and the de-trunking of existing lengths of Trunk Road and slip roads.
- b. The draft Side Roads Order, now published, to stop up lengths of superseded trunk road and to stop up, improve, create or alter other roads, footpaths, cycle routes, bridleway and private accesses.
- c. The draft Compulsory Purchase Order, to be published shortly, to provide for the acquisition of the land and rights required for the construction and maintenance of the scheme.

An Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared in association with the above Orders and is available for inspection. This project is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with Section 105A of the Highways Act 1980 and EC Directive 2011/92/EU.

In accordance with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, a Statement to Inform an Appropriate Assessment (SIAA) has been prepared on the possible impacts associated with the Scheme on the Afon Gwyrfai and Llŷn Cwellyn SAC (Special Area of Conservation), Menai Strait and Conwy Bay SAC, Glynllifon SAC, Meirionnydd Oakwoods and Bat Sites SAC and Gwydir Forest Mines SAC. This is available in Appendix E2 in Volume 3 of the ES.

The ES describes the proposals, identifies the main environmental effects on both the manmade and natural environment and describes the proposed measures to avoid, remedy or reduce impacts and provide environmental enhancement where relevant.

The ES is reported in four parts:

- The Non-Technical Summary

- Volume 1 – Technical Assessment Report
- Volume 2 – Figures
- Volume 3 – Technical Appendices

Volume 1 is the main technical assessment report, which details the methodologies and results of the EIA. It sets out ways in which identified impacts can be effectively mitigated. Volume 2 is a set of supporting figures which should be read alongside Volume 1. Volume 3 is a set of technical appendices which should also be read alongside Volume 1.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

In the early 1990s Parkman Consulting was commissioned by the then Welsh Office Highways Directorate to undertake studies in the Caernarfon area to determine if a bypass was feasible. A report was published in 1992 confirming that there were potentially feasible routes to bypass Caernarfon.

From 1992 to the present a number of trunk road and major transport infrastructure projects were undertaken in the area; A487 Felinheli Bypass, A487 Point Seiont, A487 Llanllyfni to south of Llanwnda, A487 Porthmadog Bypass together with A499 Llanellhaearn to Aberdesach and A497 Abererch to Llanystumdwy on the Llyn.

In February 2007 consulting engineers ARUP were commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake a WeITAG Planning Stage and Stage 1 Study to consider transport issues and options in the Llanwnda to Plas Menai corridor. A number of bypass options were identified and a combination of these and online measures (such as improvements to existing junctions, traffic management, parking restrictions and improving visibility at junctions) were recommended for further testing under the WeITAG Stage 1 Appraisal process.

In 2009 the Welsh Government commissioned a study to address transport problems on the A487 Fishguard to Bangor Trunk Road through Caernarfon and Bontnewydd. This study utilised the earlier work undertaken separately. The more recent WeITAG Stage 2 study included an initial public consultation that took place between March and May 2010 and a supplementary public consultation that took place between November 2010 and January 2011.

The scheme, with the objectives to reduce journey times, accidents, the number of vehicles passing through residential communities and improve network resilience forms part of the Welsh Government's main transport policy aims.

The Key Stage 2 consultancy commission for the scheme was carried out by Parsons Brinckerhoff. Following the investigation of route options and two public consultations, a Preferred Route (Purple Route) was recommended. This Preferred Route was announced by the then Welsh Government's Minister for Local Government and Communities in July 2012. In light of budgetary pressures the Welsh Government carried out a review of route options and withdrew the original preferred route and announced the Yellow Route as the Preferred Route in May 2013. The line of the Yellow Route has been protected from future development encroachment using a TR111. The Welsh Government served a Statutory TR111 notice to Gwynedd Council to protect the route for planning purposes. Following receipt of the notice the Council should refer any planning application affecting land within 67 metres of the protected route or its connecting roads to the Welsh Government. The protected route would also show up as part of the local authority search procedure.

The route currently covered by these draft Orders incorporates the version of the Yellow Route which was presented at the early 2015 Public Information Exhibitions.

3. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The problems that the project is attempting to address include:

- traffic congestion; specifically at the Goat Roundabout, through Bontnewydd and in the centre of Caernarfon where interactions between the local road network and the trunk road cause delays, particularly during the peak hours of the day and holiday seasons;
- a lack of high quality road infrastructure hindering economic development of the area; in providing improved infrastructure in the area, this will open the area up to development opportunities which would benefit the areas economic prosperity;
- community severance and quality of life for settlements along the A487; since the current trunk road passes through several communities, the volumes of traffic increase severance to facilities and hinder access. They also present potential air quality issues which will worsen as traffic volumes increase;
- a high risk of collisions in urban areas, specifically pedestrian-vehicle interactions along the existing A487 and collisions at Eagles junction;
- vehicles using county roads to bypass the A487; this is mainly due to the lack of suitable alternative routes in the area;
- difficulty in maintaining the trunk road due to high traffic levels and lack of suitable alternative routes.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The wider public has been informed about the proposed scheme by two Public Information Exhibitions held in March and June 2015. Issues raised during these consultations have been considered as the draft Orders have been developed.

These Public Information Exhibitions were held at 3 venues over a 3 day period on 17th -19th March 2015 and 25th – 27th June 2015. A total of 674 people attended the exhibitions in March and 320 people attended the exhibitions in June.

In addition, Environmental Bodies and other stakeholders have been consulted individually and as part of an Environmental Liaison Group (ELG) during the evolution of the Scheme's design.

The ELG brings together representatives from Gwynedd Council, Cadw, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Gwynedd Archaeology Planning Services and the North and Mid-Wales Trunk Road Agent. It is intended that the ELG would continue to meet regularly throughout the pre-construction and construction period.

Scheme details have also been presented to the Design Commission for Wales and Gwynedd Council, as well as Community and Town Councils. Their comments have also been considered in the development of the scheme.

Statutory Undertakers have been consulted regarding diversions and protection of infrastructure. Detailed discussions have also taken place with the Welsh Highland Railway. Landowners and people whose properties or private accesses would be directly affected by the Scheme have been contacted and informed about the details of the proposed scheme.

5. SCHEME OBJECTIVES

The following five specific Transport Planning Objectives for the Scheme have been developed:

- Reduce journey time (between Llanwnda and Plas Menai) and improve journey time reliability to within +/- 3 minutes of the average journey time throughout the day.
- Reduce journey time (between Llanwnda and Caernarfon) and improve journey time reliability to within +/- 3 minutes of the average journey time throughout the day.
- Reduce the number of vehicles passing through residential communities; including Llanwnda, Dinas, Bontnewydd and Caernarfon.
- Contribute to the Welsh Government casualty reduction targets:
 - 40% reduction by 2020;
 - 25% reduction in motorcyclist casualties by 2020; and

- 40% reduction in the number of young children killed or seriously injured by 2020.
- Improve network resilience – increase the amount and/or capacity of alternative routes to improve the resilience of the network.

6. THE PROPOSED SCHEME

The Scheme would be 10.35km in length and would comprise of a Wide Single 2+1 Road (WS2+1) highway cross-section. This would provide alternating sections of two lanes in one direction and one lane in the opposite direction throughout the Scheme. The Scheme would provide a total of 4.60km of overtaking length in the northbound direction and 4.57km of overtaking length in the southbound direction.

This route would be made up of three sections of Wide-Single 2+1 carriageway (two lanes in one direction and one lane in the opposing direction) separated by new at-grade roundabouts at Meifod and Cibyn. The proposed alignment would be entirely offline from the existing A499/A487(T) Goat Roundabout to the existing A487(T) Plas Menai Roundabout.

There would be two significant river crossings over the Afon Gwyrfai and the Afon Seiont.

New or diverted Public Rights of Way and Private Means of Access would be provided to replace those affected by the scheme wherever possible.

Road drainage would be provided through 'over the edge' drainage which would discharge into attenuation ponds along the Scheme. The attenuation ponds would be provided for each of the carriageway drainage sub-catchments to mitigate for the increased rates and volume of run-off that would be generated when the Scheme is in use. These ponds would attenuate and treat the collected surface water prior to discharging it into existing watercourses.

The drainage of both the Afon Seiont and Afon Gwyrfai viaducts would be via combined kerb and drainage bridge-deck compatible units.

The majority of the Scheme would be fenced with stock proof fencing. Otter fencing and temporary bat fencing would also be provided at appropriate points on the Scheme. The Environmental Masterplans, contained within the Environmental Statement, identify the environmental design proposals for the scheme.

The Scheme would commence at the A499/A487(T) Goat Roundabout and would provide two lanes in the southbound direction and one lane in the northbound direction. A treatment/attenuation pond (Pond 1a) would be located to the west of Goat Roundabout. The Scheme would be on a 7m embankment for a short length passing over a proposed underpass on Glanrhyd Road, which will be named Pont Parc Underpass. A treatment/attenuation pond (Pond 1) would be located to the east of the bypass at the Pont Parc Underpass. After passing the pond, the scheme enters a 9m cutting where the minor road (Ty'n Llan lane) would cross on a proposed overbridge (Ty'n Llan Overbridge). The existing Lon Eifion cycleway that currently crosses the A499 would be diverted around Goat Roundabout, crossing the proposed de-trunked A487. The existing footpaths FP 19 and FP10 would be diverted along the proposed structures, Pont Parc Underpass and Ty'n Llan Overbridge respectively. The proposed Geufron Culvert would be located near to Geufron Farm. There would be two treatment/attenuation ponds (Pond 2 and Pond 3) located adjacent to the Geufron Culvert.

The Scheme would be on a 5m embankment on the approach to Dinas Farm and the proposed Dinas Accommodation Underpass is located on the private road leading to Dinas Farm. At this point the Scheme would provide two lanes in the northbound direction and one lane in the southbound direction. It would cross the Afon Gwyrfai floodplain on a long structure that would be known as the Gwyrfai Viaduct. A treatment/attenuation pond (Pond 4a) would be located to the east of the Scheme north of the northern side of the Gwyrfai Viaduct.

The Scheme would remain on a 3m embankment after the Gwyrfai Viaduct, and would cross over the unnamed side road to Llanfaglan, which would be named Pont Llydiart Gwyn. A layby would be located in the northbound direction. The Cefn Werthyd Farm level crossing is replaced and the Scheme passes over the Welsh Highland Railway on a proposed bridge which would be named Pont Cefnwerthyd. The Scheme remains on an 8m high embankment at this location. The existing side road between Bontnewydd and Fron Goch will be stopped up to vehicles, and the proposed Pont Ceriw Non-Motorised User Overbridge would provide access over the Scheme. The bridge would not be suitable for equestrian use. Access for equestrians and vehicles would be maintained through a diversion along existing alternative side roads. A treatment/attenuation pond (Pond 4) would be located to the east of the Scheme adjacent to the section of the Scheme that would connect to the existing A487 via the new Meifod Roundabout.

On leaving the Meifod Roundabout the Scheme would be on a 7m high embankment providing two lanes in the southbound direction and one lane in the northbound direction. There would be two treatment/attenuation ponds (Pond 5 and Pond 6) located to the northeast of the proposed Meifod Roundabout and east of the existing Pen y Bryn Road. The first section of Pen y Bryn Side Road (leading to Rhos Bach Lane) to cross beneath the bypass will remain open. The side road will be diverted slightly through a new culvert, the Pont Bryn Mafon box underbridge. The culvert on the existing Pen y Bryn Road alignment will be replaced by a box culvert for bats. A layby would be provided on the Scheme in the southbound direction. At this location, the Scheme would then enter a small cutting. The section of Pen y Bryn Side Road west of the property known as "Glyn", would be stopped up.

Adjacent to the disused Caernarfon Quarry, the Scheme would change to provide two lanes in the northbound direction and one lane in the southbound direction. The Scheme would approach the Afon Seiont floodplain on an 8m high embankment and crosses the river by means of a large viaduct, which would be called the Seiont Viaduct. The road would be carried on viaduct over the northern side of the Glan Gwna Holiday Park and would then be in a cutting up to 2.5m deep until it reaches the A4086. This section would then terminate at the proposed Cibyn Roundabout, which connects with the existing A4086. There would be three treatment/attenuation ponds (Pond 7, Pond 8 and Pond 8a) located to the west of the southern embankment of the Seiont Viaduct, north-east of the northern side of the bridge of the Seiont Viaduct and south of Cibyn Industrial Estate.

There would be two treatment/attenuation ponds (Pond 9 and Pond 10) located at Cibyn Roundabout. The road would be at grade (the same height as the existing ground) for a short distance before entering another 2m embankment, which would cross an existing side road (Bethel Road B4366), which would be diverted to the east of the proposed bypass including a new Bethel Road Roundabout, adjacent to Pont Rhyd-Y-Galen. Another treatment/attenuation pond (Pond 11) would be located to the south west of the proposed diverted Bethel Roundabout and Pond 12 would be located between the proposed Scheme and the proposed diverted Bethel Road Roundabout.

At approximately this location the Scheme would change to provide two lanes in the southbound direction and one lane in the northbound direction. The route then would lower slightly into a 3m deep cutting and the Bethel Road B4366 would be on an overbridge above the scheme. The existing Bethel Road Roundabout would be relocated from Tyddyn Hen to the eastern side of the Scheme, adjacent to Pont Rhyd-Y-Galen. On the approach to the existing A487 there would be a gradient (slope) of 6% which would be a 22.5m deep cutting with exposed rock faces. The existing side road connection between the existing Plas Menai Roundabout and the proposed Bethel Road Roundabout would be a two-way link. The access would be provided by constructing a new section of carriageway which would tie into the existing Crug Lane adjacent to Crug Farm Nurseries. At the Plas Menai Roundabout, the existing road to Llys Y Mor would be connected to Caernarfon Road, and a single arm onto the existing Plas Menai Roundabout would be provided. The existing bus stop and layby on the Caernarfon Road approach to the Plas Menai Roundabout would also be closed and relocated approximately 90m north east along Caernarfon Road. Similarly, the existing bus stop on the opposite side of Caernarfon Road leading away from Plas Menai Roundabout would be relocated approximately 90m north east along Caernarfon Road.

7. 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 roads and to de-trunk parts of the trunk roads, would be obtained through 'The Fishguard to Bangor Trunk Road (A487) (Caernarfon and Bontnewydd Bypass and De-Trunking) Order 201-', now published in draft.

The Welsh Ministers are empowered as the highway authority for trunk roads in Wales, to undertake improvements to the existing trunk road under section 62 of the Highways Act 1980. The power to stop up, alter, 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 Fishguard to Bangor Trunk Road (A487) (Caernarfon and Bontnewydd Bypass) (Side Roads) Order 201- ', now published in draft.

A draft Compulsory Purchase Order will be published shortly and this will enable the Welsh Ministers to acquire all the land and rights over the land, necessary for the proposed scheme. In drawing up the proposed scheme, regard has been given to the interference with the rights of all those with interests in the relevant lands and/or who would otherwise be affected by the scheme.