

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Lower Wye Area Committee held at Chepstow Leisure Centre - Chepstow on Wednesday, 17th October, 2018 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Dovey (Chair)
County Councillor A. Webb (Vice Chair)
County Councillors: L.Brown and J.Becker

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Roger Hoggins Head of Operations

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

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|-------------------------|--|
| Mark Emmett | Welsh Government, Area Manager, Network Management Division |
| Phillip Evans | Atkins |
| Councillor Ian Martin | Shirenewton Community Council |
| Saul Cooke-Black | South Wales Argus |
| Jenny Jones | Tintern Resident |
| Geoff Sumner | Chepstow Society |
| Vic Pritchard | Better Trains for Chepstow (BT4C) |
| Toney Newman | St. Arvan's Resident |
| Councillor Alan Hillard | Tintern Community Council |
| Stephanie Dovey | Chepstow Resident |
| Councillor G. Down | Mathern Community Council |
| Bridget Griffiths | PC1062 Heddlu Gwent Police, Crime and Disorder Reduction Officer |

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors D. Batrouni, R.J.W. Greenland, P. Murphy and P.Pavia

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Public Open Forum

A number of members of the public and press were present.

3. To confirm the notes of the previous meeting held on 18th July 2018

The notes of the previous meeting held on 18th July 2018 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

Matters Arising

- Bus Services to and from Chepstow: The Passenger Transport Manager was unavailable to attend the meeting but provided the following note:

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“Passenger Transport Unit consulted with Local Councillors and residents before renewal of the town services was undertaken to gain views and where the service was required.

After this we constructed a new timetable for the service which is now in operation and seems to be more aligned with the needs of the public travelling covering journeys to all areas previously covered by the C1-5 services.

Feedback to date has been positive with very little negative feedback from the users since operation began at the end of August. We hope that this will be more sustainable for the future with more passenger journeys and people travelling.

- Trains to and from Chepstow: Disappointment was expressed about the service proposals and it was agreed that the concerns should be raised by the Strategic Transport Group in order that representations can be made to the service operator.

A Member was dissatisfied with the lack of engagement by Transport for Wales as part of the Metro plans.

4. A466 Wye Valley Road Safety Improvement Scheme: Welsh Government, South Wales Trunk Road Agent and Atkins Consultants.

Mark Emmett, Welsh Government, Area Manager, Network Management Division and Phillip Evans, Atkins were welcomed to the meeting.

The Chair read out a message from a Committee Member unable to attend:

‘If there is any further representation to be made on the A466, then I would like for all the laybys to be closed and appropriate park and ride/travel facilities to be found elsewhere.

I would like the road to be duelled in both directions, as I think in its present format is fundamentally unsafe. In that duelling, an appropriate central reservation or barrier be erected.

Also, if there is anyone from WG or SWTRA in attendance, they need to regularly clean both sides of the laybys as the litter and rubbish there is dreadful. So more bins and regular cleaning until the fundamental road restructuring is done.’

The Welsh Government representative explained that collection of litter was the responsibility of local authority not Welsh Government.

It was explained that Atkins had been commissioned to look at options, and with Welsh Government considered:

- A dual carriageway but it was difficult to form a highway compliant scheme and was also cost prohibitive.
- Improvements to the Newhouse Interchange proposing the extension of the two lane exit. Traffic would still merge and there would be a 40mph speed limit on the slip roads.
- Public Rights of Way diverted to cut down pedestrian movements.
- 50mph speed limit with average speed camera system along its length
- Prohibition of U Turns between roundabouts
- Clearway on road not laybys

A Member was opposed to all day parking in laybys and it was also stated that the Public Right of Way between Mathern to Bulwark is regularly in use. Clarification was sought about a

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Clearway proposal and the effect on parking. It was also questioned how a change to the speed limit would affect the backlog on the motorway.

It was responded that there is no problem with closing laybys or imposing waiting restrictions but it would move the parking issue (including lorries) elsewhere in residential areas.

A Member was in favour of not closing the laybys, had no problem with the revised speed limit from 60 to 50mph or the 40mph at the roundabout. He requested that the white lining is revised as it is confusing.

A Member suggested that research suggests that moving from 60mph to 40mph speed limit would be more likely to prevent a fatal accident.

Considering High Beech roundabout, it was agreed that there are queues back to the slip road at peak times. There are confusing speed limits between 30/40mph leading to the roundabout for which consistency would be preferred.

A Member of the public acknowledged the parking issues in the laybys but raised the need for parking to be available for those sharing cars to travel to Bristol and also the need for regulatory rest stops for lorries, suggesting that England and Wales need to work together.

Discussions with Highways England regarding lack of lorry stops has resulted in looking at long term parking as the motorway services have limited space.

The Chair was pleased with the proposals under consideration and was assured that there would be no prejudice to the outcomes of the Capita Transport Study as these are two separate pieces of work.

5. A466 Wye Valley - Proposed Closure

The Area Committee received some notes from Steve Baldwin, Project Engineer regarding the proposed temporary road closure. The Head of Operations provided an update on the 3 sites.

It is hoped to open the road during the Easter weekend. Signage will be made as clear as possible noting the concerns about the confusing signs currently in position; Gloucestershire CC has been asked to improve signage.

It was requested that business rates relief should be given to those businesses affected by the closure and that signs should be provided to say that businesses remain open.

It was confirmed that the Community Councils in Tintern and St Arvans have been kept fully informed.

A member of the public expressed concerns about when the work is finished, that action is taken to address vehicles being parked on verges to access rock climbing; signs and traffic cones have been moved to facilitate further parking. As cars are being parked very close to the traffic lights there are visibility problems.

The Head of Operations acknowledged the issue stating that the works have been laid out in the best way possible for forward visibility but in the future it will be possible to consider this point in the design when the scheme is completed. As a temporary measure, the road sign will be weighted to prevent it being moved.

Committee Members were invited to submit any further questions to Steve Baldwin for written response.

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6. Chepstow Chamber of Commerce: Impact of the reduction/removal of the Bridge tolls on Commerce

A presentation from the Chamber of Commerce was deferred to the next meeting.

Instead, the Area Committee welcomed Bridget Griffiths, Heddlu Gwent Police, Crime and Disorder Reduction Officer for the Monmouthshire South Area, to the meeting representing Inspector Damian Sowrey regarding County Lines which is a concern in the community.

It was explained that County Lines are not a particular problem in the area.

A Member expressed concern that there has been brazen drug related activity in public parks in Chepstow. It was explained that the Police is reliant on intelligence received and actively seek out and keep in touch with vulnerable people who could be at risk of becoming involved.

Police Officers in plain clothes and unmarked cars deal with information received. It was stressed that there is a need to be able to focus resources and information from the community was welcomed. Residents may call 101 or contact@gwent.pnn.police.uk or contact Crimestoppers to report concerns anonymously.

It was confirmed that there is a specialist drug prevention officer in primary and secondary schools. Reports of anti-social behaviour in Welsh St. Car Park are being addressed by patrols and by working with the Council on restrictions in the car park.

A member of the public stressed that it was important that those reporting information are provided with feedback on outcomes

A Member asked if the Police could discourage cyclists from cycling on pavements if observed.

A Member reported that the Town Council is provided with crime statistics and it would be of interest to communicate the following information to the public:

- how many intelligence-led investigations or prosecutions; and
- what action is taken to motivate people to report crime.

It was suggested that a Members' Seminar could be held on drugs. .

7. Chepstow Road Study (Capita) Update: Head of Operations

The Head of Operations reported on the Capita Chepstow Transport Study jointly commissioned by Monmouthshire CC and Gloucestershire CC. It was noted that Forest of Dean District Council, Welsh Government and Highways England are also involved. The purpose of the study is to look for broader, sustainable congestion solutions in the Chepstow area not just a by-pass but also looking at reducing traffic on the B4235, and removing traffic via A48 to relieve traffic at High Beech roundabout.

It was confirmed that the first stage report is nearing completion. Officers will be looking at the draft in November. The final Stage 1 WelTag (Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance) report will then be published to elected Members and other interested parties. The WelTag process is followed to access funding.

Part of the process involves filtering the long list of options in short/medium and long term.

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It was commented that the Estuary Development at Portskewett will increase traffic and congestion in the area.

A Member was in favour of Caldicot and Rogiet junctions off the M48 to Parkwall Roundabout in view of the fact that a lot of the traffic is to and from Caldicot. It was added that a by-pass will cover the Lydney side but the congestion will move to Pwllmeyric.

It was confirmed that the LDP is under review and new housing and services will be taken into account.

8. Update on Joint Working Group (MCC and Forest of Dean): Head of Operations

The Head of Operations reported on the work of the Joint Working Group on economic development and infrastructure matters. The Chepstow Transport Study was part of driver to collaboration and the purpose is to share ideas on infrastructure and opportunities to work together for mutual benefit e.g. Tourism.

It was confirmed that the Monmouthshire Strategic Transport Group also has representation from both sides of the border to encourage joined up thinking.

9. Items for Next Meeting

- Health Board – Chepstow Hospital
- Local Development Plan
- Chamber of Commerce
- Capita Chepstow Transport Study

10. To confirm the date, time and venue of the next meeting as 23rd January 2019 at a venue to be arranged

Wednesday 23rd January 2019 at 10.00am at Chepstow Leisure Centre.

The meeting ended at 12.35 pm