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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Transport Group held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Wednesday, 10th November, 2021 at 10.00
am

PRESENT: County Councillor J.Pratt (Chairman)

County Councillors: J.Becker, A. Easson and F. Taylor

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

D. Flint Severn Tunnel Action Group (STAG)
T. Hand Magor Action Group on Rail (MAGOR)
P.Inskip, Severn Tunnel Action Group (STAG)
G. Nelmes Abergavenny Action 50+
N. Gibbons Forest of Dean Council
B Mahony Friends of the 65 Bus
A. Callard Forest Economic Partnership
J. Callard Abergavenny Cycling Group
T. Melville Transition Chepstow

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Roger Hoggins	Head of Service - Strategic Projects (Fixed Term)
Richard Cope	Passenger Transport Unit Manager
Christian Schmidt	Transport Planning and Policy Officer
Mark Hand	Head of Place-making, Housing, Highways and Flood
Deb Hill-Howells	Head of Commercial, Property, Fleet and Facilities
Graham Kinsella	Traffic And Road Safety Manager
Gareth Emery	Passenger Transport Operations and Fleet Manager
Paul Sullivan	Youth, Sport and Active Travel Manager
Paul Keeble	Group Engineer (Highways and Flood Management)
Gareth Potter	Transport for Wales, Senior Project Manager
Hywel Price	Assistant Engineer
Leanne Farrow	Mott MacDonald, Transport Planner
L. Mertens	Transport for Wales, Community Engagement

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

County Councillor S. Woodhouse, Wendy Jackson, Rosemary Corcoran and Richard Lemon

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1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Severn Tunnel Junction [15 mins]

The Chair welcomed Leanne Farrow, Transport Planner, Mott MacDonald and Gareth Potter, Senior Project Manager, Transport for Wales to the meeting to provide an update and overview of the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance 1 (WelTAG 1) to improve station access at Severn Tunnel Junction and recommendations for WelTAG 2; a collaborative project with Monmouthshire County Council. Presentation slides circulated following the meeting. Following the presentation, members of the group asked questions and made comments.

A Member questioned the proposal to extend the footbridge and put forward a less costly option. Additionally, a proposal was put forward as an alternative to a covered footbridge. Christian Schmidt will raise these points with Network Rail.

A Member queried if the link to the B4245 was for buses only. It was explained that the link would be available for all transport modes with priority for buses. Regarding concerns about traffic and parking in Rogiet, it was explained that cars will be directed to the new car park and there will be a drop off point adjacent to the station front for buses only.

It was acknowledged that some of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) standards have changed since the original planning.

Consideration has been given to the potential for flooding in the area, interface with the cycling network and how best to provide access for passengers to the station.

A Group Member commented on the need for measures to reduce road use:

- Bus /coach (National Express, tourist coaches etc) interchange
- Connection to Bristol Airport
- Relieving congestion in the centre of Chepstow
- Park and ride for Newport/Cardiff commuters

Clarification was provided that work on the car parks on the Countryside Park side of the line will start very soon. This is separate work to the Transport for Wales work. A study is planned to investigate the feasibility of a car park on the North side.

Housing development between Rogiet and Caldicot has been put forward as a suggestion for inclusion in the new LDP and was consulted upon by MCC as a possible strategic growth option, but there is no decision on its allocation in the LDP yet whilst ensuring options are kept open and options don't preclude each other.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that an ecological study started in April and will continue through the winter months.

Online opportunities for consultation on preferred options in February 2022 will be advertised soon.

3. Magor Walkway Station [15 mins]

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County Councillor F. Taylor, with Ted Hand, provided an update on Magor Walkway station. In the week of the COP26 (United Nations Climate Change Conference 2021), it was emphasised that the Magor Walkway Station can address important climate priorities in terms of active travel and reducing car use in a first for Monmouthshire, Wales and UK.

It is positive that the main and relief lines can go ahead with no work on the relief lines required. It was agreed that PI's notes should be sent to Transport for Wales.

Work is underway to study what services will be able to stop and this information will be available early in the new year. The Magor Action Group on Rail (MAGOR) will continue its commitment to back the project and will provide further updates on progress.

The Group congratulated MAGOR and expressed gratitude to its members for the huge amount of work and time spent to reach this point.

4. 20 MPH Zones [15 mins]

Graham Kinsella, Traffic and Road Safety Manager, and Mark Hand, Head of Placemaking, Regeneration, Highways and Flooding presented a PowerPoint to provide an update on progress of plans to introduce 20mph zones in residential roads in Wales in April 2023.

It was confirmed that there will be limited visual impact with Gateway and Terminal signage in residential roads. Repeater signs will be installed if there is no street lighting.

The importance of keeping pilot communities informed of intentions and progress was emphasised. It was agreed this is another important means of reducing car use in favour of walking and cycling.

A question was asked about the control of speeding on the B4245 and it was confirmed that enforcement is a matter for the Police (Go Safe). In terms of design, the authority can use signage and lining, for example to encourage road users to respect the speed limits and drive to the highway conditions.

5. Active Travel Update [15 mins]

The Youth, Sport and Active Travel Manager provided an update on Active Travel. It was explained that there had been 3 months engagement with the public and 3 months consultation focussing on the views of children and young people and using a range of means.

Following on from the presentation, it was commented that the consultation with young people was comprehensive, and the comments received encouraging. The Group was appreciative of the level of detail provided in the report and were pleased to hear that the data captured will help to inform future funding bids and enhancements to the network.

A Group Member commented that there is no designated space/facilities to park cycles at Severn Tunnel Junction Station. It was responded that the point was noted and will be added into the current auditing of the site.

The Group were thankful for the information provided and looked forward to future updates.

6. Bus Services [15 mins]

- Bus Stop A40: An update was provided that a different design has been proposed of an in carriageway stop. The proposal was positively received at a stakeholder meeting.

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- Grassroutes: Electric buses are running in all areas. Footfall is 35% of pre-Covid levels reflecting the public's concern about travelling on public transport. It is hoped that booster vaccinations will raise public confidence.
- Bus Services: The loss and reduction of Sunday and other services over the pandemic is regrettable and will impact on tourism. The lack of current timetable information online (MCC, Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Visit Monmouthshire) and at bus stops and bus stations is unhelpful. Information was provided that there is a driver shortage coupled with reduced demand.
- Bus shelter maintenance: Town and community councils will be asked to list where bus stops are, who has responsibility e.g. for maintenance and usage.

7. Any Other Business

- Caldicot Town Council: Councillor Easson agreed to take up with officers, the matter of the installation of two bus shelters in the town.

8. Action List from the previous meeting

- a) Strategic Transport Group Survey: It was agreed that the Terms of Reference should be redrafted and agreed after the County Council elections.
- b) Chepstow Transport Study: An update was provided that the WelTAG Stage 2 has been completed and published. The report now splits into the following elements:
 - Active Travel Study (covers the Chepstow area plus Tutshill, Beachley and Sedbury). This has not yet been commissioned. It has funding from the MCC Active Travel budget. There are no terms of reference to date but it will follow on from the WelTAG 2 and will look at traffic movement in and around the town;
 - Public Transport Study looking at the potential to develop a transport hub; and
 - Road Study: It is unclear how to progress this element but a meeting is arranged in January to consider this.

It was queried why more consideration hasn't been given to work on High Beech Roundabout to relieve congestion.

9. Forward Work Plan/Items for the next meeting

10. To confirm the notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

11. To confirm the date of the next meeting as 26th January 2021

The meeting ended at 1.20 pm