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## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Transport Group held  
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Wednesday, 13th April, 2016 at 10.00 am

**PRESENT:** County Councillors: A. Easson, P. Farley, S.B. Jones, F. Taylor,  
D. Cole, D. Flint, T. Hand, P. Inskip, G. Nelmes and P. Turner

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Roger Hoggins	Head of Operations
Richard Cope	Passenger Transport Unit Manager
Paul Keeble	Traffic and Network Manager
Christian Schmidt	Transport Planning and POLICY Officer

### **APOLOGIES:**

Councillors D. Blakebrough

#### **1. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members

#### **2. To receive the notes of the meeting held on 18th January 2016**

We received and agreed the notes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

#### **3. Consultations - overview and outlook**

The Transport Planning and Policy Officer provided the group with a list of consultations and their status and asked members to provide further comment.

It was brought to the attention of the group Wales Route Study had been published and there was a 60 day time limit for further comments to the Office of Rail and Road. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to ORR stating that a number of comments made regarding the WRS had not been addressed. One issue was the five coach train at Severn Tunnel already had up to 100 people standing, and the WRS considered this adequate until 2043.

The Chair highlighted that the Welsh Assembly's inquiry into Welsh Rail Infrastructure does not appear to have mentioned our submission. It was stressed that this should not go unchallenged, and we should determine what could be done.

#### **4. Rail Station Updates**

David Flint from STAG reported:

##### **Severn Tunnel Junction**

- Passenger Survey to be undertaken the day following this meeting, hoping to get useful feedback.
- Expressed thanks to the MCC for the support received.

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- Regarding parking, next week would lose 15 spaces at station as the work continues on the overflow car park.
- Regarding the overflow car park, the ramp has been tarmacked and work continues.
- Passenger footbridge due for completion mid May.
- Unsure of completion date for ticket office.
- Bus shelter remains but in need of repair.
- Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> June with GWR to discuss timetabling, amongst other items.

The Chair was pleased to note that we had received a contribution from GWR of £20,000 towards the construction of the overflow car park.

A Member suggested looking at space at Caerwent Bay to help address the car park problems during the upcoming Severn Tunnel blockade in September-October. The Passenger Transport Manager stated that it would be advisable to discuss further at the meeting with GWR.

It was questioned if Highways Agency had been consulted to ensure the M48 will not be closed at the same time as the Severn Tunnel. This would be followed up with Network Rail.

Severn Tunnel Junction would be closed on Whitsun bank holiday weekend. GWR were proposing to run a bus service.

The importance of communicating any disruption to the public was highlighted.

#### **Magor**

Since the last meeting funding had been received from Welsh Government to progress work on the Grip 1 (output definition stage) and 2 (feasibility) studies. Grip 1 had been completed and was favourable. Grip 2 draft version was only received the previous day, but seemed favourable and identified 3 options, of which one was preferred. Before Grip 3 (option selection) need to consult with Network Rail and Mott McDonald to ensure the detail of the report was fully understood. The following were to be done before moving to a Grip 3 study:

- Review impact of stopping services at Magor with Undy
- Review local demand for the service.
- Initial business case put together linking with WG

The Transport Planning and Policy Officer explained that the WG had appointed consultants to support in developing engineering options for the new Wales and Borders franchise. As it is, these are the same consultants that undertook the Grip 1 and 2 studies.

The Chair noted the new opportunities for infrastructure and communication with the introduction of City Deal.

#### **Abergavenny**

With regards to the accessible footbridge there was a design in place, and it was questioned if anything could be done to progress the moving of the signal to get the new disability bridge in place. Members were very disappointed that the issue had been going on for over a decade and was still unresolved.

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The Passenger Transport Manager explained that he had spoken to representatives at Network Rail and DfT regarding the bridge and the funding was on the funding list but had been moved to the next tranche of funding due to having to spend more money on the Severn Tunnel bridge. The funding had been moved to 2017-2018.

We heard there was a staffing issue at Abergavenny Station, which did not help the situation.

#### **Chepstow**

There were no new issues but reflecting on the issues raised at Abergavenny Station, it was noted that disability access was an issue for Chepstow too. It was suggested that as a group we needed to look at with a wider perspective. We heard that the structurally weak footbridge may need to be removed which would be an ideal time to look at a new accessible footbridge.

The Access 4 All issues should be brought up with DfT and Network Rail.

We were advised by the Head of Operations that a car park order was currently out for consultation, and would feedback on feasibility. Until the order is approved there was no more that could be done at present.

#### **5. Metro / City-Deal / Metro-West**

##### **Metro**

The Welsh Government has set up a new company, Transport for Wales, to deliver the Metro project. At the moment TfW is not fully operational, it has a board comprising some senior civic servants while the work is undertaken by consultants. Until TfW is fully operational it is not clear on how projects are moving forward.

##### **City Deal**

Following the announcement of City Deal there was not great detail of schemes provided. A key point was that there was talk of a Regional Transport Authority.

It was noted that the minutes of the City Region Board effectively proposed opposite to what had been proposed for STJ.

##### **Metro West**

Issues raised included:

- Issue with service to Bristol – there was a need for a slow and a fast service; a half hourly stopping service while long-distance services to Portsmouth would no longer stop at STJ.
- Electrification of the main line would miss an opportunity to improve the service if we fail to push for it.
- The biggest revenue incentive for GWR would be to accelerate services.

The Chair expressed that with Monmouthshire being the fastest growing area in SE Wales in terms on communication and IT business, the Council recognised the fact that Chepstow is close business activity in Bristol.

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#### **6. Local Transport Fund update**

We heard that MCC had put in three bids for Local Transport Funding, two for further development work for the Abergavenny to Llanfoist Active Travel Bridge and one for Monmouth Wyebriidge junction improvements.

The third bid was for 53 smaller Active Travel Quick Wins across the County. All three bids had received funding in full.

The group congratulated the Transport Planning and Policy Officer on the achievement.

#### **7. Active Travel update**

The Transport Planning and Policy Officer advised that the Existing Routes Maps had been submitted to Welsh Government at the end of January 2016. A response from WG stated that most had been accepted but requested that some routes be deleted.

Over the next couple of months workshops would be arranged in order to develop the draft future network, which would be followed by a public consultation.

#### **8. Bus service changes**

The Passenger Transport Unit Manager explained that there had been a number of changes on eleven bus services, as a result of the withdrawal of some of the commercial services by Newport Bus.

There had been a meeting of Severnside in order to discuss issues and address gaps.

Section 106 monies could be used to enhance services, possibly from Church Road and Asda development. A report would be going to Cabinet in due course.

Members suggested that there should be increased information for the public announcing changes. The PTU Manager would contact National Express.

There were concerns that bus services had been taken from areas with the greatest percentage of people with no access to vehicles.

Concerns were raised regarding lack of responses to complaints regarding bus services.

The following points were noted:

- The Authority should look how we can improve bus services and people's confidence in them in order to make services more sustainable.
- Were we strategically using what we have in our gift to a clear effect.
- Whether we were best placed to enhance the Grass Routes service.
- Need to look at how rail and road join up

The PTU Manager advised that officers were looking at alternative service models, and looking for the best way forward. The bus service as a whole area was in need of a complete revamp. We were also looking to upgrade shelters and stops. Members would welcome being engaged in the process.

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A suggestion was made to create sub groups to reflect the expertise in each area, which would enable the group to address issues in a timely manner. The Head of Operations would look into the possibility, but noted that communication via email may be effective.

#### 9. M4

The Head of Operations advised that the Draft Orders have been published, and a timescale was in place to put responses back to Welsh Government by the end of April as required, and this group was considered the most focused group to discuss. Based upon the comments received a final draft response would be created and discussed with the Leader and Chief Executive. Any input from the group would be valuable.

The Traffic and Network Manager added that following officer discussion it was thought that officers would be best placed to comment on the more technical issues, but it was important that members of the group were kept informed. The deadline for the response was 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

Members were invited to discuss and comment, the following points were noted:

- Need a corporate response to reflect some concern about traffic management as it stands on M4 currently, e.g. average speed check, Brynglas tunnels.
- Need to have comments regarding the construction phase of the project.
- Wider issues regarding disruption, but positives be noted in the response.
- Significant issue of the location of compounds.
- The significant movement of people – hundreds of people to get to and from work.
- The scale and scope of the project should not be underestimated.
- Need a clear communication mechanism – Local Authority, Welsh Government, Contractors.
- Noise assessments should be undertaken appropriately.
- On/off access to the services – a major knock on impact to people working in that locality.
- Detail of benefits to the local economy. Was the proposal fit for purpose?

The Chair suggested that the comments could be dealt with through officers on a one to one basis, possibly via email.

#### 10. Chepstow A466 road safety

The Chair had attended a moving presentation given by the wife of a person who had been killed on the A466. At the emotional meeting Mrs Russell had managed to put across concerns about the road safety issues on that particular stretch of road, and had wanted to ensure a similar occurrence did not happen again.

The Traffic and Network Manager explained that responsibility for the road fell to Welsh Government, and it was down to WG to respond to the suggested actions raised at the meeting. However, the group were updated with the outcomes from a meeting with a WG representative, and it appeared that they would close off the laybys as a trial. This could result in displaced vehicles parking in the Thornwell area.

In the meantime MCC would put up temporary signage, WG to approve the type of signage. MCC would assist WG in identifying an alternative location for a park and ride system.

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A Member applauded the efforts of officers, and noted that there could be a reduction in traffic on the road with a positive effort from WG.

Further discussion regarding the bypass was suggested.

#### **11. Any other business**

A briefing on buses was requested, to include basic items such as who decides where a bus will stop, are they in the right places, fares and timetabling.

#### **12. To note the following meeting dates:**

**The meeting ended at 1.05 pm**