

P-05-850, Protect the Gwent Levels and stop the proposed M4 motorway, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 14.05.19

Thank you for inviting us to comment on the petition to Protect the Gwent Levels and Stop the Proposed Motorway.

CALM submitted papers to the Committee in Oct/Nov 2018 in support of the CALM petition against the M4 bypass. This highlighted new material published after the conclusion of the Public Inquiry which strongly challenges the need for this project on transport, environmental and cost grounds. We now enclose a copy of a letter we sent to the First Minister on 29 March 2019, in advance of his announcement on the M4, since postponed to the first week of June. The most recent edition of CALM's newsletter, published at the end of April, is also appended.

CALM believes the M4 bypass across the Gwent levels is the wrong choice for Wales. We are requesting the Welsh Government and the Senedd to reject it. In a nutshell, our main arguments are that the Black Route will:

1. Cost too much - likely to be over £2 billion
2. Fail to solve long term congestion, or wider transport/economic issues in South Wales
3. Cause irrevocable damage to wildlife & landscape in the unique Gwent Levels
4. Contradict Government policies to reduce carbon emissions and combat climate change
5. Breach Wales' own legislation, The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
6. Ignore the alternatives which are available to improve transport and access for all
7. Ignore advice by 2 expert Government bodies, NRW & Future Generations Commissioner

Along with increasing numbers of people in Wales, CALM cannot believe that a Wales Government and Senedd that have led the world in legislation to protect our future generations and their environment would seriously consider continuing to build motorways. A decision to build the £2 billion + M4 Black Route would directly increase carbon emissions and destroy unique wildlife at a time when thousands of ordinary citizens have been demonstrating on the streets to demand that we save our planet from climate change and species extinctions. The declarations of a Climate Emergency by both the Wales and UK Governments earlier this month logically rules out the Black Route. Claims that the Black Route will be carbon neutral are spurious. This claim is little more than "greenwash" based on long term projections discredited by several experts at the Public Inquiry. In reality, constructing and operating a new M4 at a time when we need to reduce emissions drastically under a Climate Emergency, will actually put an *additional* 500,000 tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere.

We hope the Committee will share our view that the public mood is rapidly catching up with the scientific reality that the entire Web of Life is under immediate threat. Millions of viewers have seen David Attenborough's BBC programme on 18 April revealing the unvarnished truth about climate change. This week we have seen yet another UN global report (IPBES) about the damage already done to many species and habitats and the threat of mass extinctions : we must not sanction a project whose destructive impact on the wildlife of the Gwent levels was described at the Public Inquiry by the Government's own environmental agency, Natural Resources Wales, as "too great" and "unprecedented" as well as a breach of the Wildlife & Countryside Act.

The response in South Wales should not be more road building but a full Metro, transformed bus networks and active travel incentives to meet the transport, health and wellbeing needs of 21st century Wales. This will demonstrate that the Climate Emergency declaration is being translated into the right policy decisions for the future of Wales.

Finally whilst we appreciate that the Petition of 12,270 names submitted to Senedd last October is formally closed to new signatures, an identical version still open to the public on our website has continued to attract new support and the total number of signatures now stands at 20,810.

Diolch yn fawr, Many thanks,

CATHERINE LINSTRUM & ROB HEPWORTH - Joint Chairs of CALM