

## **Written Response to the Finance Committee's Report on Funding Road Infrastructure by Ieuan Wyn Jones AM, Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport**

**22 February 2010**

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1. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to the development of a modern and sustainable transport network that can support the renewal of our economy and help to develop a more inclusive society. We are also committed to putting transport onto a carbon reduction pathway, so that it can play its full part in meeting the challenge of climate change.

2. We recognise the challenges inherent in delivering a low carbon transport network to support economic and social development. This will require a balanced, joined-up approach that takes full account of the linkages between different policy areas. In addition, at a time of increasing pressures on the public finances, it is essential to maximise the benefit from every single transport intervention that we make.

3. In the light of this, we have been working to put in place a more cohesive approach to transport policy making and the delivery of our transport programmes. In particular, we have developed an approach which seeks to:

- Better integrate our trunk road programme with our wider transport policies;
- Maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of our transport spending in terms of economic, social and environmental outcomes;
- Strengthen the management of all our transport programmes;
- Ensure that our transport policies are fully integrated with our wider economic, social and environmental policies, including the transition to a low carbon economy.

4. We are therefore disappointed that the Finance Committee has failed to recognise the development of our new approach and the broader context for transport policy making, particularly in relation to climate change. We were also disappointed that the Committee did not fully recognise the range of measures that have already been put in place to support the delivery of our vision for transport. These measures, which are discussed in detail below, centre on improvements to:

- the framework for transport planning;
- the arrangements for delivery; and

- liaison with local government, to ensure that the transport network functions effectively at the national, regional and local levels.

### **An overhaul of the framework for transport planning**

5. Following the Transport (Wales) Act 2006, we have put in place a new framework for transport planning and delivery in Wales. This is based on the Wales Transport Strategy, which sets out the high-level outcomes that we want to achieve from our transport network, as well as our strategic priorities. The National Transport Plan, the final version of which will be published shortly following a public consultation, sets out the specific actions that we will be taking to deliver the Wales Transport Strategy.

6. In our National Transport Plan, we have moved away from the concept of separate trunk road and rail programmes, developing an integrated transport programme which sets out how we intend to manage and enhance the transport network as a whole. This new transport programme replaces the 2008 update of the trunk road forward programme.

7. Our approach in the National Transport Plan is to consider all transport modes – road, rail, buses, community transport, walking and cycling – and to consider how we can best integrate the various modes to ensure that we are making the best possible use of the network. Each intervention is assessed against the economic, social and environmental outcomes that we want to achieve. This ensures that our transport programme is both effective and fully aligned with our wider policies and programmes.

8. This approach is particularly important in the context of minimising the environmental impacts of transport and tackling climate change. Whilst we are taking forward improvements to the safety and reliability of the road network, it is as part of a balanced package of measures, including increased investment in public transport and enhanced provision for walking and cycling. Our overall aim is to put transport on a carbon reduction pathway and move towards our longer-term vision of a fully decarbonised transport network. We are also conscious that road schemes, such as the current improvements to the A487 at Porthmadog, often have local environmental benefits in terms of improved local air quality and noise reduction.

- **An improved focus on delivery**

9. We have changed the organisational structure of the Assembly Government to sharpen our focus on delivery, as well as ensuring that we have staff with the right transport planning, civil engineering, procurement, project management and programme management skills. A separate Division is responsible for managing and developing the trunk road network. We have also established a Division to deal with transport planning issues, including a team which is working to attract funding for transport schemes from European and other sources. A further Division is responsible for the public transport network. Finally, we have brigaded transport together with economic regeneration, to ensure that our approach to these areas is fully joined-up.

10. We are already seeing the benefits of this new approach; for example, the £100 million scheme to widen the M4 north of Cardiff has recently been delivered to time and within budget. In addition, construction has commenced on six of the schemes in the first phase of the 2008 trunk road forward programme, which are together valued at some £130 million. These are: the A483 Four Crosses; the A470 Penloyn to Tan Lan, Llanrwst; the A487 Porthmadog, Minffordd and Tremadog; the A470 Cwmbach to Newbridge-on-Wye; the A40 Penblewin to Slebech Park; and the A40 The Kell. Other schemes in the programme are making good progress.

11. We will continue to develop our organisational structure, to ensure that we maximise the synergies between different policy areas. In particular, we are currently working to bring housing together with transport and regeneration to form a new Transport, Regeneration and Housing Group.

- **New arrangements to improve liaison with local government**

12. We have also continued to encourage and support the development of the regional transport consortia, as well as facilitating the move to regional transport planning. This has ensured that local authorities work together to address transport issues on a regional basis, given that many transport issues cross local authority boundaries.

13. We also appointed regional transport planners in the Assembly Government to improve our channels of communication with the regional transport consortia and to ensure that the Regional Transport Plans are developed and taken forward in parallel with the National Transport Plan. This has led to a more joined-up approach to transport planning and delivery, so that local, regional and national priorities are properly aligned.

## **Conclusion**

14. In the light of the above, the Assembly Government believes that it has already addressed the issues raised by the Finance Committee in its report. The measures set out above will ensure that our transport programme is managed efficiently and effectively and that we can develop a modern and sustainable transport network.

**Ieuan Wyn Jones AM**  
**Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport**

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