A40 PENBLEWIN - SLEBECH PARK IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

SPECIAL PROCEDURE ORDER

STANDING ORDER 25 - PETITION

PEMBROKESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

PRELIMINARY RESPONSE TO PETITION COMMITTEE
INCLUDING SPECIFIC RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPHS 2 (7) AND 2 (8)
1.0 SPECIFIC RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPHS 2(7) AND 2(8) OF PEMBROKESHIRE CC PETITION

1.1 Under the principles of sustainable development the Welsh Assembly Government is required to consider a wide range of factors when appraising transport proposals to deliver improvements to the transport network in Wales. These include social and environmental factors and not just the economic ones relating to value for money, as highlighted by Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC).

1.2 The tool used to appraise transport proposals in Wales is WelTAG (Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance) published in May 2008, was developed using the principles of sustainable development and states:

*The Welsh Assembly Government spends significant sums of money on improving transport provision within Wales through the implementation of new or improving existing services or infrastructure. The choice of options to address problems and to achieve policy objectives is considerable and varied. This, added to the need to justify expenditure and investment, means there is clear need for a robust appraisal framework.*

In order to compete for public sector resources, transport proposals need to demonstrate that they:

- Make a positive contribution to the objectives for transport and hence the wider policy objectives for Wales;
- Provide good value for money;
- Provide overall economic, social and environmental benefits to society; and
- Maximise benefits and minimise impacts

This shows that value for money is only one consideration when determining the appropriate transport proposals to take forward.

1.3 The appraisal of the economic factors includes an assessment of transport efficiency through a cost benefit analysis (CoBA) and an assessment of the wider economic effects. These assessments only contribute to the determination of whether a proposal provides value for money, as they do not account for the social and environmental costs, as well as any affordability criteria.

1.4 PCC has not provided details of their CoBA analyses. The Welsh Assembly Government is therefore unable to comment specifically on their findings. However, CoBA analyses carried out by the Welsh Assembly Government indicate a proposal to build a dual carriageway from the outset would provide better CoBA results in terms of transport efficiency when compared to building a single carriageway upgraded to dual carriageway in the future. The Welsh Assembly Government contends that the PCC findings do not establish that dualling from the outset would represent better value for money as they do not take account of the wider economic effects, the social and environmental factors and affordability criteria.
1.5 A wider economic assessment process is needed in addition to the results from CoBA analyses when considering the level and scope of investment in transport proposals. This further economic assessment takes into consideration the wider economic impacts, expressed in terms of their effects on the local, regional and/or the national economy, and affordability to the Welsh Assembly Government.

1.6 Such an appraisal was undertaken in the 2002-04 study of the A40 using an assessment of the Economic Activity and Location Impacts described in STAG, (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance), an appraisal tool employed by the Scottish Executive to inform their decision making processes. This method was adopted for the A40 study pending the introduction of WelTAG which follows similar objective led appraisal principles to STAG.

1.7 The primary economic findings of the 2002-04 study were endorsed by the Welsh Assembly Government's Economic Advice Division, (EcAD) who agreed with the conclusions of the study that;

- There was no evidence to demonstrate that the dualling of the A40 would result in any significant change in economic behaviour.
- Major improvements to the A40 would not lead to significant new job creation or significantly increased local or national GDP.
- Alternative packages of economic support were likely to provide better value for money in terms of tackling regeneration.

1.8 Therefore, the Welsh Assembly Government has established that the wider economic benefits of the single carriageway improvement, would be of a similar scale to a dualling of the A40 from St Clears to Haverfordwest and therefore in economic terms:

- The transport efficiency economics of single and dual carriageway options between Penblewin and Slebech Park would be marginal and similar,
- The wider economic benefits of a strategy of single carriageway improvement schemes combined with local safety schemes would be of a similar small scale to the option of dualling the A40 between St Clears and Haverfordwest.

1.9 The Welsh Assembly Government therefore determined that the significantly greater level of investment required for the dual carriageway option (£130m more than the single carriageway strategy at 2002 prices) did not represent as good an investment when compared with the lower level of investment for the single carriageway option, which would achieve the principal objectives set for the A40 improvement strategy, namely providing relief to the communities affected by trunk road traffic, and improving safety and journey time reliability.

2.0 PRELIMINARY RESPONSE TO PETITION COMMITTEE - GENERAL

2.1 The Welsh Assembly Government and the County Council agree that the A40 trunk road west of St Clears needs improvement, but disagree about the standard of improvement that is appropriate to meet the need and would be affordable given the budgetary priorities.
2.2 The Welsh Assembly Government is strongly of the opinion that both the Minister and the independent Inspector were able make fully informed decisions to make the published draft Orders.

2.3 The Welsh Assembly Government is strongly of the opinion that it is in the public interest to make the draft Orders and proceed with the scheme as soon as possible in order to provide much needed relief to the communities affected by trunk road traffic, and improving safety and journey time reliability.

2.4 The Welsh Assembly Government is strongly of the opinion that the published proposals will provide a sustainable solution to meet the needs of this element of the trunk network for the foreseeable future.

2.5 The Welsh Assembly Government acknowledges that the economy of Pembrokeshire has experienced a period of sustained growth between 2003 and 2007. It is noted however that this has been achieved without improvement to the A40.

2.6 The Welsh Assembly Government disagrees with the County Council that the growth in economic activity and traffic between 2003 and 2007 justify provision of a dual carriageway.

2.7 The Welsh Assembly Government does not accept that it is being 'wilfully blind' to the consideration of an alternative. Indeed, extensive work has been carried out in developing strategies to improve the A40, which included both single carriageway and dual carriageway options along with improvements to the road and rail network.