# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Roads Review: One Year On**  |
| **DATE**  | **02 February 2024** |
| **BY** | **Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Climate Change**  |

A year ago, we published the independent report of the Roads Review and our response to it - a new approach that has generated interest from around the world.

Our roads policy statement made clear we would continue investing in roads that:

* Reduce carbon emissions and support a shift to public transport, walking and cycling.
* Improve safety through small scale changes.
* Help us adapt to the impacts of climate change.
* Provide connections to jobs and areas of economic activity, in a way that maximises the use of public transport, walking and cycling.

These tests ‘raise the bar’ of the new roads we will build in Wales. In applying them, we committed to take forward a number of schemes which are set these out in the National Transport Delivery Plan.

The plan incorporated several projects that were underway and aligned to our new approach, including proposals for a new Dyfi Bridge in Machynlleth, where the local community have suffered for many years with short notice closures of the A487 due to flooding. A problem that is worsening as our climate changes around us.

This key strategic route connecting north and south Wales provides connectivity to healthcare, education, employment, and leisure. We remain committed to investing in schemes like this on the strategic road network that clear the bar we have deliberately raised.

I was particularly pleased to be among the first group of people on bikes to take advantage of the new cycling and walking route that is fully integrated into the new bridge, as part of a wider active travel network being developed in and around Machynlleth. This shows how we can make it easier to walk and cycle in rural Wales, as well as in our more urban towns and cities.

While the brand new Dyfi Bridge is a very visible symbol of the changes we are making for the future, just as important are the changes we are making to the hidden wiring, and behind the scenes we are taking a new approach to prioritising road maintenance.

Last year, we responded to the independent review led by Matthew Lugg OBE, which challenged us to think differently about how we maintain and renew our road network to comply with statutory duties and our response to the climate emergency.

Following that review, we are now adopting a prioritisation framework that takes account of safety, climate change and modal shift. This ensures our road maintenance budget supports our broader transport strategy.

This is relevant to both central and local government, and last month I met with Cllr Andrew Morgan, in his role as WLGA Transport Lead, to explore how councils can apply a similar approach on local roads in Wales.

Today we have also published a revised Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) framework. This new guidance will support transport planners in Wales to develop and appraise proposals across all transport modes in line with our policy commitments set out in Llwybr Newydd, the Wales Transport Strategy.

Using this revised guidance, we are adopting a regional, collaborative approach to developing the roads projects in the National Transport Delivery Plan with the Strategic Road Network team, TfW regional teams and local government working together to co-design schemes.

This will support delivery against the stretching modal shift targets in the Wales Transport Strategy and is the best approach to manage the exceptionally challenging budgetary constraints we are facing.

There is an important role for independent, expert advice to help us on this journey. To support this, a new national WelTAG Review Group will be established to provide specialist technical advice and assurance to Ministers and officials on whether specific WelTAG studies align with Llwybr Newydd and the four tests set out in our response to the Roads Review.

More immediately, the Roads Review is fundamentally changing the way Welsh Government and Local Authorities approach transport problems.

When we published the findings of the Roads Review Panel, I asked Cllr Anthony Hunt, the Leader of Torfaen Council, and Cllr Llinos Medi, the leader of Ynys Mon Council, to look at road schemes that are designed to support economic development and I am pleased this group is progressing with their work.

Meanwhile in Llanharan, where the Roads Review panel concluded that the proposed bypass should not proceed, we are in detailed discussions on an alternative project, to be developed by Rhondda Cynon Taf in partnership with Transport for Wales.

This could see the construction of a new road, but different in character to the one that was examined by the Roads Review panel. The re-developed proposal prioritises new bus services and active travel routes, a lower speed limit and a focus on reducing embodied carbon and protecting areas of ancient woodland that would otherwise have been destroyed.

Schemes like this demonstrate how investment in roads will continue where it aligns with our transport and planning policy; recognising that we cannot continue on the path we were on but must follow a new path which addresses the threat facing us from the climate and nature emergencies we have declared.

We have indicated to Gwynedd Council that we are keen to work with them on an alternative to the by-pass around the village of Llanbedr that was rejected by the Roads Review. So far progress has been slow, and we have asked TfW to share the approach Rhondda Cynon Taff have been taking in applying the principles of the Roads Review in practice.

Our roads policy statement published last year makes clear that we will continue to invest in new and existing roads, but to qualify for future funding the focus must be on minimising carbon emissions, not increasing capacity; not increasing emissions through higher vehicle speeds, and not adversely affecting ecologically valuable sites.

We have declared a Climate and Nature Emergency, legislated to protect the Well-being of Future Generations, and put into law a requirement to reach NetZero by 2050. We must be prepared to follow through.