

PCC/1/1  
FEBRUARY 2020

**STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE A40  
LLANDDEWI VELFREY TO PENBLEWIN  
SCHEME**

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF

DARREN THOMAS, MBA, BEng (Hons), CEng, MICE, MIStructE

ON BEHALF OF PEMBROKESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

A40 LLANDDEWI VELFREY TO PENBLEWIN - PUBLIC INQUIRY.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Personal details**

1.2 My name is Darren Thomas. I have been employed by Pembrokeshire County Council as Head of Infrastructure since July 2018, and prior to this I was the Council's Head of Highways & Construction since 2005. My responsibility is for managing the building, highway and civil engineering design services team, highway management function (including on and off street parking control, Highway Development Control, and strategy functions), energy and sustainability management, coastal protection, and fleet / transport services. I also manage the direct labour "Engineering Works" team, undertaking highway maintenance, winter maintenance, surfacing and the delivery of highway / bridge engineering works.

1.3 I have a MBA, BEng (Hons) degree in Civil Engineering and I have been a Chartered Engineer for 27 years, being a Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Structural Engineers.

### **1.4 Experience**

1.5 I have been involved in civil and structural engineering since graduating in 1989 and have worked on a wide variety of schemes, including highways, buildings, bridges and coastal. This experience includes design office and site based work, as well as in the private sector. I am the chief technical officer for the authority responsible for formulation and overall responsibility for the delivery of highways and transport projects. I have been involved in a number of inquiries, including: Chief Witness at the Inquiry for the Bulford Road Johnston improvement; witness for the Council at the Special Assembly Procedure Committee for the draft A40 Penblewin Order; presenting evidence to the National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee on the Active Travel (Wales) Bill; and Chief Witness at the Inquiry for the Maidenwells Relief Road.

### **1.6 Scope of Evidence**

1.7 This proof of evidence sets out the Pembrokeshire County Council's SUPPORT for the A40 Llanddewi Velfrey to Penblewin scheme.

1.8 The Council have already set out in writing its support for the scheme, as shown in Appendix 1.

## **2 THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC VIEW**

2.1 The Cabinet's Programme for Administration is arranged around the portfolios of the Cabinet Members of Pembrokeshire County Council and sets out their political

Administration's aims and aspirations (ref: Item 17 the on following page: <https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees>). Under Economic Development their priorities are to work with partners to promote Pembrokeshire as a great place to visit, live and work and also to work to address Pembrokeshire's comparative disadvantages of remoteness and connectivity. Linked with this, under the theme of Transport & Infrastructure, the priorities of the Administration are noted to be: to support the delivery of the Llanddewi Velfrey bypass scheme and other key road schemes; and to improve Pembrokeshire's connectivity across road, rail, water and digital.

- 2.2 The Council's Corporate Plan 2019-2020 is its plan for the future and sets out how the Council will plan and manage services in a more sustainable way (ref: <https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/improvement-planning/corporate-plan>). The Plan is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to 'secure continuous improvement' and, since 2018, is aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Improvement Plan is the Council's main forward-looking document and sets out the organisation's objectives. This Plan has been structured around six objectives: education outcome improvements; social care focus on prevention; making Pembrokeshire economically competitive, productive and prosperous, a great place to visit, live and work; providing good quality housing; promoting pride in Pembrokeshire; and self-sustained, resourceful and vibrant communities.
- 2.3 Attention is drawn to the third objective "To make Pembrokeshire economically competitive, productive and prosperous, a great place to visit, live and work" in the context of supporting the delivery of the Llanddewi Velfrey bypass scheme. The Council wishes the local economy to thrive and be prosperous in order to provide opportunities for current and future generations of residents. The County's comparative disadvantages are seen as being relatively remote from main centres of population as well as not being well connected. To address this, it is considered that investment is needed in key infrastructure to support the local economy and its main industries in order to attract investment and opportunities. If this does not happen, the concern is that the impact would disproportionately fall on future generations.
- 2.4 The emphasis on economy is supported by the fact that Milford Haven has the UK's fifth busiest port. The County houses the Haven Waterway Enterprise Zone (ref: <https://businesswales.gov.wales/enterprisezones/zones/haven-waterway/about-haven-waterway-enterprise-zone>), which at its inception, was based uniquely on existing and potential new energy sites, building on the areas established industry base. Around 20% of the UK's energy supplies are received via Pembrokeshire, and the Zone remains an attractive location for energy companies with its access to energy infrastructure, established supply chain and distribution infrastructure, skilled workforce

and network of universities with expertise in a range of energy-related fields. The Zone is also gaining a marine energy focus, given its deep sea port facilities combined with marine conditions suited to wave and tidal stream technologies, plus the benefit of electricity grid access. It is noted that access to the waterway elements of the Enterprise Zone can also be made via the A477 to the South, and also utilising the A477 Cleddau Bridge, as a travel choice to access the northern shore. Notwithstanding, the A40 is considered also provides an important strategic link to the Enterprise Zone, particularly as three of the four Enterprise Zone areas (Haverfordwest Withybush; Trecwn and Fishguard Bay) are accessed off the A40.

- 2.5 The Council have taken the view outlined in the Improvement Plan, that if the local economy does not perform well in the long term, it is likely to have widespread implications, for instance, reducing or even reversing population growth and leading to an older population as younger people move out to seek opportunities elsewhere. Investing in key infrastructure is considered will increase the amount of investment other stakeholders are prepared to put in, and, in turn, can create a circle of increased confidence and investment in Pembrokeshire.
- 2.6 It is also noted that the Hywel Dda University Health have made a positive commitment that a new hospital will be built somewhere between Narberth and St Clears (ref: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/862/page/95315>). Clearly, an improved road would support this initiative.
- 2.7 The Llanddewi Velfrey Scheme is therefore seen strategically as a key piece of infrastructure to help improve access for Pembrokeshire.

### **3 THE COUNCIL'S VIEWS ON BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

- 3.1 As well as stressing the wider economic benefits above, the local benefits to the community in terms of relieving the impacts of traffic through the village of Llanddewi Velfrey are also noted. The Cabinet's Programme for Administration also has a focus on casualty reduction and safer roads. Although this is trunk road, and the qualitative evidence will rest with the Promoter in this respect, the Council have, over the years, also been made aware of significant concerns locally over the traffic issues through the village. The bypass scheme is envisaged will significantly ameliorate most of these concerns. Furthermore, coupled with the improvements to the walking & cycling facilities in the area proposed as part of the scheme, we believe that there will be significant overall improved opportunities created for walking and cycling, as well as benefits in terms of the reduced risks in terms of road safety, and casualty reduction.

#### **4 THE COUNCIL'S SUPPORT FOR THE SCHEME**

- 4.1 It should be noted that the support for this specific highway scheme should also be read in context with the Council's support for other transport measures. The Cabinet's Programme for Administration also highlights other measures including: to improve rail links to Pembrokeshire, and to develop a network of cycle and walking routes between towns to reduce car usage and encourage people to be more physically active. The objective to improve Pembrokeshire's connectivity across road, rail, water and digital is also emphasised in the Council's Improvement plan. The Llanddewi Velfrey scheme, whilst specifically a highway scheme, is being supported as it is believed it will, with the other transport projects being developed in a balanced way, compliment our key priorities and objectives that when taken together, support the people of Pembrokeshire.

#### **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The Council supports the A40 Llanddewi Velfrey to Penblewin scheme and hopes that the Inspector will recommend to the Welsh Ministers that the Side Roads Order and Compulsory Purchase Order as presented at the Public Local Inquiry be confirmed.

## APPENDIX 1: THE COUNCIL'S LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE SCHEME

Date / Dyddiad 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019  
Your ref - Eich cyfeirnod  
My ref - Fy nghyfeirnod DT/RJ  
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### Pembrokeshire County Council Cyngor Sir Penfro

IAN WESTLEY, M.A. B.Eng(Hon), C.Eng, MIMechE, M.CIBSE  
Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

DARREN THOMAS  
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Pennaeth Iaddeled

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Please ask for  
Os gwelwch yn dda gofynnwch am

Darren Thomas

Mr G.N. Jones  
Orders Branch, Transport  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

Dear Mr Jones

### **LONDON TO FISHGUARD TRUNK ROAD** **A40 LLANDDEWI VELFREY TO PENBLEWIN IMPROVEMENT**

I refer to your letter dated 30 July 2019 on the matter of the issue of the draft Order for the above mentioned scheme.

I understand from colleagues that other officers from within the Authority have separately submitted additional detailed comments relating to their specific areas of responsibility. We support and welcome an improvement scheme around Llanddewi Velfrey, and enhancements to the highway to improve road safety and capacity.

I trust this reply is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Darren Thomas  
Head of Infrastructure

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We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English, and will respond within a maximum of 15 working days. We will respond in the language in which the correspondence is received (unless you ask us to do otherwise). / Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg a byddwn yn ymateb cyn pen 15 diwrnod gwaith fan bellaf. Byddwn yn ymateb yn yr un iaith â'r ohebiaeth a dderbyniwyd (oni bai eich bod yn gofyn i ni wneud yn wahanol).

For a copy in large print, easy-read, Braille, audio, or an alternative language, please contact Pembrokeshire County Council on the number above. / Os am gopi mewn print mawr, fformat hawdd ei ddarllen, Braille, sain neu mewn iaith arall, cysylltwch â Chyngor Sir Penfro ar y rhif uchod.