

A40 Llanddewi Velfrey - Suggested Alternatives

1. Introduction

1.1. As stated previously I oppose any intervention in Ffynnon Wood or west thereof, but understand the need to find a resolution to the issue of pedestrian safety in Llanddewi Velfrey. Safety in Llanddewi Velfrey can be significantly improved without much of the environmental damage that the Welsh Government's preferred scheme would cause. Several options are presented here; depending on the option(s) selected the financial cost could also be much lower than the Welsh Government's scheme.

1.2. My initial objection letter (R0015-1) suggested the provision of an underpass, a further reduction in the speed limit, pavement widening, additional pavements and traffic calming measures. I wish to take this opportunity to clarify and update these proposals in light of the comments made by the Welsh Government in their response letter (R0015-2) dated 12th February 2020.

2. The Scheme Objectives

2.1. The Welsh Government's response (R0015-2 paragraphs 9.2 and 9.6) correctly argues that the alternatives suggested previously would not meet some of the scheme objectives. However, as Pembrokeshire Friends Of The Earth point out in their Proof Of Evidence (R0040-POE), the WelTAG Stage 3 Report assesses the Welsh Government's preferred scheme as not contributing to two of the scheme objectives (Doc.4.03.07 paragraph 4.7.2).

2.2. Therefore, neither the Welsh Government's scheme nor my alternatives contribute positively to all eight of the scheme objectives. This may imply that it is not possible for any one scheme to achieve this feat. Objectives 3 and 4 require interventions on the A40 and objectives 1 and 2 cannot be met by a road scheme without compromising objective 7 and probably objective 8. As a result it is necessary to either prioritise some objectives over others or deliver a package of schemes with each addressing different objectives.

2.3. I take the view that objectives 3, 4 and 7 are the most important, followed by objectives 8, 5 and 6. Objectives 7 and 8 are considered to be far more important than objectives 1 and 2. My suggested alternatives are based on these priorities.

3. Preferred Alternatives

3.1. This section lists my preferred alternatives to the Welsh Government's scheme. These may be adopted individually (contributing to a limited set of the scheme objectives) or together as a package (contributing to all scheme objectives). While the benefits they provide may be slightly less than the Welsh Government's scheme, all these options (even in combination) would, if adopted instead, significantly reduce most of the environmental impacts. Some impacts (such as the damage to woodland) could be entirely eliminated.

3.2. Provision of pedestrian crossing

3.2.1. Of the eight identified problems (Doc. 1.0.1 paragraph 5.3), the most important and relevant in my view is the community severance in Llanddewi Velfrey. It is essential to provide pedestrians with a safe means of crossing the A40 in the village. This would contribute to the aims of promoting active travel and reducing the risk of collisions (in this case collisions with pedestrians) (scheme objectives 4 and 5). It would also address the problem of community severance, thereby achieving scheme objective 3.

3.2.2. A pedestrian crossing could take one of several forms, each with positive and negative aspects, as listed below. Any of these would ensure that pedestrians can cross in safety. A bypass alone would not do this; there would still be a risk of pedestrians miss-judging the speed of a vehicle and attempting to cross when it is not safe to do so.

3.2.3. The lowest cost option would be to replace the existing pedestrian island near the war memorial with a Puffin crossing. This option would have the advantage of providing step-free access for persons of reduced mobility but would impact on trunk road traffic. This would be my preferred option.

3.2.4. Provision of a footbridge would avoid the impact on trunk road traffic. The main issues with this option are the limited space available and the visual impact. I would support a footbridge if one can be accommodated.

3.2.5. The issues with a footbridge led to my proposed provision of an underpass. As the Welsh Government pointed out in their response letter (R0015-2), providing access to this from the south would require the acquisition of land outside the existing highway boundary. However, this additional land-take would be far less than required for the Welsh Government's preferred scheme. Furthermore, the land required is a narrow strip of agricultural land along the boundary of one field. It would not result in any agricultural severance. Additional land-take (in the same field) would likely be needed for machinery during construction of the underpass but this would be temporary.

3.2.6. Local support for footbridge and underpass options was implied on page 3 of the 1995 traffic calming report (R0047-POE-1 (10th page)).

3.3. Further reduction in the speed limit through the village

3.3.1. Excessive speed of traffic was raised as the greatest concern of respondents to question 2 of the 2006 consultation (Doc. 4.02.07, section 3.2). In 2009, the Western Telegraph reported that a lady had "twice had her handbag ripped off her shoulder by the slipstream of passing lorries." (Doc. R0047-POE-3, page 11) The article also mentioned that villagers were to petition the Welsh Assembly requesting a 30mph speed limit and speed cameras.

3.3.2. By allowing more 'thinking time' and reducing the braking distance, a 30mph speed limit would reduce the risk of collisions within the village. Any collisions that do occur would be less severe due to the reduced levels of kinetic energy involved. This would therefore contribute to objective 4.

3.3.3. A reduced speed limit would improve actual and perceived safety for walkers on the pavements alongside the A40 in Llanddewi Velfrey. It would therefore contribute to promoting active travel in the form of walking.

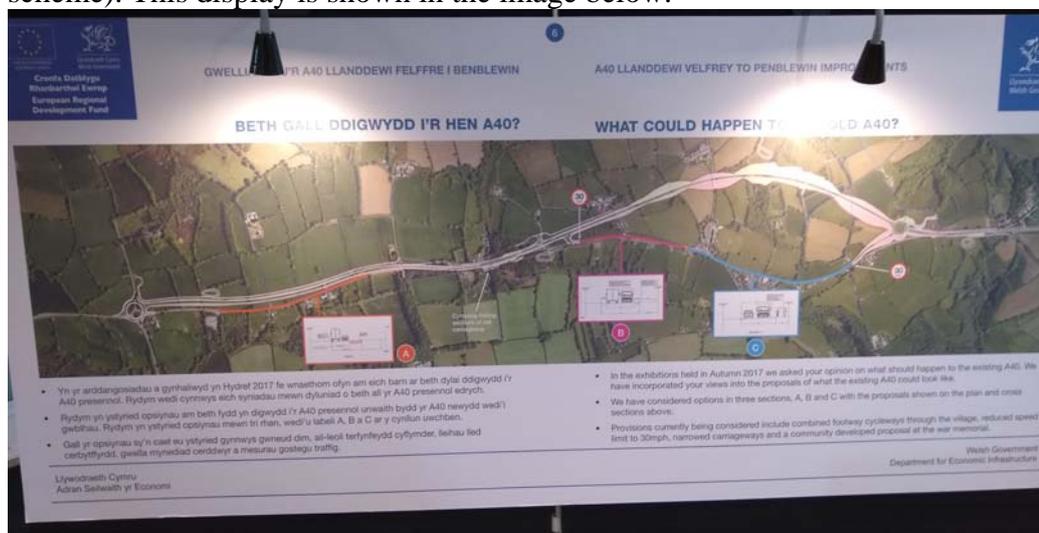
3.4. Traffic calming measures

3.4.1. Part 2 of Gloria Thomas's proof of evidence includes an extract from the March 17th 2010 Western Telegraph which showed that compliance with the existing 40mph speed limit was poor (R0047-POE-2 page 8). The average speed was reported to be 46mph with over half of the passing vehicles exceeding the speed limit. Some vehicles even passed at 60mph.

3.4.2. The Welsh Government's response letter states that "Traffic calming measures, such as the provision of speed bumps, would reduce the speed of traffic". Traffic calming measures would therefore assist in alleviating the problems described in paragraph 3.4.1 above.

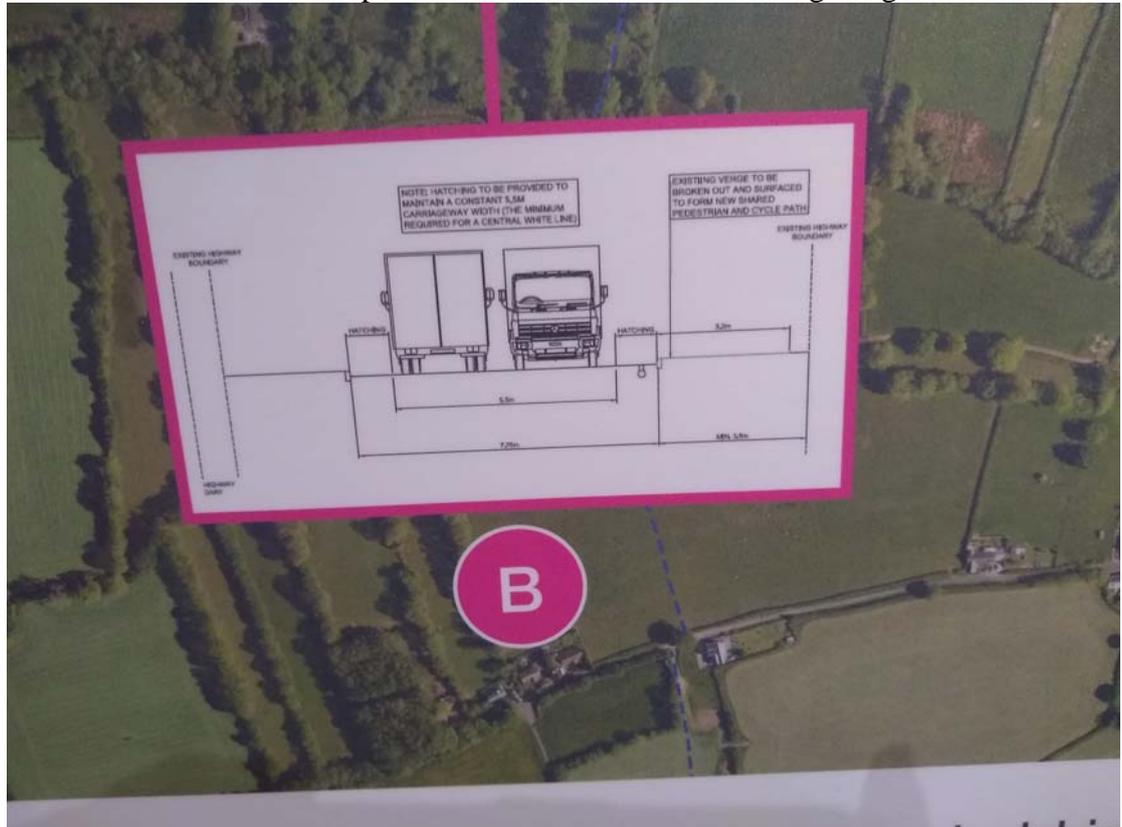
3.5. Pavement improvements along the A40

3.5.1. The draft orders exhibition held for this scheme in Llanddewi Velfrey village hall displayed proposals for pavement improvements along the current A40 (which would be de-trunked under the Welsh Government's preferred scheme). This display is shown in the image below.



3.5.2. For the avoidance of doubt, my proposal relates to widening of the current narrow pavement between the junction with Llandaff Row and the east end of the village. This falls entirely within the section marked C (in blue) on the above image.

3.5.3. The display at the public exhibition indicated that a carriageway width of 5.5m is the minimum requirement for a central white line and would be sufficient for two lorries to pass. This is shown in the following image.



3.5.4. The Welsh Government's response letter indicates that the current carriageway width is 6.5 metres in places. There is therefore scope to reduce the carriageway width by 0.5m and increase the pavement width by the same amount. The resulting minimum carriageway width of 6m would still be 0.5m greater than the 5.5m minimum identified in paragraph 3.5.3 above.

3.5.5. The additional 0.5m of pavement width would improve pedestrian safety and therefore promote active travel and reduce the risk of collisions with pedestrians.

3.5.6. This option may work best in combination with a 30mph speed limit as proposed in section 3.3, which would mitigate the risk to drivers caused by the reduced carriageway width.

3.6. Provision of new pavement on side road

3.6.1. As a minor supporting measure, to promote active travel (walking) in Llanddewi Velfrey, I propose that the road leading north from the war memorial towards Llanfallteg be narrowed in order to provide a pavement.

3.6.2. The current absence of a pavement at this location is illustrated by the photograph below.



3.7. Enhanced rail services to and from Pembrokeshire

3.7.1. It is recognised that none of the above options (sections 3.2 to 3.7 of this document) would contribute to scheme objectives 1 and 2. It is not certain that these objectives can be met in a globally responsible manner. Any globally responsible solution, should one exist, is likely to be found by applying the sustainable transport hierarchy found in Planning Policy Wales (Doc. 4.01.30, page 48). This states that public transport should be prioritised over private motor vehicles.

3.7.2. Improvements to rail services to Fishguard Harbour, Haverfordwest and Milford Haven from Cardiff and Swansea could be a solution. These could deliver economic benefits and would provide better access to towns along the east-west corridor. They would therefore contribute to scheme objectives 1 and 2.

3.7.3. If additional trains included express services it would be possible to substantially reduce journey times to and from Cardiff, potentially by over 15 minutes. This could reduce the perception of Pembrokeshire being remote.

3.7.4. By attracting modal shift away from the private car, improved rail services should reduce traffic on the A40. Reduced traffic would lower the risk of accidents, providing a small contribution to objective 4.

4. Conclusion

4.1. The Welsh Government's preferred scheme would deliver significant benefits but would result in extensive environmental impacts including fuelling climate change. This document proposes alternatives that would in combination deliver many of the scheme benefits without the environmental damage. They achieve this by foregoing the dubious benefit of small time savings for motorists.