



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

16th OCTOBER 2018

MAJOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UPDATE

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

AUTHOR: Andrew Griffiths, Head of Highways and Engineering (01443 281117)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the current status in respect of a number of key strategic transportation infrastructure projects.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Notes the progress made to date on Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link Road, Llanharan Bypass, A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill) and the Council's current Park and Ride projects.
- 2.2 Notes the Welsh Government A465 dualling proposals and the impact on the Cynon Gateway North Link Road
- 2.3 Considers the issues of the Gelli-Treorchy Relief Road and the alternative proposals for a Treorchy Link Road.
- 2.4 Considers the funding of further works and studies to progress these key strategic transportation infrastructure projects.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 These major transport infrastructure projects include the provision of link roads, relief roads, dualling of existing highway network and key park and rides that will have major transportation and regeneration benefits for RCT. These proposals are linked to the Council's Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOA) Cynon Gateway – Energizing the Region (based in Hirwaun), The A4119 Corridor: The Regional Rhondda

Gateway, but also to the wider economic opportunities for Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Cardiff Capital Region.

3.2 Well planned and delivered strategic transportation infrastructure projects have the potential to offer the following benefits;

- Improve capacity, reliability and resilience of the strategic transport network.
- Improve provision for cyclists and pedestrians, encouraging healthier lifestyles and a consequent reduction in the number of short vehicle journeys.
- Enhance road safety and reduce casualties.
- Improve accessibility and connectivity, improving links to employment and key services and improving our infrastructure to make our communities more attractive for investors and employers.
- Encourage and promote sustainable transport and, closely aligned to the Metro, influence modal shift.
- Act as catalysts for economic activity, new development and regeneration across RCT.
- They present opportunities for businesses and suppliers across the Heads of the Valleys region and western area of RCT and Wales as a whole. Businesses and suppliers gain productivity benefits from being close to one another and from access to larger and deeper labour markets.
- The Cynon Gateway North project, aligned with dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys project which will improve connectivity between Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and the Heads of the Valleys region, west Wales and the Midlands.
- 80% of public transport journeys take place by bus. Buses are seriously impacted by congestion. Appropriate strategic enhancements to the road network can create capacity for reduced and more reliable journey times for buses.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Council is progressing a range of major projects. This section identifies the current status of these projects and provides an update on progress. It also highlights some schemes that, whilst identified in the Council's Local Development Plan, have yet to gain traction towards scheme development and delivery.

4.2 Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link

4.2.1 The A4059 junction modification works which commenced in October 2017 were completed in May 2018 and the junction is now open and operational.

- 4.2.2 The Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) has been confirmed by the Welsh Government and subsequently Notice to Treat and Notice to Enter has been served on all third party land in known ownership and a General Vesting Declaration Order has been made to acquire the land whose ownership is unknown. From 20th June 2018, RCT and its contractors are able to enter land to undertake works.
- 4.2.3 As a result of modifications to the original design a Section 73 planning application was made by Council's appointed design and build contractor Walters/Sisk. The application was subsequently approved by Council in May 2018 and all pre-commencement conditions have been discharged prior to commencement of construction.
- 4.2.4 Walters/Sisk completed the design and commenced the main construction phase for bridge and road works in July 2018 with project completion scheduled for Autumn / Winter 2019/20.
- 4.2.5 In parallel, Alun Griffiths Contractors have been appointed by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water to undertake a contract to divert the trunk sewer on the east side of the river in preparation for main bridge works. This works will be carried out during Autumn 2018.

4.3 Llanharan Bypass

- 4.3.1 The first section of the Llanharan Bypass was constructed as part of the Llanilid housing development and has yet to open to the public. The middle section of the route will be constructed by a housing developer and is phased for completion in conjunction with house completions as a requirement of the planning consent for the development. Current planning conditions require completion of the middle section of the bypass before the 801st house (of 1840 houses) is built. The final eastern section of the Llanharan Bypass i.e. the crossing of the main Cardiff to Swansea railway line and connection to the A473 to the east of Llanharan is currently being progressed by the Council.
- 4.3.2 The Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) Stage 1 has been recently completed for the Bypass and the Stage 2 study has been commissioned.
- 4.3.3 The preliminary design for the final section of the Bypass has commenced which will investigate and identify the preferred route for the Bypass. As part of this process, site investigation, land mapping and ecological surveys have commenced which will inform route selection. It is envisaged that these studies and design will not be complete until Autumn 2019.
- 4.3.4 It is envisaged that the following statutory procedures will be required for the project i.e. planning permission, Compulsory Purchase Order

(CPO), Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) and a Side Roads Order (SRO). A specific report on these matters will be presented to Cabinet during the latter part of 2019.

4.4 A4119 Ely Valley Road Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)

- 4.4.1 On 21st June 2018, the Cabinet approved proposals to progress the dualling of the A4119 (Stinkpot Hill) as part of the strategic highway within RCT. The WeITAG Stage 1 and 2 studies for the project have been completed with Stage 3 commissioned.
- 4.4.2 Land mapping of the land required for the project has been completed and land acquisition negotiations have commenced with third party landowners. Preliminary design, site investigation and ecological surveys have commenced with the preliminary design scheduled to be complete in late Autumn 2018. A public consultation will be undertaken after this date.
- 4.4.3 The programme for implementation of the dualling project will be dictated by statutory processes for land acquisition. The project will proceed at pace if the Council is able to purchase third party land by negotiation. However, it is highly likely that a CPO and SRO will be required.
- 4.4.4 Some queues occurs on the two roundabouts immediately north of the Coed Ely roundabout on the A4119, ie. the Tonyrefail and Trebanog roundabouts. Consideration should be given to investigate these with a potential "quick win" solution via using verges to increase lane widths, etc as successfully implemented as part of the Making Better Use programme on other roundabouts in RCT eg on A4059.

4.5 Park and Rides

- 4.5.1 A number of park and ride projects have been identified within RCT. The 3 main strategic park and rides currently being taken forward are Abercynon Phase 2, Porth Phase 2 and Pontyclun Phase 2. More detail is contained in the Park and Ride Capacity Review approved by Cabinet on 28th September 2017. <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2017/09/28/Reports/AgendaItem8ParkandRideCapacityReview.pdf>
- 4.5.2 Abercynon Park and Ride Phase 2 is the provision of a 300+ space car park situated adjacent to the existing 160+ space car park at Navigation Park, on land owned by Welsh Government. The preliminary design has been completed with a planning application submitted in August 2018. Construction is scheduled to commence late Autumn 2018. Negotiations are currently ongoing with Welsh

Government over future ownership and maintenance of the car park. The existing car park is heavily oversubscribed and the additional parking capacity will come on stream as early enhancements to rail services will start to be delivered by Transport for Wales Rail Services (the new Keolis-Amey joint venture franchise winner) ahead of electrification of the Cynon and Merthyr lines which will see the station served by 8 trains per hour in each direction from around 2021/22.

4.5.3 Porth Park and Ride Phase 2 is the provision of a 23 space car park which is situated to the north of the Phase 1, 73 space car park which was opened in Summer 2016 by Cabinet Secretary Ken Skates AM. The car parks form an integral part of the Porth Town Centre Regeneration Strategy and aligns with Metro. Planning consent for the car park will be required and all statutory procedures and design are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2018/19. Construction is scheduled for 2019/20.

4.5.4 Pontyclun Park and Ride Phase 2 is the provision of a car park of approximately 50 spaces on land currently owned by Network Rail (similar to Porth Park and Ride Phase 1). Phase 1 works was completed in Spring 2018 which provided an additional 14 parking spaces at the existing car park situated adjacent to Pontyclun Rugby Club. The site potentially has a number of Network Rail services and plant buried underground and these services are currently being identified as in order to ascertain the cost implications to the project. Construction is not anticipated until late 2019/20.

4.6 Cynon Gateway North (A4059 Aberdare Bypass Extension)

4.6.1 The project complements the proposed dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road by providing a direct link from the A4059 Aberdare Bypass, east of Penywaun to a new junction at Croesbychan on the A465.

4.6.2 This project is included in the Council's LDP under policy CS8 and has benefitted from Welsh Government grant funding over successive years until 2015/16. This funding supported the progression of initial surveys and project development to a stage that enabled informed discussions to take place with Welsh Government regarding junction arrangements within the A465 dualling project to accommodate the Cynon Gateway project.

4.6.3 The project now benefits from a commitment from Welsh Government to work in partnership with the Council to bring the project forward. In particular a letter from the Cabinet Secretary, Ken Skates AM of 27 February 2018, notes:

- The significant contribution the project makes to mitigating the additional traffic generated through Llwydcoed,

- The increased Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of the A465 project with the Cynon Gateway scheme.
- The benefits the scheme can bring in supporting the development of the Cynon Valley area and complementing investment in the A465 dualling.

4.6.4 The project is technically challenging and will need to mitigate acknowledged environmental and ecological sensitivities as well as the physical challenges posed by the geography of the area; crossing the Afon Cynon, the mineral rail line, running in proximity to a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the proximity of housing to the west.

4.6.5 The revised delivery programme for Sections 5 & 6 of the A465 Dualling now anticipates works starting in 2020 and completion of the project during 2023. The outcome of the public inquiry that has taken place in the Welsh Governments A465 Dualling CPO and SRO has yet to be reported and in light of this these timescales, subject to approval of the project, may need to be reviewed. The aspiration for Cynon Gateway should be to be on site and starting works during the construction phase of the A465 works.

4.7 Gelli / Treorchy Relief Road

4.7.1 Proposals for a single carriageway relief road providing a high quality link between the middle and upper Rhondda Fawr are included in the Council's LDP under policy CS8. The proposed route is safeguarded from development whilst acknowledging the intent to investigate alternative alignments before finally adopting a route to take forward to detailed design.

4.7.2 The proposals in the LDP show a route running over a considerable distance along the western periphery of the settlement. Whilst technically feasible, the principle of the project evolved at a time when the Council was engaged in the development and delivery of two major bypass projects, each approaching £100M in value. Since this time, Welsh Government funding for major transport projects at a local authority level has all but ceased. The current Local Transport Fund (previously Transport Grant) now amounts to £5M/yr across Wales with 22 local authorities bidding to secure a portion of this funding.

4.7.3 There are no up to date costings for the Gelli / Treorchy Relief Road but the scale of the project means that costs are likely to be well in excess of the cost of each of the Welsh Government funded major road projects referred to above and therefore a project of this scale is undeliverable in the current financial climate.

- 4.7.4 It is also questionable whether a bypass that takes the majority of traffic out of Treorchy is in the best interests of the town or whether it would have a detrimental impact on the viability of this thriving town.
- 4.7.5 What is clear is that there are long-standing congestion issues at Stag Square. Whilst initiatives have been developed to mitigate the issues, it is fair to say that a local solution is unlikely to resolve this problem.
- 4.7.6 It is therefore appropriate to investigate alternative options in order to assess whether a substantive project of a more affordable scale could offer some resolution to the congestion issues at Stag Square, possibly following the same principles as Mountain Ash where cross-valley connectivity will deliver improved accessibility and congestion relief.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Equality Impact Assessment screening forms have been prepared for the projects. It has been found that full reports are not required. The projects will enhance existing movements along the strategic highway network and hence between communities, whilst also contributing to modal shift.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The majority of projects included in this report were identified within the Council's Adopted Local Development Plan which was subject to extensive consultation and public engagement.
- 6.2 Major projects will be subject to statutory processes and consequent consultation.
- 6.3 Consultation has and is continuing to be undertaken with a wide number of internal and external bodies on these various projects.
- 6.2 A public exhibition has already been undertaken on Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link and Abercynon Park & Ride and each of the remaining projects will also have a public exhibition individually.
- 6.3 Consultation has commenced with a number of third party landowners in respect of the dualling of the A4119.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 A total of £4.894m funding has currently been received from Welsh Government and currently a sum of £7.402m (inclusive of S106 funds) has been allocated from RCT capital programme for the Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link.

- 7.2 A total of £0.1m funding has currently been received from Welsh Government and currently a sum of £1.15m has been allocated from RCT capital programme for the A4119 dualling (Stinkpot Hill)
- 7.3 A total of £1.15m has currently been allocated for development of the Llanharan Bypass project from RCT funds.
- 7.4 A total of £232k has been received from the Welsh Government and £349k from RCT funds has been allocated up to 2016/17 with no further funding allocated / received to date for the Cynon Gateway North project.
- 7.5 There has been no allocation of monies to date for the Gelli Treorchy Relief Road.
- 7.6 A total of £1.4m has been allocated by Council for the design and implementation of the park and ride projects with particular emphasis on Porth, Abercynon and Pontyclun.
- 7.7 Porth Park and Ride Phase 1(completed) and 2 has received £1.935m funding from Welsh Government with £0.646m (inclusive of slippage) funding currently allocated from RCT funds to complete Phase 2 project.
- 7.8 Abercynon Park and Ride Phase 2 has currently received £0.787m funding from Welsh Government with a further £0.43m (inclusive of slippage) currently allocated from RCT funds.
- 7.9 Pontyclun Park and Ride Phase 2 has currently an allocation of £0.41m (inclusive of slippage) from RCT funds.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The Council has the power to acquire 3rd party land for these projects by a CPO and the ability to make a SRO under the provisions of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 and Sections 14,125, 239,240,246,250 and 260 of the Highways Act.
- 8.2 The legal implications will be considered on a project by project basis and will be highlighted in subsequent Cabinet reports.

9 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 9.1 The projects support a number of the authorities' own plans, policies and strategies that relate not only to transport, but the wider local agenda.

Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The projects will help achieve the well-being goals and objectives of the Act. Measures along the various transport corridors to reduce journey times and improve reliability will help to improve access to key employment sites in the northern and western parts of the borough. Increasing the proportion of employed residents will support economic growth in the area, help raise household income levels, tackle inequality and generate greater prosperity for communities. The projects will help to reduce traffic congestion on the highway network and as a result there will be a reduction in the carbon footprint. The measures will help to sustain local bus services which are suffering from congestion, this will support social inclusion, particularly in deprived communities where car ownership is low.

Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

All the road projects will include Active Travel Measures where appropriate and complimentary dedicated active travel infrastructure as required under the Act. Enhancing strategic corridors can create additional capacity on routes to accommodate Active Travel.

Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan – Replaces the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) and a number of different partnership plans that were previously produced, including the Community Strategy, Children and Young Peoples Plan, Health Social Care and Well Being Strategy, Community Safety Plan and Local Housing Strategy. The Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan has been produced by an overarching partnership of organisations in the public and voluntary sectors. The aim is to promote thriving communities, healthy people and a strong economy. These are closely aligned to the Welsh Government's 'Programme for Government Priority Areas'.

Local Development Plan (LDP) – The LDP provides the framework for the development and use of land within Rhondda Cynon Taf. It sets out the objectives and priorities relating to the development and use of land and the policies and proposals for implementing them.

Core Policy CS8 – Transportation, includes specific reference to the Gelli Treorchy Relief Road (CS8(a)(1)), A465 dualling (CS8(a)(4)) and the A4059 Aberdare Bypass Extension – Cynon Valley Gateway North (CS8(a)(3)).

Policy Core Policy CS8 – Transportation, includes specific reference to the A4119/A473 corridor ie dualling of the A4119. It is recognised that the corridor is a strategic transport corridor and this corridor area is subject to high demands for economic and housing developments. This policy safeguards the

provision improvements to this corridor via a strategic transport corridor management system.

Policy NSA 20 includes specific reference to the Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link and the Mountain Ash Northern Cross Valley Link. These road schemes are essential to improve accessibility for local residents to services and employment opportunities, improve the environment by removing vehicles from congested areas i.e. A4059 and B4275 and to attract investment into the area.

Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOA's) – The current context of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Valleys Taskforce means that it is more important than ever to identify where there are key strategic opportunities to work with partners to deliver economic growth in Rhondda Cynon Taf. As such, RCT has identified key strategic opportunity areas to maximise the benefit of economic regeneration and ensure RCT is successful in the global competition for investment. SOA's are geographical areas where resources are focused to provide opportunities for the private sector to invest and create new jobs. Each SOA aims to provide a comprehensive and focused package to encourage investment and enterprise. On 21st September 2017, the Council approved five Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOAs) and in particular the “the Cynon Gateway” and also the “A4119 Corridor”. In doing so, the Council has committed to developing and delivering projects that will achieve the primary aspirations of this Strategy, namely enabling significant economic growth and jobs.

- 9.2 The proposals to dual the A4119 Stinkpot Hill, Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link, Cynon Gateway North, Llanharan Bypass, Treorchy Link and the Park and Ride projects will make significant contributions towards the Corporate Priorities “Building a Strong Economy” and “Improving our Communities”. The proposals have a significant impact on improving accessibility and connectivity which is recognised as a fundamental factor in linking the labour market with employment opportunities and supporting economic activity.
- 9.3 It is noted that these projects would be in accord with the Corporate Plan commitment to invest in highways infrastructure and to improve the transport network.
- 9.4 On 21st September 2017 Council approved the Strategic Opportunity Areas and in particular the Cynon Gateway and the A4119 Corridor.
- 9.5 The projects will help support the delivery of a Wales of cohesive communities, a prosperous Wales and a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The provision of the major transportation infrastructure indicated in the report will help to relieve congestion, improve safety and improve the resilience of the highway network.
- 10.2 The park and ride projects will also help to promote modal shift by encouraging the general public to utilise public transport coupled with the benefits of the South Wales Metro.
- 10.3 The provision of the major transport infrastructure which complements Welsh Government infrastructure proposals will help to promote economic growth and potential creation of employment prospects for the residents of RCT not just locally but also regionally.
- 10.4 The major transport infrastructure will also create dedicated active travel infrastructure as part of the design and also help to enhance active travel measures on the existing corridors.
- 10.4 The proposals are in accord with a number of national and local policies which will help in economic growth, increasing household income levels, greater prosperity and make communities and facilities more cohesive and accessible.
- 10.5 RCT will continue to liaise with Welsh Government and the Cardiff Capital Region in order to obtain and maximise any potential sources of funding for the implementation of these projects.
- 10.6 Consideration should be given for further funding from within RCT to continue the development / implementation of these projects.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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16.10.18

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Item: **MAJOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS
UPDATE**

Background Papers

None.

Officer to contact: A Griffiths