



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

3rd OCTOBER 2018

**A465 HEADS OF THE VALLEYS DUALLING SECTIONS 5 AND 6
DOWLAI TOP TO HIRWAUN**

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND FRONTLINE
SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL,
COUNCILLOR A MORGAN.**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the current situation regarding the A465 Heads of the Valleys Dualling Sections 5 and 6 Dowlais Top to Hirwaun.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Notes the proposals drawn-up by the Welsh Government to dual the existing A465 between Dowlais Top and Hirwaun.
- 2.2 Notes the letter of support from the Welsh Government in respect of the Council's Cynon Gateway North (see Appendix A).
- 2.3 Agrees to the Council supporting the Welsh Government's proposals for the dualling of the A465.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This major improvement to the existing strategic trunk highway network on the A465 i.e. the dualling of the section of the A465 between Dowlais Top and Hirwaun, a length of 17.7km, will see the dualling of this important part of the Welsh Government's strategic road network and Trans-European Transport (TEN-T) Network connecting South and West Wales to the English Midlands. The improvement is not only integral to the national and regional strategic highway network, it is also linked to part of the Strategic Opportunity Area (SOA) Cynon Gateway –

Energizing the Region (based in Hirwaun), but also to the wider economic opportunities for Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Cardiff Capital Region.

3.2 The project will have transportation and regeneration benefits including:-

- It will improve capacity and resilience of the A465 for the section concerned which currently experiences congestion during peak hours and will be the final stage of dualling this strategic route.
- It will improve connectivity between Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and the Heads of the Valleys region, west Wales and the Midlands.
- It will facilitate economic regeneration and development of the northern area of RCT, especially the SOA the Cynon Gateway, and encourage investment in the wider area.
- It will provide access to employment across the region for commuters and job seekers to strategically significant employment sites as well as access to key services such as education and health facilities.
- It presents opportunities for businesses and suppliers across the Heads of the Valleys region 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.
- It will act as a catalyst for the development and construction of the Cynon Gateway North highway linking to the A4059.
- It will improve reliability and journey times.
- It will enhance road safety and reduce casualties.
- Improve provision for cyclists and pedestrians, providing opportunity for healthy lifestyle and a reduction in short vehicle journeys.

4. **BACKGROUND**

4.1 The need to dual the A465 between Abergavenny and Hirwaun was identified in the 1990 South Wales Area Traffic Study. The length between Abergavenny and Hirwaun was identified for upgrade leading to a public consultation in 1994 and the announcement of a Preferred Route in 1995. Between Dowlais Top and Hirwaun, this comprised of widening of the existing A465 corridor with a modification at Hirwaun creating a new off-line section to the south between the Hirwaun and Trewaun junctions

- 4.2 In 1997, a draft Line Order and Environmental Statement was published for the project as well as draft Side Road and Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO and SRO) for the sections between Tredegar to Dowlais Top and Abergavenny to Gilwern. A Public Local inquiry followed in 1998 and in 1999 the Line Order for the A465 Abergavenny to Hirwaun was made along with the CPO and SRO.
- 4.3 Development and implementation of the sections of the route has since progressed with only sections 5 and 6 (ie Dowlais Top to Hirwaun) not complete or currently under construction. The Welsh Government and their Technical Advisor, Jacobs, have been developing the outline design of the 1999 Line Order route. This has resulted in the need to publish a draft Amendment Order to the 1999 Line Order for the section between Dowlais Top and Hirwaun by the Welsh Govt.
- 4.4 In July and August 2017, the draft Orders, along with the Environmental Statement and a Statement to Inform and Appropriate Assessment for the Dowlais Top to Hirwaun sections were published and exhibited at the draft Orders Exhibitions held during August 2017.
- 4.5 In April 2018 the Local Public Inquiry for the Dowlais Top to Hirwaun sections of the A465 was held in Merthyr Tydfil and was completed in May. The Inspector's decision is anticipated in September / October 2018.
- 4.6 The A465 passes through the Heads of the Valleys region, an area of economic and social deprivation which has been the subject of regeneration programmes. The problems have been linked in part to poor accessibility to key public services and connectivity between local communities, and the main towns and cities. The Our Valleys, Our Future Delivery Plan and the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal identify the importance of transport improvements to economic growth. The dualling would address congestion, and safety capacity issues completing a dual carriageway route through the Valleys, providing a critical Northern Cross valley link for the Metro and improving the resilience of the City Deal transport network.
- 4.7 The dualling would be likely to deliver wider economic benefits including social impact of improved accessibility, increased social inclusion, improved accessibility for tourists and the perception and attractiveness of the Heads of the Valleys as an area in which to invest.
- 4.8 On 21st September 2017, the Council approved five Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOAs) and in particular the "the Cynon Gateway." 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. There are three main areas in this SOA; Tower Plateaux, Bryn Pica and Hirwaun

Industrial Estate. The SOA recognises that the Council will need to work with partners on delivering projects and the A465 dualling was noted as being of key importance.

4.9 Council officers from various departments have been actively working with the Welsh Government and Jacobs since 2015 in respect to the proposed dualling works within the RCT boundary in order to mitigate any impact on communities, the transportation network and the environment, whilst also seeking to deliver key benefits for the Council such as key transport links, improved junctions and accessibility for development sites.

4.10 As a result of the discussions with the Welsh Government and Jacobs on their project, the following has been achieved:

- Inclusion of an additional junction at Croesbychan on the A465 to facilitate the Cynon Valley Gateway North (A4059 Aberdare Bypass extension)
- Recognition that the Cynon Gateway North will mitigate any effects of the A465 dualling on the local road network, supporting development of the Cynon Valley.
- Welsh government has committed to working in partnership with RCT to progress development of the Cynon Valley Gateway North Link.
- Replacement of T-junction at B4276 Merthyr Road and Swansea Road with a roundabout to improve flow of traffic movements.
- Amendment of tie in details at Hirwaun Interchange and Trewaun roundabout to facilitate for future development in accordance with RCT's LDP.
- Remediation works to be undertaken to any Welsh Government assets to be handed over to RCT as part of the de-trunking process to insure the assets are fit for purpose at hand-over.
- Commuted sums being made available for future maintenance of any Welsh Government assets to be transferred to RCTCBC.
- Agreement on provision of non motorised (active travel) routes as part of the dualling project.

Council officers will continue to work closely with the Welsh Government, their Technical Advisors and the contractor to ensure that the above are achieved.

4.11 The project is being funded through the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) and is anticipated to be completed during 2022.

4.12 A plan of the proposed route is included at Appendix B.

4.13 The A465 dualling is in accord with the following:

Welsh Assembly Government Policy

Wales Spatial Plan (2008)
Wales Transport Strategy (2008)
National Transport Plan (2010, updated 2011)
Active Travel Action Plan for Wales (2016)
Heads of the Valleys Action Plan “Turning Heads: A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020”
One Wales : One Planet – the Sustainable Development Scheme for Wales (2009)
Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan (2012)
National Transport Finance Plan (2015)
Road Safety Framework for Wales (2013)
Vibrant and Viable Places (2013)
Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021
Prosperity for All : the national Strategy and Economic Action Plan (2017)
Our Valleys our Future (2017)

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required. The A465 dualling Dowlais Top to Hirwaun will enhance existing movements along the strategic highway network and hence between communities.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the stakeholders and parties affected by the A465 dualling Dowlais Top to Hirwaun and these include the Council’s departments, statutory bodies, statutory undertakers and third parties whose land is required for the proposals directly by the Welsh Government and their Technical Advisors.

6.2 Close liaison with RCT will continue throughout the project.

6.3 Further information from the Welsh Government and their consultants can be found on the following websites / links:

<https://beta.gov.wales/a465-section-5-and-6-dowlais-top-hirwaun>

<http://a465-dualling-persona-pi.com/index>

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 The Council has previously obtained funding from the Welsh Government to undertake initial investigations for the Cynon Valley Gateway North, but has not received any funding from 2016/17 onwards.

- 7.2 The current estimated cost of the Cynon Valley Gateway North is £30M and is inclusive of design, construction, land purchase, compensation and risk. It is envisaged that this cost could reduce as further investigation work and preliminary design is undertaken.
- 7.3 The Welsh Government is committed to working in partnership with RCT to progress development of the Cynon Valley Gateway North project with a view to opening the link as soon as it is practicable to do so.
- 7.4 All assets which are to be handed over to RCT as part of the detrunking process will have remediation works to bring up to an adoptable standard and will transfer with an agreed commuted sum for future maintenance.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Part of the land which will be compulsorily acquired by the Welsh Government is in the ownership of RCT.
- 8.2 The powers being exercised by the Welsh Ministers in making the compulsory purchase order and side roads order are sections 10, 12, 14, 125, 239, 240, 246, 250, 260 and 268 Highways Act 1980 and section 2 of, and paragraph 1(1)(b), (3) and (4) of Part 1 of Schedule 2 Acquisition of Land Act 1981.

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

- 9.1 The A465 dualling Dowlais Top to Hirwaun supports 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 A465 dualling Dowlais Top to Hirwaun will help achieve the well-being goals and objectives of the Act. Measures along this transport corridor to reduce journey times and improve reliability will help to improve access to key employment sites in the northern part 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 safety issues with the existing route will be alleviated by the project

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 A465 dualling (CS8(a)(4)) and the A4059 Aberdare Bypass Extension – Cynon Valley Gateway North (CS8(a)(3)).

Policy NSA8 – Land South of Hirwaun – for construction of 400 dwellings, 36 hectares of employment, a new primary school, a retail store, medical/community centre and informal recreation.

Policy NSA22 – Rail Network and Station Improvements – former freight line between Aberdare and former Tower Colliery and provision of station at Hirwaun.

Policy NSA21.1 – Park and Ride / Park and Share Provision at Strategic Site 5: Land south of Hirwaun.

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." 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 A465 Dowlais Top to Hirwaun will make a significant contribution towards the Corporate Priorities "Building a Strong Economy" and "Improving our Communities". The proposal has 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 this Welsh Government project 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.
- 9.5 The dualling of the A465 Dowlais Top to Hirwaun 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 enhancement of this important transport corridor brings with it not only local benefits but also improved connectivity within the region and nationally delivering greater economic opportunities.
- 10.2 The dualling of the A465 Dowlais Top to Hirwaun will improve journey time reliability, reduce journey times, reduce congestion, improve capacity and safety.
- 10.3 The dualling will aid and act as a catalyst for the Strategic Opportunity Area the Cynon Gateway.
- 10.4 The Welsh Government will work in partnership to implement the Cynon Valley Gateway North highway project which will further facilitate economic regeneration.

Appendices.

- Appendix A – Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Welsh Government (27/2/2018)
- Appendix B – Plan of proposed sections 5 & 6 HoV Dualling

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee – Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers

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