

Finance Committee

FIN(3) 09-09 (p1) Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council: Inquiry into Funding Road Infrastructure

Date: Thursday 21 May 2009

Time: 9.30 – 11.30am

Venue: Committee Room 3

1. Introduction.

1.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council welcomes this opportunity to present its views to the Committee on the very important subject of funding road infrastructure. The Council believes that an efficient transport system, both roads and public transport, is an essential requirement to assist with the regeneration and protection of the local and regional economy, particularly in times of recession that we are currently experiencing.

1.2 The four main issues that I wish to deal with are:-

- Investment by WAG in the trunk road network.
- Funding of the local/regional road network and the implementation of the RTP.
- Funding of the maintenance of the existing road system.
- Funding of new roads infrastructure provided via Safe Routes in Communities and Road Safety Grants.

1.3 Members are probably aware that this Council is a member authority of the South Wales Transport Alliance (Sewta). As such, many of the views expressed here will be in accord with the aspirations of that organisation in its Draft Regional Transport Plan (RTP). However, other matters of more local importance are also discussed.

2. Investment by WAG in the trunk road network.

2.1 The dualling of the A465 has been accepted as an issue of strategic and economic importance for some time now given that it would provide a much needed improved link from Swansea and West Wales, through the Heads of Valleys to the English Midlands. It is crucial to the success of the Heads of Valleys Programme and the area is also one of the Strategic Opportunity Areas in Wales where the assembly is seeking to target regeneration funding. It should therefore, be given the highest of priorities accordingly.

2.2 On a regional basis, the proposed improvements to the trunk road and motorway network are recognised by Sewta in its Draft RTP. Also,

Sewta is supportive of the development of the trunk road network and all of the Assembly's trunk road proposals are considered as being integral to the RTP. On a local basis, this Council has long been a supporter of the dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys road. Indeed it gave evidence in support of the principle of dualling of this route at the public inquiry held into the Line Order for the scheme in the late 1990's. In addition, it has included the scheme in the following of its statutory documents:-

- Mid Glamorgan (Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough) Replacement Structure Plan 1991-2006, adopted January 1999 – Policy T1.1.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf (Cynon Valley) Local Plan 1991-2006, adopted January 2004 – Policy TP1.
- Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Transport Plan, August 2000
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Deposit Draft Local Development Plan 2006-2021, Core Strategy CS8 transportation.

2.3 The Assembly document 'Turning Heads – A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys' sets out the vision of a partnership between the public/private and Voluntary/community sectors to revitalise the area along the heads of the valleys. In Rhondda Cynon Taf this covers most of the Cynon Valley and the upper reaches of both Rhondda Valleys. Significant amounts of money have been invested in this strategy and this work is continuing. In the above document, the first of the opportunities listed as benefiting the area is the upgrading of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road, which ensures that a number of key settlements are in a prime location with excellent road links. At present, only two of the four remaining sections of the A465 have yet been upgraded. Therefore, there is an urgent need to complete the upgrade to maximise this opportunity.

2.4 As you will be aware, there are also safety concerns over this particular road with, sadly, a number of serious and fatal accidents having occurred there, making this issue even more imperative. During a two year period ending 30th June 2008 the numbers of collisions and casualties reported on the single carriageway section of the A465 between the Hirwaun roundabout and Dowlais Top were as follows:-

Accident Data June 2006 – June 2008		
	Collisions	Casualties
Fatal	3	4
Serious	8	10
Slight	56	116
Total	67	130

In addition, there have been at least 3 fatal accidents since the 30th June 2008 and it can only be assumed that there have been other non fatal accidents as well. This is a significant number of accidents over a relatively short length of just under 13km. Historically, accident rates

for dual carriageway roads are less than for single carriageway routes. This adds weight to the need to upgrade the A465 in this area.

- 2.5 A further issue of specific relevance to the A465 dualling within Rhondda Cynon Taf is the desire of this Council to link this scheme to the proposed A4059 Aberdare By Pass Extension. This scheme is being promoted by the Council to link the Aberdare By Pass in the vicinity of Penywaun to the A465 to the east of Hirwaun at the existing Court Lodge junction. It is anticipated that this road will be of 7.3m single carriageway standard and approximately 1.8km long. The purpose of this scheme is to provide good communications between the upper part of the Cynon Valley and the A465 and the markets and suppliers beyond. It is intended that the road will be constructed in conjunction of the dualling of the A465 in this area. In addition, there is a need to reduce the amount of through traffic using the B4276 through the village of Llwydcoed. The Aberdare By Pass extension would provide an alternative route and also resolve this problem.
- 2.6 One issue that this Council has with the Assembly's proposals for the dualling of the A465 relates to the proposed junction strategy which conflicts with the Council's aspiration for the Aberdare By Pass Extension. The Assembly's proposed junction strategy for the A465 dualling reduces the number of junctions on the A465 in Rhondda Cynon Taf from five to two. The current proposals are for a junction with the B4276 at the former Baverstocks Hotel near the boundary with Merthyr and another to the west of Hirwaun at the end of the existing dual carriageway from Llandarcy. The following junctions will be deleted with no direct access to the A465 then being possible:-
- The A465 with the unnamed road leading to Llwydcoed Crematorium (just under 400m west of the B4276 junction)
 - The A465 at the above mentioned Court Lodge junction
 - The A465 with the A4059 at Trewaun.
- 2.7 This Council understands the need for a rationalisation of junctions along with the dualling and supports this in principle. However, it believes that the junction at Court Lodge should be retained and enlarged to be the primary link between the A4059 (south into the main part of the Cynon Valley) via a new Aberdare By Pass Extension. A plan of this proposal can be found in Appendix 1 to this document. This scheme has been investigated in the past and has been subjected to a NATA assessment (predecessor of WelTAG) and also achieved a positive cost benefit result (COBA). It should also be borne in mind that as part of the development of its RTP, Sewta has reviewed a considerable number of road construction proposals from across all Sewta local authorities. Following a thorough external appraisal and stage 1 Weltag analysis it has selected 17 schemes for further consideration and included them in its 5 year programme for further development work. The Aberdare By Pass Extension is included in this programme.

- 2.8 This Council believes that considerable savings could be made to the public purse (particularly the Assembly as promoter of the A465 scheme and provider of Transport Grant for local authority schemes) if construction of the two schemes was undertaken jointly. This would require this Council to undertake any remaining feasibility and design at an early stage in order to meet with the Assembly's timescales. The Assembly's final design would also need to take account of the A4059 proposals. While supporting the principle of dualling the A465 at the Line Order public inquiry, this Council lodged an objection on this issue of deleting the Court Lodge junction. Subject to Member decision, it is possible that this Council may be forced into a position of objecting to the Side Roads Order for the scheme when this is published in the future, if no progress is made on this matter.
- 2.9 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is concerned to learn that the anticipated start dates for the four outstanding sections of the A465 dualling have been put back several years, compared to the previous 2004 review. We understand that Section 2 (Gilwern to Brynmawr) and Section 3 (Brynmawr to Tredegar) were previously stipulated as 'could be ready to start by April 2010' whilst Section 5 (Dowlais Top to A470) and Section 6 (A470 to Hirwaun) were 'unlikely to start before April 2010'. It is frustrating and disappointing that these have been reprioritised and that Sections 2 and 3 are now not programmed to start until between April 2011 and April 2014 whilst the two stretches that most affect Rhondda Cynon Taf – Sections 5 and 6 – are unlikely to start before 2014. It is recognised that section 2 faces significant barriers to its implementation, not least financial, environmental/ecological and topographical barriers. Should these prove insurmountable or significantly delay this stage, this Council would urge the Assembly to reconsider its current priorities and bring forward sections 5 and 6 in the programme so that the whole A465 programme does not slip. The Assembly proposals are included in Appendix 2 to this document for ease of reference.
- 2.10 We appreciate that there are many competing demands on the resources for improvements to the transport infrastructure across Wales and recognise that the costs for the A465 dualling will be substantial. However, this project is absolutely vital for the Heads of the Valleys area, the regeneration of which we would hope continues to be near the very top of the Assembly Government's agenda. Given that the majority of the A465 is in the West Wales and the Valleys region, we ask that the potential for using Convergence Programme money is fully explored along with the Strategic Capital Investment Fund.
- 2.11 This Council, along with others, has been trying to obtain clarity over the timescales of these works for some time and in this sense, the reprioritisation confirms some of our worst fears. We therefore wish to convey our concern about any dilution of the commitment to, and

priority placed upon, this immensely important project, which has the capacity to help unlock the strategic potential of the upper Valleys in particular, and South Wales in general.

- 2.12 Another area of concern is the amount of congestion of the trunk road network and the need to improve capacity at the worst locations, especially junctions (M4 junctions 32 to 34 in particular). This is of particular relevance to employees living within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Sewta Outline Regional Transport Plan (ORTP) indicates that 16% of this Council's employed residents work in Cardiff and consequently need to travel through the congested M4 junctions and the lower A470. The draft Sewta RTP indicates that commuting numbers from outside Cardiff have increased by 12% between 2002 and 2006 (by 20% from Rhondda Cynon Taf). Almost 77,000 commuters travel in to Cardiff from south east Wales and beyond. Since the ORTP indicates that almost 80% of this Council's residents travel to work by car, there is a need to relieve congestion in these locations and also to continue to improve public transport in an effort to modify modal split. Another area of concern with regard to congestion is the A470 junction at Abercynon which is seen as one of the pivotal junctions in Rhondda Cynon Taf where a number of major routes converge but regularly suffers peak hour congestion.
- 2.13 A similar concern, though of lesser importance to this Council is the congestion on the M4 around Newport, which is prompting calls for the M4 Relief Road. This is likely to be of greater concern to Setwa councils to the east whose residents use the M4 to gain access to employment and for other purposes to Newport and Cardiff. Whilst only a small proportion of RCT residents work in Newport, the perception that it is a blockage on the trunk road system could adversely affect the retention and creation of jobs in this Council's area.
- 2.14 One final concern about the national issues is the reprioritisation of WAG funding towards north-south routes as opposed to east-west routes. It is the belief of this Authority that the main demand for travel is east-west, and that this is supported by the huge difference in traffic flows between those observed on the M4 and A465 and those passing through Mid Wales. This difference is so large that it cannot be explained by suppressed demand only. Many of the markets and business contacts for employers in the South Wales Valleys are in the south east of England, the Midlands and the West Country. The same is true of leisure and other reasons for travel. Therefore, this Council believes that investment in east-west routes is most beneficial, though not to the exclusion of north-south links.

3. **Funding of the local/regional road network and the implementation of the RTP**

- 3.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council has a number of reasons why it still believes that there is a place for new road construction in appropriate circumstances. They are often seen a key to the regeneration of the local economy. This largely revolves around the need to provide good access to the region to assist with the retention of existing employment, and creation of new jobs, in the valleys which are generally the areas with the greatest deprivation and need of regeneration. Improving access also enable residents of these areas to successfully compete for jobs elsewhere. Whilst this involves additional travel, in economic terms it is substantially preferable to long term unemployment.
- 3.2 A common feature of the valley communities is that the main road also often contains the main shopping streets and commercial areas. This mix of traffic and heavy pedestrian activity leads to a very poor environment in these areas. In addition these roads also function as a residential area and substantial volumes of traffic pass within the width of a footway (around two metres) from peoples' front doors and windows, causing significant nuisance and disturbance.
- 3.3 Where roads pass through residential and commercial areas there are often poor accident rates brought about between the close proximity and conflict between traffic and pedestrians. The provision of new routes to take traffic away from the congested areas and on to new facilities designed to modern standards provides benefits both in terms of human suffering and also in financial savings.
- 3.4 A further spin off benefit of new roads is that, while they are not often used by bus services, the removal of traffic from the roads that are used by buses allows services to operate to faster schedules and, perhaps more importantly, more reliably.
- 3.5 Of increasing importance is the principle of making best use of the road network. This involves relieving pressure points on the existing road network and removing congestion. The draft Sewta (South East Wales Transport Alliance) RTP contains an estimate that congestion costs the region £600m a year and if nothing is done could soon reach £1bn. This will often involve junction improvements rather than full blown road schemes. It is anticipated that, as these schemes are developed in the future, they will include a substantial element of providing assistance for bus services, which could be the catalyst for their creation. Making Better Use schemes are much more focused on achieving modal shift through more reliable and efficient public transport, integration of modes and relieving congestion. These schemes will usually cost a fraction of a by pass while providing many of the benefits. While this will not necessarily please all residents, it will result in a project that provides much better value for money. The days of the old 'predict and provide' road scheme have passed.

- 3.6 In these difficult financial times, it will be increasingly important to achieve value for money, which will require careful evaluation of projects against the issues and objectives they are designed to resolve. It will therefore, be necessary to ensure that new highway infrastructure meets the aspirations of the local population and also the local, regional and national policies. The WeITAG process will be of considerable assistance in this respect.
- 3.7 The development and procurement of funding for schemes will increasingly be undertaken on a regional basis, though the individual Councils are likely to be involved in the actual design and construction. In the case of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council this will be done through Sewta. The key tool that will be used by Sewta in developing their future forward programme of work is their RTP, which is currently in draft form and in the final stages of its development. When approved by the Assembly, probably at the end of this year, it will become a statutory document. The Assembly has been involved in the development process of the RTP. Most recently it was supplied with a copy of the draft at the end of 2008 and has provided comments and their requirements for further work before the plan becomes a final document. This Council's Development Control Committee has considered the draft RTP in the latter part of 2008 and, subject to a few minor comments, accepted its contents. Therefore, it is this document that will form the basis for the main policy decisions that will be followed by this Council. It has therefore, formed the guiding influence on the main transportation input to the Council's Deposit Draft Local Development Plan.
- 3.8 The RTP contains a vision, several objectives, priorities, many policies covering a wide ranges of issues policies and three wider goals. Perhaps these wider goals will best give a flavour of the main thrust of the plan. These are:-
- develop the economy, through improving connectivity for business and freight, making transport more effective and efficient, providing access to employment, education, shopping and leisure, and by improving transport integration.
 - promote social inclusion and equality, by providing a transport system that is safe, accessible and affordable to all sections of the community.
 - protect the environment, by minimising transport emissions and consumption of resources and energy, by promoting walking, cycling, quality public transport, modal shift and minimising demand on the transport system.
- 3.9 The preferred strategy in the RTP requires a prioritised and balanced programme of investment and support for all modes of travel. The proposals for the highway system centre on the core concept of making better use of what is already there. There are a limited number of new highway scheme proposals and these are only included as part of a general network management strategy, which centres on the concept

of a strategic regional road network, which comprises the motorway and trunk road network under Assembly control and the most important of local authority controlled A roads. The draft RTP has identified 17 key problem areas across this regional road network which could result in potential road schemes. In the particular case of this Council there are three such entries. These are:-

- A4058/A4061 Upper Rhondda Fawr to Pontypridd (Gelli/Treorchy Relief Road)
- A4059 Aberdare By Pass Extension
- A4119-A473 Ynysmaerdy to Talbot Green Relief Road

3.10 The draft RTP has also identified the need for “making better use” (MBU) schemes referred to above. A number of key junction improvements that could contribute to a making better use programme have been identified in the draft RTP. Of these two are in Rhondda Cynon Taf and are located in Talbot Green and Pontypridd. The development of further MBU schemes may result in the replacement of major road schemes, thereby optimising value for money across the investment programme.

3.11 With regard to a future roads programme, and consequently any new schemes that will take place in Rhondda Cynon Taf, work is still ongoing within Sewta. As such Sewta is changing from an organisation mainly focused on policy making into one that will have scheme development and implementation as its primary purpose. It is anticipated that an integrated delivery team comprising designers and contractors will facilitate the comprehensive review and development of the best value for money schemes. This will cover both major schemes and MBU projects. One of the key issues is to retain sufficient flexibility in the programme to respond to changing circumstances and maximise potential opportunities as they present themselves.

3.12 Therefore, one of the key issues facing the region, and consequently this Authority, when it comes to new road infrastructure is that of funding. Sewta will need a considerable amount of funding to undertake feasibility studies as well as design and construct schemes that are required to deliver the RTP. A number of sources of potential funding have been considered to contribute towards meeting these needs. Of particular importance in this respect is Transport Grant (or its replacement) from the Assembly. Other sources considered include developer contributions for infrastructure improvements necessary to accommodate the traffic impacts of their proposals, the private sector and perhaps road user charging (in the longer term). One particular area of interest to this authority is that of Convergence funding from the EU. This source of funding is available for a fixed term. Therefore, this Council feels that, in order to gain maximum advantage from this source, match funding is largely prioritised in the Convergence area during the period of grant availability. Other non convergence areas

could perhaps receive some extra prioritisation in recompense after the Convergence funding expires.

- 3.13 Of immediate concern in this respect is clarity from the Assembly with regard to the exact method of operation of their funding for transport infrastructure. With the change over to the RTP guided investment that will be controlled by the regional consortia it is anticipated that Sewta will have a greater influence on how the money is spent. However, to assist forward planning it would be very useful to know how the Assembly intends to administer this process. For example, will it be a block grant to each consortium that it can administer as it wishes as long as it fulfils the policies in the RTP and the schemes are in the associated 5 year programme. Or, would there be a much more controlled environment where the Assembly would give money to the consortia with instructions to progress specific schemes. Also, will the Assembly be ring fencing some of the allocation for specific activities e.g. public transport or Safe Routes in Communities schemes. Answers to these questions are fundamental to the administration of the system and will greatly assist forward planning by the consortia.
- 3.14 In addition, it would be very useful to the consortia in planning their forward programmes if the assembly was able to give indicative allocations of funding for future years, say for example on a three year rolling programme. It is difficult enough to programme small schemes on a year by year basis, in view of the need to design, complete statutory requirements and actually construct. The larger the scheme, the more difficult it becomes to accommodate any of the stages within one financial year and the consortia will be able to undertake their project management work much more efficiently if they can programme and commit work straddling more than one financial year.
- 3.15 There is also the issue of the overall budget available for transport. This appears to be split into a budget for Capital investment in new Assembly road schemes, the trunk road maintenance budget and the money available for local authority schemes. Now that a common WelTAG appraisal approach is to be adopted for all schemes, there appears to be a case for a common pot of money for all new investment. This should be directed to wherever in the network or to whatever mode of transport that provides the best value for money and is expected to be the most effective in addressing the relevant problems and priorities.

4. Funding of the maintenance of the existing road system.

- 4.1 The Welsh Assembly Government has allocated £15M / year to a Road Maintenance Grant over the period 2007/8, 2008/9 and 2009/10 in order to tackle the Roads Maintenance Backlog. This grant has been split between the 22 Councils with Rhondda Cynon Taf's allocations totalling £2.85M over the 3 year period.

- 4.2 The backlog has been calculated using SCANNER / MRM mechanised surveys of the highway network. These surveys are analysed to allocate a Road Condition Indicator (RCI) to each section of the highway network. Roads scoring in excess of 100 points are considered to be in the red band and maintenance is required immediately. Roads scoring between 40 and 100 points are in the amber band and “maintenance should be considered soon”. Roads scoring less than 40 points are considered to be in good condition.
- 4.3 The backlog for Rhondda Cynon Taf as provided by WAG from 2006/7 SCANNER / MRM Surveys was £8.4M with the total Welsh backlog being £293M. The 2007/8 backlog was £8.07M in Rhondda Cynon Taff and £272M across Wales. The backlog figures from the 2008/9 Surveys have not yet been published. It should however be noted that while SCANNER surveys are a good mechanised technique to determine the backlog, the experience and knowledge of local authority engineer’s and visual inspection of the network often reveals roads that SCANNER indicates are in good condition to be in very poor condition and requiring urgent, immediate works. Many local authority engineers consider the SCANNER identified backlog to be significantly underestimating the actual maintenance requirements. In Rhondda Cynon Taf the identified backlog for 2007/8 is broken down as shown below :-

	A Roads	B Roads	C Roads	Unclassified	Total
Network Length (km)	164.8	66.8	124.7	877.1	1233.4
% age of network with *RCI score >100	13.6 %	21.6	12	21	19.1
Length (km) of Network with *RCI score > 100	22.42	14.43	14.96	184.19	236.00
Value of Backlog £m	2.170	1.379	1.075	3.446	8.070

* RCI – Road Condition Indicator

- 4.4 In the first two years of the grant funding, £1.56 M of the £1.9M grant allocation has been spent on the reconstruction of the A4119 Tonyrefail Bypass. This vital access into the Rhondda valley had deteriorated to such a condition that works could not have been further delayed and in the absence of the Road Maintenance Grant, it would have meant that the Council’s entire Capital road maintenance allocation for these 2 years would have had to have been spent on this one road. There is another phase of reconstruction required which is programmed to be carried out using more than half of the 2009/10 grant allocation which equates to approximately 2/3 of the Council’s capital road maintenance programme.

4.5 The flood events of 2008 and the severe winter have had a significant effect on the Council's road network and have accelerated its deterioration. It is anticipated that the acceleration in decline of the highway condition will continue as the integrity of road surfaces have been compromised allowing the ingress of water to lower levels which will over time lead to structural failure.

4.6 It is estimated that in order to maintain the Council's road network in its current condition an annual budget allocation of £19.8M / year would be required as detailed below :-

Roads - from the draft Highway Asset Management Plan - £7M/yr

Footways - from the draft Highway Asset Management Plan - £3.5M/yr

Street

Lighting - from the draft Highway Asset Management Plan - £2.7M/yr

Drainage - estimated

- £6.6M/yr

Replace 2% of 50,000 gullies @£300/unit = £3M/yr

Replace 2% of 600km of carrier @£300/m = £3.6M/yr

Structures -

In addition, there is an outstanding need of £6.5Million to strengthen sub-standard highway bridges, which are currently under a monitoring regime. Also, there is an identified backlog of high priority repairs needed to highway structures to a value of £2Million. A total investment of £8Million is therefore necessary to bring the highway structures to an adequate steady state condition.

The current total Capital Allocation for road maintenance is approximately £1M / year.

4.7 The Welsh Assembly Government's Road Maintenance Grant of just under £1M / year therefore equates to almost half the total capital expenditure on road maintenance and approximately two thirds of the capital carriageway maintenance expenditure.

4.8 As can be seen, even with the grant funding in place there is a significant gap between the funding requirements for highway maintenance and the funding available. In this regard, the Council invested £2.1M of additional capital monies in 2007/08 to address some of this funding gap. Notwithstanding this, the condition of the Council's carriageway network will continue to decline and in the absence of the continuation of the Road Maintenance Grant, the decline will accelerate.

- 4.9 There is a clear relationship between the deterioration of road surfaces and the volumes of traffic using the route. It could be argued therefore, that it is possible that if significant modal shift is achieved, the rate of deterioration of the highway network will slow. Firstly, this will take time to occur and in the meantime there will be a continuing need to maintain the network at or more than current levels. Secondly, if there is insufficient investment in delivering the RTP this mode shift will not happen.

5. Funding of new roads infrastructure provided via Safe Routes in Communities and Road Safety Grants.

- 5.1 In addition to the mainstream investment in major capital schemes, smaller amounts of money are also invested in worthwhile minor improvements to the network using grants made available by the Assembly under their Safe Routes in Communities and Road Safety programmes. These programmes have enabled a number of schemes to be implemented, which include enhanced infrastructure, that this Council would not otherwise have been able to fund.
- 5.2 Since 1999 this Council has implemented a total of 19 Safe Routes in Communities schemes (or its predecessor programme Safe Routes to Schools). These have proved to be popular and have had tangible benefits. The programme has provided new facilities and measures to improve access to local services, reduce car journeys, make communities a safer place and improve the health of the local population. This Council has been awarded grant funding of £219,000 in the current financial year allowing two schemes to be commenced. It is intended that further schemes will be bid for in 2010/11. There is a considerable demand for these schemes and there is a backlog of requests for further projects. As such the Council is developing a new approach to developing these schemes so that they are fully inclusive of the community needs and aspirations and that they are assessed on a common basis.
- 5.3 Since 2000, the Council has implemented safety schemes and provided additional road safety education, training and publicity initiatives, using the Assembly's Local Road Safety Grant. Since 2002, an additional Grant has enabled an officer to be employed specifically to deliver the 'Kerbcraft' child pedestrian training programme through a network of volunteers. In the 2007-08 academic year, 440 young children completed this programme. Schemes to provide 20mph zones, pedestrian crossings, and other safety measures have been delivered using the Local Road Safety Grant, as encouraged in the Grant's guidance notes. Road safety initiatives including free registration on the Children's traffic Club scheme, a substantial contribution to the Pass Plus Cymru scheme for new young drivers, and road safety themed drama presentations in schools have been provided, all of which are consistent with the proposed actions in the Assembly's Road Safety Strategy for Wales. The combined Local

Road Safety Grant and 'Kerbcraft' Grant allocated to this Council for 2009-10 is £604k.

- 5.4 It is unlikely that this could find replacement funds for these schemes should the grant funding be withdrawn, especially in these financially stringent times. Therefore, this Council urges the Assembly to continue supporting these projects.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This Council would like to see the completion of the dualling of the A465 as soon as possible, particularly section 6 in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 6.2 It would also urge the Assembly to take account of the proposal for the Aberdare By Pass Extension in the development of the A465 dualling scheme.
- 6.3 This Council has concerns about the level of congestion on the M4 and A470 north of Cardiff, limiting the ability of its residents to compete for jobs in the commercial area of Cardiff.
- 6.4 This Council believes that there is continued room for further road building in appropriate circumstances. However, it accepts that there is also room for smaller 'making better use' type schemes to relieve pressure points that are likely to provide better value for money.
- 6.5 Also, most of the decisions taken regarding future road investment programmes will be taken by the regional consortium and guided by the RTP.
- 6.6 In order to deliver the RTP, considerable funds will be required. Transport Grant (or its replacement) will be an important element of this, together with EU Convergence funding. It is also believed that the opportunities afforded by the EU funding should be maximised during the timescale that it is available.
- 6.7 The Council would also like to see clarity over the future TG funding allocation, both in terms of procedures and future sums likely to be available.
- 6.8 The Assembly's Road Maintenance Grant is an important element of this Council's available budget. If withdrawn, it would have a significant effect and accelerate the ongoing decline in the Council's highway assets.
- 6.9 The Council would also urge the Assembly to continue to support the Safe Routes in Communities and Road Safety Grant programmes.

6.10 The Council has limited funds available following the latest financial settlement from the assembly. Therefore, it is already having to make further savings and gain additional income just to stand still. Therefore, it has no room for manoeuvre in funding additional capital investment or revenue maintenance work should current external support be withdrawn.

APPENDICES

1. Indicative alignment of the Aberdare By Pass Extension
2. WAG 2008 Reprioritisation of the Trunk Road Forward Programme