

14th February 2022



CECA Wales Monday Briefing

A transport strategy for the north of Wales - the good and not so good news

Last week's briefing was, admittedly, a bit downbeat so it's good to start this week with some good news - for Welsh rugby anyway. It was great to celebrate a Welsh win over Scotland after the poor performance against Ireland the previous week. A bit nail-biting at the end but a win's a win!

From a business perspective though the news is mixed following two transport-related announcements, last week, by the Welsh Government. The Roads Review Panel recently presented its Initial Report to the Deputy Minister for Climate Change who agreed the scope of the Roads Review and the inclusion of 55 road schemes to be looked at in more detail by the Panel. The interim report contains proposals on how the Roads Review will be conducted and the conditions to be considered when assessing alignment to the new Wales Transport Strategy, the well-being goals and Net Zero Wales. The full list of schemes is set out in [Table 1](#) of the accompanying [Written Statement: Roads Review - Initial Report and North Wales Transport Commission \(A55 J14-16 Review\) \(10 February 2022\)](#). This list of schemes will provide a basis for the panel to provide future looking recommendations on road building in Wales to guide the decision points in other Welsh Government funded road schemes. We now need to see the Panel move forward as quickly as possible with its work so that we get certainty on which schemes will progress, in what form and the scale of investment.

Unfortunately, as part of this initial work a decision has been made to pause work on the A55 at Jctn 14-16, and to reconsider proposals in light of the Review Panel's criteria. This is bitterly disappointing to those who would have undertaken this work but probably not a major surprise. The Panel recommended that, instead of progressing in its current form, there is a strong case for considering the whole North Wales corridor, as recommended in the Union Connectivity Review final report. As a result the Deputy Minister is establishing a North Wales Transport Commission, led by Lord Burns, which will be responsible for taking an evidence-led approach to develop recommendations for multi-modal, integrated transport solutions ([Lord Burns to lead north Wales transport review](#)). This new transport commission will develop, over the next year, a pipeline of transport schemes for the north, developing recommendations for road, rail, bus and active travel across the whole of the north.

So, some disappointing, but not surprising, news for those planning their business activities over the next few years. On the other hand, in the longer term, if it provides a more integrated and certain view of plans for contractors to work from then it could prove more positive. What we need to see is this work move forward at pace and, in the meantime, we see investment redirected to our existing transportation networks to ensure its fitness for purpose.

CECA Wales Political Update

Here are some of the infrastructure related matters being discussed at the Senedd and Westminster:

- **Roads Review:** The [Wales Roads Review: initial panel report](#) has been published. The Roads Review Panel was asked to provide its view on the A55 Junction 14/15 and 16/16A improvements scheme as a priority. The Panel recommended that instead of progressing in its current form, that there is a strong case for considering the whole North Wales corridor, as recommended in the Union Connectivity Review final report
- **New Transport Commission:** The Deputy Minister for Climate Change has announced a [new transport commission](#) led by Lord Burns that will develop a pipeline of transport schemes for north Wales. The year-long review will develop recommendations for road, rail, bus and active travel across the whole of north Wales.
- **Project Bank Accounts:** Paul Davies MS has tabled written questions regarding the use of [project bank accounts](#) for construction and infrastructure projects.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Finance Minister Rebecca Evans has said tackling the climate and nature emergency is the "overarching ambition" of Wales' new [Infrastructure Investment Strategy](#).
- **Crown Estate:** Plaid Cymru [renewed calls](#) for the full devolution of energy powers during their Senedd debate on Wednesday, highlighting the renewable energy opportunities attached to the devolution of the Crown Estate to Wales.
- **Energy price cap:** Responding to the Minister for Climate Change's statement on the energy price cap, Janet Finch Saunders MS [criticised](#) the Welsh Government's inaction on fuel poverty and called for renewable energy innovation.
- **Apprenticeships:** The Economy Minister has [announced](#) that the Welsh Government is investing £366m over the next three years to deliver 125,000 all-age apprenticeships across during this Senedd term.

CECA Wales Director Activities

My activities over the last week included :

- Meeting members of the SEWales Civils Framework Governance Board to agree a programme of client/contractor engagement sessions to discuss approaches to risk
- Meeting local authority clients in the north to explore how they can be better supported in delivering projects with limited resources
- Meeting board members to discuss proposals on how to better address behavioural issues across the sector with a view to improving productivity and wellbeing
- Meeting members to discuss current concerns including theft of diesel, employment challenges and future workload across different sectors
- Finalising the CECA Wales 2021/22 Annual Review

Client engagement and business opportunities

Our engagement with construction clients has recommenced with meetings with a variety of local authorities, Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water, Transport for Wales, Trunk Road Agents, Natural Resources Wales and Network Rail Wales and with more specific engagement events for members and partners over the next 2-3 months to explain future opportunities for contractors, procurement arrangements and opportunities to better manage carbon. Further engagement is also planned with Welsh Government, local authorities and power and communications utilities.

Training Events

Please note that our events programme for 2022 has been launched and will be constantly refreshed throughout the year. Here's the link <https://www.ceca.co.uk/wales/events/> .

Our series of NEC4 workshops for members will recommence on 22nd March with further dates for the 2022 programme available via the link above.