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M4 Corridor around NewportProject Information Brochure - September 2015



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1

Introduction

Unreliable journey times and traffic congestion, particularly during peak times, are common occurrences on the M4 around Newport. This is due to the lack of capacity and alternative routes, especially during incidents and accidents.

Following public consultation, we adopted our strategic 'Plan' for the M4 Corridor around Newport¹ in July 2014.

We are proposing:

A new section of motorway between Junctions 23 and 29 south of Newport; alongside complementary measures, including:

- Improvements to safety, access arrangements and our ability to manage traffic by reclassifying the existing M4 between Magor and Castleton as a trunk road:
- Relief to Junction 23A, the local road network and access to the proposed park and ride facilities at Severn Tunnel junction railway station with a new M4/M48/B4245 connection; and
- Providing cycle and walking friendly infrastructure

Alongside the Plan, we announced a revision of the 2006 'Preferred Route' for the new section of motorway south of Newport including the junctions at Glan Llyn and Docks Way. A 'Preferred Route' protects the route for planning purposes, to avoid development conflicts.²

We have since appointed a design development team to undertake the next stage of project development. This includes further environmental surveys and development work up to publication of 'draft Statutory Orders' and an 'Environmental Statement'.

The M4 is much more than a motorway; it's essential for the Welsh people and our economy. We need it to transport ourselves, our people, goods and services throughout Wales and beyond. We need it to reach ports and airports, and we need it to serve our thriving tourist industry.

The problems around Newport discourage business investment, and are expected to get worse. We want to improve access to international markets. We need a transport system that improves our nation's economic competitiveness and encourages jobs and growth.

The M4 Corridor around Newport project is an essential part of our vision for an efficient integrated transport system. Complementary to this project, we are also taking forward a Cardiff Capital Region Metro to improve public transport within the region.

- 1. The M4 Corridor around Newport Plan (July 2014), available at gov.wales/m4newport...
- 2. The M4 Corridor around Newport Preferred Route and Statement of Reasons (July 2014), available at qov.wales/m4newport.

Problems, Aims and Objectives

For many years, traffic congestion has been a fact of life for those using living around and using the existing M4 around Newport. Journey times are often unreliable, making it difficult to take up job opportunities or access services such as hospitals and schools. These problems discourage investment, for example from businesses, and are expected to get worse.

As the main gateway to South Wales, we need a transport system that improves our nation's economic competitiveness. We want to improve access for people, Welsh goods and services to international markets.

Our proposals form an essential part of our vision for an efficient integrated transport system. In parallel with the M4 Corridor around Newport Project, we are taking forward a Cardiff Capital Region Metro. The Metro is seeking to improve accessibility to local employment sites, educational facilities and services within the Region and is complementary to our proposals for the M4 Corridor around Newport.

As a result of consultation and previous development workshops, problems have been identified and aims and objectives have been set for the M4 Corridor around Newport³. These are set out below.

2.1 The Problems

17 problems have been identified; covering issues of capacity, network resilience, safety and sustainable development.

2.2 Capacity

- 1. A greater volume of traffic uses the M4 around Newport than it was designed to accommodate, resulting in regular congestion at peak times over extended periods.
- 2. The M4 around Newport is used as a convenient cross town connection for local traffic, with insufficient local road capacity.
- 3. HGVs do not operate efficiently on the motorway around Newport.
- 4. There is insufficient capacity through some of the junctions (e.g. 3-lane capacity drops to 2-lane capacity).
- 5. The 2-lane Brynglas tunnels are a major capacity constraint.
- 6. The M4 cannot cope with increased traffic from new developments.

These are republished in the M4 Corridor around Newport - The Plan (July 2014), available at gov.wales/m4newport.

2.3 Resilience

- 7. Difficulties maintaining adequate traffic flows on the M4 and alternative highway routes at times of temporary disruption; alternative routes are not able to cope with M4 traffic.
- 8. The road and rail transport system in and around the M4 Corridor is at increasing risk of disruption due to extreme weather events.
- 9. When there are problems on the M4, there is severe disruption and congestion on the local and regional highway network.
- The M4 requires essential major maintenance within the next 5-10 years; this
 will involve prolonged lane and speed restrictions, thus increasing congestion
 problems.
- 11. There is insufficient advance information to inform travel decisions when there is a problem on the M4.

2.4 Safety

- 12. The current accident rates on the M4 between Magor and Castleton are higher than average for UK motorways.
- 13. The existing M4 is an inadequate standard compared to modern design standards.
- 14. Some people's driving behaviour leads to increased accidents (e.g. speeding, lane hogging, unlicensed drivers).

2.5 Sustainable Development

- 15. There is a lack of adequate sustainable integrated transport alternatives for existing road users.
- 16. Traffic noise from the motorway and air quality is a problem for local residents in certain areas.
- 17. The existing transport network acts as a constraint to economic growth and adversely impacts the current economy.

2.6 Our Aims for the M4 Corridor around Newport Project are to:

- 1. Make it easier and safer for people to access their homes, workplaces and services by walking, cycling, public transport or road.
- 2. Deliver a more efficient and sustainable transport network supporting and encouraging long-term prosperity in the region, across Wales, and enabling access to international markets.
- To produce positive effects overall on people and the environment, making a
 positive contribution to the over-arching Welsh Government goals to reduce
 greenhouse gas emissions and to making Wales more resilient to the effects
 of climate change.

2.7 Our Aims are supported by 15 Transport Planning Objectives:

- 1. Safer, easier and more reliable travel east-west in South Wales.
- 2. Improved transport connections within Wales and to England, the Republic of Ireland and the rest of Europe on all modes on the international transport network.
- 3. More effective and integrated use of alternatives to the M4, including other parts of the transport network and other modes of transport for local and strategic journeys around Newport.
- 4. Best possible use of the existing M4, local road network and other transport networks.
- 5. More reliable journey times along the M4 Corridor.
- 6. Increased level of choice for all people making journeys within the transport Corridor by all modes between Magor and Castleton, commensurate with demand for alternatives.
- 7. Improved safety on the M4 Corridor between Magor and Castleton.
- 8. Improved air quality in areas next to the M4 around Newport.
- 9. Reduced disturbance to people from high noise levels, from all transport modes and traffic within the M4 Corridor.
- 10. Reduced greenhouse gas emissions per vehicle and/or person kilometre.
- 11. Improved travel experience into South Wales along the M4 Corridor.
- 12. An M4 attractive for strategic journeys that discourages local traffic use.
- 13. Improved traffic management in and around Newport on the M4 Corridor.
- 14. Easier access to local key services and residential and commercial centres.
- 15. A cultural shift in travel behaviour towards more sustainable choices.

How did we get to where we are today

3.1 The need to do something

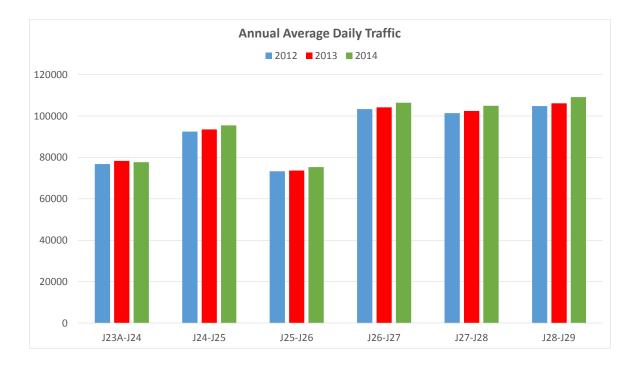
Problems on the existing M4 around Newport relate to capacity, resilience, safety and issues of sustainable development.

3.2 Capacity

This means the most number of vehicles the road can carry at busy times. Once the numbers of vehicles is more than 80% of the road's capacity, congestion occurs and operational problems can be expected. The more congested it becomes, the greater the chance of delays, incidents and accidents. This congestion also means that journey times are unreliable for commuters, businesses and goods vehicles.

Predictions of future vehicle numbers are that congestion will be worse by the year 2022, and by 2037 all sections between J24 and J29 would experience severe problems⁴.

The graph⁵ below shows traffic flows in recent years.



- 4. M4 Corridor around Newport Plan and Traffic Forecasting Report (July 2014), available at gov.wales/m4newport.
- 5. Annual Average Daily Traffic data 2012 to 2014. Source: Traffic Wales Data 2012-2014.

3.3 Resilience

This means the ability of the wider transport network to accommodate vehicles when there are problems.

Issues associated with resilience include:

- A limited capacity on alternative routes when traffic needs to be diverted off the motorway
- Delays and incidents on local roads when they are used as diversions;
- Major maintenance works, including to the Brynglas Tunnels will be required within the next 5-10 years, which could cause significant disruption
- Our current ability to inform drivers sufficiently before joining the M4 to help them avoid problems
- Poor weather can cause disruption to the transport network, this can be worse around Newport because of problems with the alternative routes.

3.4 Safety

A priority is keeping people safe. Problems include:

- Vehicles speeding up, slowing down and changing lanes over short distances
 causing weaving movements that can result in accidents. We drive in this
 way because this section of the existing M4 was not designed as a motorway.
 Slopes and bends are steeper and tighter than motorway standards, there are
 also places where there is no hard shoulder and frequent junctions.
- Common rear-end shunts on the approaches to the Brynglas tunnels are largely due to stop-start conditions during peak periods. This is caused by the motorway reducing from three to two lanes.
- Poor weather can cause disruption to the transport network, this can be worse around Newport because of problems with alternative routes.

3.5 Sustainable development

Traffic congestion adversely impacts on the local environment, community and the economy.

Congestion on the existing M4, particularly around Newport, is cited by the business community in South Wales as a barrier to economic growth. Where congestion increases, the cost of transport for businesses, commuters and consumers in turn affects our economy. Increased congestion can also result in longer journey times to work. This reduces employment opportunities.

In terms of the environment, local authorities in the UK work towards meeting national air quality objectives. If a local authority finds any places where the objectives are not likely to be met, it must declare an Air Quality Management Area.

Newport has seven of these Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and four are associated with the existing M4⁶.

Traffic growth along the existing M4 around Newport is also worsening noise pollution, affecting neighbouring residential communities. Newport has various designated Noise Action Planning Priority Areas (NAPPAs) including along the M4.

^{6.} For more information, see www.newport.gov.uk/en/Transport-Streets/Pollution-and-noise-control/Air-quality.

The Project

Our proposals are a new section of motorway south of Newport alongside complementary measures to improve links for movement along the M4 corridor between Junctions 23 to 29.

4.1 Key Facts about the project

4.1.1 Route

The 23km route of 3-lane motorway would pass south of Newport, crossing the Gwent Levels, River Usk Estuary, Newport Docks, the Llanwern Steelworks site and close to the Docks Way landfill site. It will be raised on with approach viaducts and a bridge crossing of the River Usk.

Where possible the route crosses brownfield land, contaminated land, or areas next to development land. The route:

- Minimises land requirements that may include property demolition
- Minimises land take from the Gwent Levels, which are protected areas or 'SSSIs' (Site of Special Scientific Interest)
- Minimises impact on the Docks Way Landfill Site, reducing risk of pollution problems
- Minimises impacts on Newport Docks
- Minimises impact on utilities, which would reduce costs, hazards and disruption to supply

4.1.2 Junctions

An interchange at Magor with new B4245/M48/M4 connection would reduce traffic through Magor and improve accessibility, including to Severn Tunnel Junction railway station. Intermediate junctions at Glan Llyn and Docks Way would connect into existing roads at the A4810 and A48, serving Newport and its development sites, the proposed Llanwern railway station and the Newport Docks. An interchange at Castleton would connect the route between Newport and Cardiff.

4.1.3 River Usk Bridge

The new bridge across the River Usk and Newport Docks would be a 440m main span cable-stayed bridge (a similar structure to the Second Severn Crossing). It would be the second longest bridge structure of its type in Wales and the fourth longest in the UK.

4.1.4 Traffic

The new road would take about half of all traffic and most of the Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) from the existing M4 to the new section of motorway. The existing M4 would continue to carry traffic connecting north of Newport, such as to the A4042 and A449.

4.1.5 Reclassification of the existing motorway

Reclassification of the existing M4 around Newport as a trunk road, or 'A' road, would allow us to make changes to enable traffic management, safety and revised access arrangements, such as reopening the Caerleon junction. This will improve accessibility to Caerleon and St Julians along the northern fringe of Newport.

4.1.6 Costs

The cost estimate for the project is around £1 billion.

Economic assessment has indicated that the project is likely to result in monetised economic benefits of around double the investment made⁷.

Costs will be managed throughout scheme development to identify cost savings and ensure value for money.

What are we doing now?

We are working on scheme development towards publication of draft Statutory Orders and an Environmental Statement.

5.1 Environmental Surveys

An Environmental Impact Assessment and an Environmental Statement will be produced. These will be published together with an Assessment of Implications on European Sites (considering likely impacts on Protected Sites such as the River Usk Special Area of Conservation)⁸.

The project team are continuing with a range of environmental surveys to develop environmental mitigation and enhancement measures. You may have noticed equipment in the study area, collecting data on ecological habitats, noise levels, air quality, and even geological conditions.

5.2 Design Development

With your feedback we continue to develop our proposals for the new section of motorway, reclassification of the existing M4 and cycling and walking measures ready for consideration at the anticipated Public Local Inquiry.

5.3 Land / Access

Accurate and up to date information on land ownership and other land interests such as freeholds and tenancies, is needed in anticipation of preparing the draft Statutory Orders for the project.

Earlier this year, 'Land Interest Questionnaires' were sent to around 450 people in the vicinity of the new section of motorway. Our Public Liaison Officer Brian Greaves is meeting and assisting landowners wherever necessary.

Public Information Exhibitions are also seeking your feedback on how we are proposing to deal with lands matters such as side roads and local access.

5.4 Stakeholder Consultation

We have already engaged with many stakeholders including land owners, environmental organisations, community groups, businesses, local authorities, access groups and other organisations. For example, feedback has helped us to develop proposals for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, in terms of maintaining, replacing or improving their infrastructure (e.g. footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways).

This is helping our proposals take into account the needs and preferences of different groups, and is helping make the project acceptable and beneficial to as many people as possible.

We will be continuing to talk to stakeholders during design development.

8. For more information, see M4 Corridor around Newport Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) reports, available at gov.wales/m4newport.

The Environment

6.1 Castleton

Changes to the existing junction would be integrated into the landscape with woodland planting, providing additional habitat for woodland species, including dormice. This would replace the existing mature tree belts and woodland affected by the project.

6.2 River Usk: Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

The River Usk is of international and national importance for its migratory fish and otters and is legally protected. The design and construction of the new bridge across the Usk would avoid the river channel. The land on both sides of the River Usk is industrialised and contains areas of contamination, which would be avoided or cleaned up during construction.

6.3 Magor

Views of the existing M4 are mainly screened by vegetation, this would also be the case for the new road and new junction between Magor and Rogiet. New lengths of road would be either further away from the majority of residents or in cutting.

6.4 Gwent Levels: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

The Gwent Levels is an extensively managed, designated historic, man made landscape reclaimed from the sea. They consist of complex drainage network of interconnected rivers, reens (wide ditches) and smaller field ditches, with grazing marsh between.

Today the Gwent Levels support an important collection of flora and fauna, particularly invertebrates in the reens, and locally the Shrill Carder bee. The Levels are also a designated historic landscape.

The carefully chosen route means the land required for the project is less than 2% of the total Gwent Levels SSSI area9. Large reens would pass under the new section of motorway with smaller watercourses diverted to maintain the drainage network. A greater length of reen would be provided than would be lost to the project.

The new section of motorway would be as low as possible (between 1 and 3 metres high), and where practicable, it would follow the historic landscape pattern across the Levels. This ensures integration of the new road with the local landscape. It is anticipated that existing waste material in the steelworks site on the Levels would be treated and used within the project.

Current design development indicates that the land required for the new section of motorway would be less than 2% of the total area of the Gwent Levels SSSI.

The Economy

The delays on the existing M4 increase the cost of moving goods and for business travel. Other factors – such as population increase and the future reduction or removal of tolling on the Severn Crossings – would result in higher overall volumes of traffic, worsening the situation. Existing legislation allowing the collection of tolls across the River Severn will expire by 2027.

7.1 Wider Economic Impacts

The quality of a transport network influences people and companies decisions about where to work, where to live and where to invest. The M4 motorway provides the primary east/west strategic road link that underpins the economy of South Wales, supporting two-thirds of Welsh GDP. It also supports the regional and national economy by providing a strategic link between Wales and the rest of the UK.

As the primary transport gateway to South Wales, the experience of using the M4 is likely to influence people's perceptions of the quality of the transport network and, therefore, the experience of doing business in Wales more generally. There is a gap in economic performance between Wales and England. In 2013, Gross Value Added (GVA) per head (a recognised measure of economic performance) in Wales was just 72% of the UK average (Office for National Statistics). GVA per capita in Cardiff and the Vale or Glamorgan is 20% lower than that of the City of Bristol¹⁰. The quality of the transport network is a factor in this 'productivity gap' between England and Wales.

This project would greatly improve the efficiency of our transport network, reducing transport costs for businesses in South Wales, increasing competitiveness and allowing us to compete in new markets. Importantly, the project would:

- Reduce journey times between key economic centres.
- Provide better access to employment in South Wales.
- Bring new investment the majority of businesses report a perceived decline in network quality. Surveys show 99% of companies report that quality infrastructure impacts on future investment decisions¹¹.
- Improve access to development and employment sites such as the Glan Llyn development, west Newport and Newport Docks.

The project would be funded through a combination of UK Government borrowing and Welsh Government Transport budgets. It is anticipated that ¾ of the costs of the project would be spent with the Welsh supply chain, with the remainder being spent on specialist products and services not currently available locally, like the cables for the River Usk Crossing.

- 10. Office for National Statistics data.
- 11. Taking the Long View: A New Approach to Infrastructure, CBI-URS Infrastructure Survey (November 2014), available at www.cbi.org.uk.

Society

Congestion on the existing M4 around Newport is already impacting on business performance and the level of congestion is expected to increase. The project aims to provide economic benefits and support the regeneration of Newport, benefitting the people of South Wales, now and in the future.

The impacts and benefits to people as a result of the project would be expected to fall into three categories:

- a) Road users;
- b) Local communities; and
- c) Pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians

Benefits would involve safety, access to services and facilities, health and wellbeing, and social through employment and skills opportunities. How these types of benefit would impact on each group of people is shown below.

8.1 Accessibility

By reducing congestion on the existing motorway and local road network, Newport would experience reduced severance issues. The continuity of the local networks would be maintained through: minimised diversions of public rights of way, the provision of appropriate crossing facilities and additional routes. Additional and enhanced routes for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians would improve accessibility for people to key destinations, including local communities, facilities, services, and places of employment.

8.2 Health and Wellbeing

The project would contribute to general well-being by providing benefits to safety, air and noise quality. The improved driver experience would reduce stress by providing a new free flowing route to motorway standards and improving travel conditions along the existing M4. Additional or improved provision for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians would encourage active travel for shorter journeys, and has the potential to bring benefits to physical fitness.

8.3 Employment Opportunities

It is estimated that construction of the project would employ the equivalent of around 600 full time workers¹². We would maximise opportunities for local people in terms of recruitment and training. 20% of the labour force would also be made up of local new entrants to work with apprenticeship opportunities.

8.4 Air Quality and Noise

Residents of Newport close to the existing M4 experience poor air quality and high baseline noise as a result of motorway traffic. Reducing the mix of long distance and local traffic would provide an improvement of around 15% in local air quality, together with a noticeable reduction in traffic noise, providing health benefits¹³. Any potential air quality and traffic noises impacts as a consequence of the new section of motorway south of Newport would be minimised by avoiding the problems on the existing M4 such as frequent lane changing and stop-start traffic.

- 12. Based on Costain-Vinci Joint Venture estimates.
- 13. M4 CAN DMRB Stage 2 Environmental Report (July 2014).

What happens next?

Your feedback will help us shape the design, local access and associated land requirements.

9.1 Programme

Our programme is:

Activity	Key Date	What this means for the public?
Publication of Draft Statutory Orders and an Environmental Statement	Spring 2016	These will set out the land that would be required to build the scheme and the environmental mitigation work that would be involved. You will then have the opportunity to formally object, support, make representations or suggest alternatives.
Public Local Inquiry	Autumn 2016	An independent Inspector would hear evidence, in front of the public, from interested parties and stakeholders. The Inspector would make a recommendation to the Welsh Ministers on how to proceed.
Welsh Ministers' Decision to make the Statutory Orders	Autumn/Winter 2017	The Welsh Ministers would decide whether to make Statutory Orders and to go ahead with the construction of the project.
Commence Construction	Spring 2018	Works to build the new section of motorway would start.
New section of motorway open	Autumn 2021	The new section of motorway would be open to the public and works to reclassify the existing M4 route would start.

9.2 Statutory Process

After the current stage of development, the Welsh Government intend to publish draft Orders under the Highways Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. The draft Orders comprise the powers to establish a line, modify the side roads, purchase land and put in place any other rights needed to deliver the scheme. There would be a period during which people who have an interest in, or might be affected by the proposals may object, support, make representations on or suggest alternatives to the draft Orders. It is likely that a Public Local Inquiry would be held. If so, an independent Inspector would hear and consider the evidence and make a recommendation to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport to take into account when deciding whether to make the Orders.

The Scheme requires Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the European Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended) and Section 105A of the Highways Act 1980 (as amended). EIA is a means of identifying and collating information to inform an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of a scheme. The findings of the EIA process will be reported in an Environmental Statement in order to inform the decision-making process.

In accordance with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, an Assessment of Implications on European Sites (AIES) is also being undertaken to consider the possible effects on sites of nature conservation interest designated at the European level. An AIES will therefore be produced alongside the Environmental Statement at the same time as draft Orders are published.

The protection of a Preferred Route does not commit the Welsh Ministers to construct the new section of motorway along that route. It is the statutory Orders, if made, which would convey the legal power to construct the scheme. These must first be published in the form of "draft" Orders and this is the point when individuals and organisations can formerly lodge objections, which would likely lead to a Public Local Inquiry before an independent Inspector.

The scheme would be promoted using the powers of the Welsh Ministers as Highway Authority in accordance with the Highways Act 1980, which have been transferred to them by virtue of the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999 and the Government of Wales Act 2006 and delegated to the relevant Assembly Minister.

Should you have any comments or queries, please do not hesitate to contact us via the details below.

How to contact us

To find out more information visit: gov.wales/m4newport

Or contact our public liaison officer, Brian Greaves:

Email: Brian.Greaves@costain.com

Telephone: 0845 600 2664

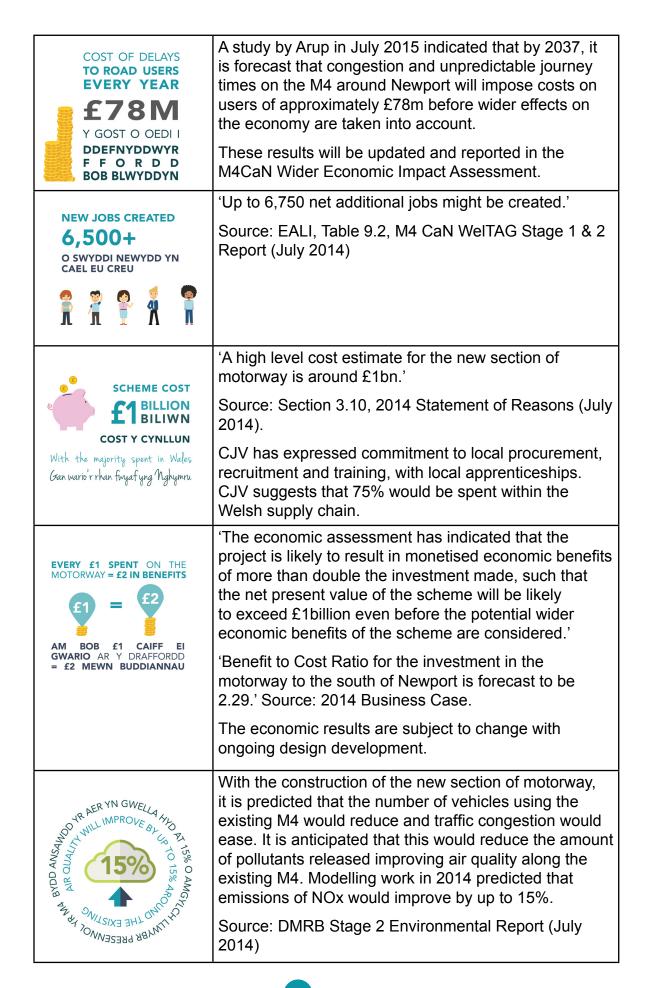
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Infographics

Information graphics or 'infographics' are graphic visual representations of information, data or knowledge, intended to present information quickly and clearly.

A series of 'infographics' are shown below to provide high level summaries with statistical information about the proposals for the M4 Corridor around Newport project. They focus on the problems, the economy, society and the environment.

Infographic	Source Statement		
VEHICLES USE THE	Estimated Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) flows on the M4 around Newport for 2014 are:		
ROAD EVERYDAY	J24-J25	95,500	
100,000	Brynglas Tunnel	75,400	
O GERBYDAU YN	J26-J27	106,400	
DEFNYDDIO'R FFORDD BOB DYDD	J27-J28	104,900	
	J28-J29	109,200	
	An average of 100,000 has been selected to be presented.		
AVERAGE JOURNEY TIMES WILL IMPROVE BY AT LEAST	'The scheme results in a 10 minute time saving between Junctions 23 and 29 of the M4.'		
Y GWELLIANT LLEIAF MEWN AMSEROEDD TEITHIO ARFEROL	Source: Section 6.5.3.1 Impacts on journey times between key centres, M4 CaN WelTAG Stage 1 & 2 Report (July 2014)		
IN 2014 THE ROAD WAS 95% FULL LLAWN DEFNYDD O'R FFORDD YN 2014	_	odel flow is AM westbound, % of the capacity for a D3M urban I in DMRB.	
60% LESS TRAFFIC THROUGH BRYNGLAS TUNNELS YN LLAI O DRAFFIG DRWY DWNELI BRYNGLAS	total vehicle transfer 60% through the tun	ults at August 2015 show is generally 45-48% (rising to nel because there is less local ne tunnel). The HGV transfer at the	





Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are nationally designated for either their wildlife, geological or physiographic interest. The Gwent Levels SSSIs comprise 6 separate sites - Magor & Undy SSSI; Redwick and Llandevenny SSSI; Whitson SSSI; Nash and Goldcliff SSSI; St. Brides SSSI; and Rumney and Peterstone SSSI.

The Gwent Levels is an entirely manmade environment which has been reclaimed from the sea and is today actively managed to maintain water levels through a complex system of reens and ditches. All the SSSIs are designated primarily for their reen and ditch habitat, insects and other aquatic invertebrates, and the shrill carder bee.

Current design development indicates that the land required for the new section of motorway would be less than 2% of the total area of the Gwent Levels SSSI. The total area of the Gwent Levels SSSI is about 5,500 ha. As at current design development, calculations indicate that about 100 ha of the land required for the new section of motorway goes through the Gwent Levels SSSI.



As part of the project, current design development shows that more than 60 hectares of new woodland would be planted and maintained across the new section of motorway. These woodlands would provide screening for local residents, new wildlife habitats in key areas, and designed to be sympathetic to the existing landscape.



The route of the proposed new section of motorway has been designed to make best use of brownfield land, i.e. land which has been previously developed, used for industrial and commercial use, or potentially contaminated. Current design development shows that approximately 50% of the new section of motorway would cross brownfield land. As at current design development, calculations indicate that the total land take would be about 270 ha, with about 140 ha going through brownfield land.