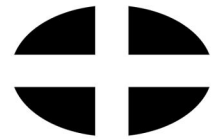


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THE TEMPLE TO BODMIN A30 ACTION GROUP

SUBMISSION

TO

THE SOUTH WEST REGIONAL SELECT
COMMITTEE

FROM

THE TEMPLE TO BODMIN A30 ACTION
GROUP

ON

TRANSPORT IN THE SOUTH WEST

- JULY 2009 -

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Introduction:

This report has been compiled by the Temple to Bodmin A30 Action Group in response to a call for evidence from the South West Regional Select Committee concerning transport issues within the South West.

Brief History:

The Temple to Bodmin A30 Action Group has been in existence since June 2007. We are a local active campaign group which started campaigning for the dualling of the single carriageway section of road at Temple. This stretch of road has been blighted by serious traffic accidents over a number of years, some unfortunately fatal; plus suffering frequent long tailbacks amounting to miles of queuing traffic during the peak holiday season.

In 2006 the Temple scheme was removed from the original Regional Funding Allocation (RFA1) programme. As a consequence of our campaign we also found we were fighting to change the priorities of this funding process. The group were afforded stakeholder status in the pre-allocation of the new RFA2 refresh. During our campaign we presented evidence to the Transport Minister, Tom Harris MP; Officers of the SW Regional Assembly and SW Regional Development Agency; Senior Director and Regional Managers of the Highways Agency and members of the Government Office of the South West.

After nearly two years of solid campaigning the A30 scheme was finally recommended for inclusion into the revised RFA2 programme. We are currently awaiting the report to be sanctioned by the Department for Transport.

Summary:

- It will come as no surprise to the Committee to hear that **Cornwall is unique** in the South West Region.
- For too long the far South West has played 'second fiddle' to the rest of the country when it comes to instigating major transport infrastructure improvements whether for road or rail.
- Due to the fact that Cornwall is part of the peninsular it suffers from a lack of connectivity within the County and subsequently to the rest of the UK.

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- Our mainline rail service linking Penzance with London is already running at full capacity; the single line working on secondary lines within Cornwall all require much needed investment for track and new rolling stock.
- There is a total lack of an efficient rail service linking our smaller towns with Truro; commuting into the City by road or rail is an everyday problem. At present no rail access is provided to the new expanding Cornwall Newquay Airport.
- Our local buses barely provide a service for the rural community; there appears to be no cohesive link between the independent service providers. More investment should be provided for community bus services.
- There is no major trunk road of at least two lane, dual carriageway standard, running the entire length of the south west peninsular; although part served by the A30 and A38. Both roads are in urgent need of upgrading in sections to improve safety and connectivity.
- It is a fact the **National Road Network** ends with the M5 at Exeter; the A30 remains *the* only strategic road serving the entire length of the 'peninsular corridor' from Exeter through to Penzance.
- The A38 from Exeter is adequate until it reaches Plymouth and the Tamar Bridge. Strategic road improvements are essential to improve safety and congestion in southeast Cornwall. West of the new Dobwalls bypass the A38 returns to a winding, single lane carriageway, through the Glynn Valley until terminating just outside Bodmin.
- **Tourism is Cornwall's lifeblood**, it is responsible for at least 30% of the GDP of the County. Tourism *cannot* be sustained without the convenience of the motor car. For the vast majority of visitors the A30 is their only option.
- The Temple Improvement on the A30 was designed to address just these issues; by reducing accidents, alleviating seasonal congestion and improving connectivity.
- It would improve capacity for the owners of haulage companies who find themselves regularly disadvantaged as a result of congestion; thus bringing them in direct conflict with HGV driver regulations. This highlights the peripherality experienced by hauliers working to and from Cornwall.

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- The Cornwall Economic Forum (CEF) reported, that Cornwall was still economically challenged given the amount of funding it has already received through E.U. Objective One and latterly E.U. Convergence funding. The Chairman of CEF has stated **“dualling the A30 is crucial for the future of Cornwall.”**
- New industry relocating to Cornwall and current commercial enterprises need an efficient road infrastructure to support today’s commercial markets. (Rod Eddington’s - Transport Study)
- The Temple scheme fulfils these basic criteria. **It is a deliverable scheme** within a short timescale; the scheme originates from a solid evidence base, which is realistic and above all value for money.
- The Temple scheme reflects the priorities needed to implement the **Regional Spatial Strategy** and the **Regional Transport Strategy**. By improving a major strategic road it will enhance connectivity for future housing and regeneration schemes.
- The Select Committee’s remit is to target spending in areas where it can add most value in line with current planning initiatives; we respectfully suggest now **is** the time to include the Temple Improvement within those guide lines.

Submission:

1. Transport provision in the south west is lacking in both quality and accessibility. It is our assertion that this comment is accepted within both the public and private sector. For too long the south west (includes the entire south west peninsular) appears to have missed out on these funding initiatives to larger urban conurbations throughout the rest of the country.
2. The much-berated Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) alludes to the future needs of the south west over the next decade and beyond. It is set to include major regeneration programmes including thousands of new homes earmarked for Cornwall plus sustainable light industry coupled with improved training for the workless. Most of these proposed schemes are likely to be centred in and around our larger towns.

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3. In deference to the RSS report we submit it fails to address the fundamental question; a much needed and improved road infrastructure is required before any such schemes are considered. It is not acceptable to assume that new local housing will fulfil all the needs of a local sustainable workforce. This negates the long-held argument that new roads are not needed to serve regeneration schemes; it is still a held belief that the workforce would be locally sourced.
4. Sir Rod Eddington's advice to Government in his 'Transport Study' commissioned in 2006 states, that a strategic road infrastructure is fundamental to any regeneration scheme being considered. It also refers to good road infrastructure being vital to the economy; above all the need to unlock pinch points. That submission still holds good to this day, even more so given the present economic climate.
5. Unlike road systems in other counties, the A30 is the only strategic link serving the entire peninsular corridor. It plays a pivotal role for regional connectivity to markets in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond. Reliable journey times from Cornwall to major markets represents a significant limit to the viability of commerce in Cornwall. Economists report this stretch alone at Temple is crucial for the future of Cornwall and its quest for future funding initiatives.
6. Major hold-ups regularly occur at Temple where the highway comprises of just 2.5 miles of winding, single carriageway linking miles of existing dual carriageway at either end. The first part of the original Government scheme to improve the A30 was completed in 2007. Located just 10 miles west of Temple, the Bodmin to Indian Queens By-pass has resulted in a 17% increase in peak traffic flows at Temple causing knock-on effects to surrounding areas.
7. Lack of foresight has enhanced the perception that Cornwall is not a place in which to do business. Given the recent EU funding initiatives, Cornwall is sadly lacking from additionality to enhance these investments. Over the past number of decades Cornwall has lacked match funding for major initiatives which has severely restricted expenditure on transport infrastructure.

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- 8.** We are constantly told that over the past number of years Cornwall has already received a large amount of investment for infrastructure projects; even so it is our understanding that Cornwall is only playing catch-up for its previous decades of neglect. In 2006 tourism accounted for 30% of the GDP for Cornwall amounting to some £1.5bn and employing over 40,000 people. Cornwall is now seen as an all year round holiday and short-break destination.
- 9.** Thanks to the considerable marketing efforts on behalf of tourism in Cornwall the county is now witnessing a resurgence. But how can this lack of foresight for improving our transport infrastructure be seen to be forward thinking on behalf of Cornwall's very successful tourist industry?
- 10.** Of the 5 million visitors that are attracted to the county each year; the vast majority use the A30 as their entry and exit into Cornwall. There are no realistic road alternatives. Cornwall's visitors need the convenience of their own transport. Even popular activity holidays such as cycling and walking still require the motor car as the preferred mode of transport around the County.
- 11.** The reality of this convenience for the motor car fails to accord with the green lobby and environmental groups but is unfortunately a fact of life. Cornwall already has one of the highest uses of the motor car per capita than anywhere else in the country. This is obviously as a direct result of poor intermodal services throughout the County.
- 12.** Cornwall's commerce relies heavily on connectivity. We are a main source of fresh produce to the rest of the country. Whilst our commercial sector requires both the regular delivery of supplies and the guarantee of an efficient distribution network for end-user products. None of this is possible if we suffer regular delay on our only major trunk road.
- 13.** The south west appears lacking when utilising its maritime potential. Ferries could help alleviate excess green miles for the delivery of fresh produce or fish destined for the European markets. Feasibility studies should be instigated into the use of containerisation at ports such as Falmouth and Plymouth. Both ports need substantial investment for their future growth.

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- 14.** The Government's own figures indicated that drivers travelling on the A30 between Bodmin and Penzance wasted 744,000 hours sitting in traffic during 2007. At present large areas of North and East Cornwall suffer when there are major hold-ups at Temple. Commerce in surrounding villages and towns including Bodmin have been significantly affected. Narrow country lanes synonymous with the moorland landscape area are being turned into nightmare rat-runs.
- 15.** The peace and tranquillity that Cornwall is famous for is being eroded under a constant flood of motor cars and caravans. In 2008 we carried out a survey at major events in Cornwall. Over 90% of those surveyed used the road regularly, of which 98% believed the road needed improvement and over 86% believed the problems had worsened in the past 12 months.
- 16.** Safety is a paramount issue; improving standards of safety and comfort for all vehicle users on the A30 was originally highlighted by the Highways Agency. The single carriageway constantly suffers fast moving, through traffic, which is constantly in conflict with local slow moving or turning traffic. Accident rates at Temple are above average for a single carriageway trunk road.
- 17.** We can only reiterate, the A30 in Cornwall is not fit for purpose in the 21st Century.
- 18.** We are sympathetic to the likely imposition of financial restraints on improvements as a result of the current economic downturn; however decisions regarding future funding priorities must still be made. Priorities must be subjective and based purely on fact not politically induced demographic whims.
- 19.** Having attended meetings of the SW Regional Assembly and its Regional Transport Board we would submit their effectiveness as poor; they performed an unnecessary level of bureaucracy. From our perspective the sheer make up of the relevant boards and committees with members, officers and SEEPS ensured most decisions were subjective and bore little relation to the often-solid evidence base. Some members appeared guided by their own political objectives rather than looking at the bigger picture to the benefit of the region. Regional conflicts became apparent during workshop forums when personal prejudices were evident.

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- 20.** Expert witnesses such as the Highways Agency were not utilised to their full potential at committee meetings. This we saw as an apparent failing in the decision making process. It is our submission that the effectiveness of the system would not be improved by using the Regional Development Agency or the new South West Councils forum given our previous comments.
- 21.** Now that Cornwall has recently achieved unitary council status better efficiencies would be available if some of the decisions on transport issues were made at local level. In close collaboration with the Highways Agency the Council could then have smaller working parties to achieve decisions without the need for the expensive bureaucracy of regional quangos. However there would still be a need for some form of pan-regional decision making.
- 22.** The cost behind the running of the regional forums and meetings for the recent RFA2 programme must now be seen to be prohibitive given the current economic climate. Although seen to be democratic how much better it would be to decide these schemes at a much more local level without regional politics coming into the equation.
- 23.** National transport policies, or the interpretation of these policies has not significantly improved the plight of the south west these past decades; the region still lags behind the rest of the country in transport funding initiatives. Major funding schemes are earmarked for the M4 corridor in both road and rail upgrades. Due in part to its peripherality the peninsular is not seen as a priority.
- 24.** With reference to the ability of Government to influence private sector transport providers; unfortunately we see this as a failing over the past two administrations. The quality of our train services have fallen these past decades; albeit some investment is in place our current rolling stock is in need of drastic upgrading as it is still yet to be delivered.
- 25.** If privatisation has part failed our railways it has certainly failed our local buses. Rural communities are desperate for funding for local hopper buses; left to the private sector these local services have failed our villages. In our rural community we now rely on a local supermarket to sponsor a free bus service; we must be able to tap into this potential for the benefit of our communities.

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26. This of course should have been foreseen when bus companies were privatised. Investment must be seen to be put into our rural villages or else an entire lifestyle will disappear and our communities could be replaced by holiday homes for the pseudo-rich.

Recommendations:

27. Consideration must be given to breaking up the power of the surviving regional quangos in deciding issues that affect both local county and national needs. The south west region is far too large to take onboard local transport plans.

28. The cost-benefit analysis of regional quangos show they are not cost effective. Cornwall, under its new unitary status, is now in a prime position to decide its own transport infrastructure budgets. This would save on capital investment by removing an entire middle section of bureaucracy.

A Final Word:

A discussion heard on national radio recently concerned the upsurge in the number of people taking their holidays within the UK. A listener was asked to comment on where were the best beaches throughout the UK. When asked, "What about Cornwall?" the listener replied:
"Why go there, just to sit in traffic"

What a sad indictment on our region.

We trust our evidence provides some guidance for the Select Committee when it comes to deciding the future priorities and policies for our region.

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(2677 words)