Welsh Government
Consultation – summary of response

A55 3rd Menai Crossing improvement study

October 2018
A55 THIRD MENAI CROSSING IMPROVEMENT STUDY
STATEMENT OF RESULTS
FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION

October 2018

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The A55 Britannia Bridge over the Menai Strait provides one of the two road links between the mainland and Anglesey, with the other route being via the height and width restricted A5 on Menai Bridge. The bridge is the only section of the A55 route which is single carriageway and this reduction in lanes leads to congestion at peak times. The Welsh Government stated in the National Transport Finance Plan 2015 that it will develop a scheme for improvements to the A55 crossing of the Menai Strait and commissioned a study to investigate options and make a recommendation for a Preferred Option.

1.2 The main factors under consideration include the location of the proposed bridge within a corridor along the Menai Strait, the type of junction arrangements required to tie into the existing A55 and the type of bridge structure suitable for the highway options.

1.3 This study was undertaken in accordance with the Welsh Transport Planning Appraisal Guidance 2017 (WelTAG) procedure which is guidance produced by Welsh Government for use in the development, appraisal and evaluation of any proposed transport intervention. WelTAG 2017 was developed to reflect the Well-being of Future Generations Act where the environment, social, economic and cultural impacts of each option need to be assessed. The assessments also considered how each option contribute to the Well-being Goals and Objectives.

1.4 WelTAG also aims to ensure that public sector transport proposals demonstrate the following criteria:

- A positive contribution to objectives for transport;
- Good value for money;
- Overall economic, social and environmental benefits;
- Maximum benefit and minimal impact.
- to enable the most beneficial scheme to be identified
- to allow the comparison of schemes on a like-for-like basis

1.5 This Statement of Results summarises the scheme’s technical, economic and environmental aspects and the views expressed during the public consultation which took place between 15 December 2017 and 9 March 2018. It also explains the Cabinet Secretary’s decision, acting in his capacity as Minister for the Economy and Transport.

2 DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL OF OPTIONS

2.1 The main issues raised by the study were:

- The A55 is important locally, nationally and internationally. It provides the main economic artery for North Wales and forms part of the route Euro 22 on the Trans European Road network. This route links Ireland, through the UK, to the European continent ending in Ishim, Russia.
- Britannia Bridge is the only section within the UK that is not dual carriageway, and this acts as a constraint to traffic flow.
• Congestion is experienced at peak times and during summer and bank holiday periods. This is due to the lack of alternative routes to and from Anglesey, freight movements to and from Holyhead and the high level of commuter traffic.

• Full closures of the Britannia Bridge are implemented during severe weather warnings and high winds (above 70mph) and speed restrictions are applied when wind speeds exceed 35mph. Problems are also encountered when high sided vehicles get into difficulties after ignoring the speed restrictions.

• The Menai Bridge is not a viable diversion route when the Britannia Bridge is closed or restricted because its narrow arches make it difficult for modern day HGVs and other large vehicles to pass over the bridge.

• The lack of resilience along the corridor is particularly apparent when incidents such as vehicle breakdowns occur, causing obstructions and resulting in delays to other road users.

• Congestion on the road network regularly occurs on the A5 between Llanfairpwllgwyngyll and Bangor, and on the A487 between Menai Bridge and Parc Menai at A55 Junction 9.

• There are no segregated cyclist facilities over the bridge and pedestrians are banned from crossing it. This causes severance between Anglesey and the mainland and discourages the use of healthier and more sustainable modes of transport.

• The alignment and on-slips of the A55 around Llanfairpwllgwyngyll approaching the A55 Britannia Bridge are below modern design standards leading to congestion as traffic seeks to merge onto the A55.

• The above problems all combine to have a negative impact the economic success of the region and make the Isle of Anglesey a less attractive destination for investment and tourism.

2.2 To address the problems raised, and in line with strategic network objectives, the following five Transport Planning Objectives were identified as part of the WelTAG Stage 1 study:

The Transport Planning Objectives for this study are as follows:

Objective 1:
• Improve journey times between A55 junctions 7 and 10 during peak periods and to maintain improved journey time into the future.

Objective 2:
• Improve journey time reliability between A55 Junctions 7 and 10.

Objective 3:
• Improve network resilience and reduce reliance on the use of the Menai Bridge as an alternative route during maintenance or emergencies.

Objective 4:
• Improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the Menai Strait including connections to long distance routes and key employment sites.
Objective 5:
- Promote safety for trips across the Menai Strait.

2.3 The traffic modelling analysis undertaken indicates that if nothing is done, traffic flows on the A55 Britannia Bridge are expected to increase by up to 17% between 2017 and 2038. Traffic flows on the A5 Menai Bridge are also expected to increase by up to 18% between 2017 and 2038 whilst traffic on minor roads is expected to increase by up to 30% on Anglesey, with larger increases of up to 40% on the mainland.

2.4 Along the A55 and across the Britannia Bridge between Junctions 7 and 12, eastbound journey times in the morning peak would increase by 36% and westbound journey times in the evening peak would increase by 23%.

2.5 As a result, if nothing is done, the growth in traffic along the corridor is expected to increase congestion and journey times throughout the Menai area. This will continue to affect and restrict investment, which in turn limits employment opportunities in the region.

2.6 To address the above problems and to meet the transport planning objectives, four highway alignments were developed, two of which offer two and four lane carriageway variants, resulting in six highway options overall. Four indicative bridge structures were shown as part of the consultation material, providing added context to the highway alignments. The highway options are briefly described below:

**Red Option** – Bridge directly to the west of the existing Britannia Bridge. Existing Britannia Bridge would be reconfigured to carry all eastbound traffic in two lanes. The new structure would carry all westbound traffic in two lanes and additional facilities provided for pedestrians and cyclists.

**Pink Option** – Widening of the existing Britannia Bridge or Bridge directly to the east of the existing Britannia Bridge. Existing Britannia Bridge would be widened to include new lanes or a new bridge immediately adjacent could be built. Junctions would be reconfigured to carry ‘local traffic’ and additional facilities provided for pedestrians and cyclists.

**Orange Option** (One direction Two Lane Crossing) – Parallel bridge to the east of the existing Britannia Bridge carrying 2 eastbound lanes. Existing Britannia Bridge would be reconfigured to carry all westbound traffic in two lanes. A new structure would carry all eastbound traffic on two lanes. Additional facilities would be provided for pedestrians and cyclists.

**Orange Option** (Four Lane Crossing) – Parallel Bridge to the east of the existing Britannia Bridge carrying 2 eastbound lanes and 2 westbound lanes. Construction of a 2-lane dual carriageway located alongside the Britannia Bridge on the eastern side, which would carry all ‘through traffic’. The Britannia Bridge and junctions would be reconfigured to carry ‘local traffic’ and additional facilities would be provided for pedestrians and cyclists.
Purple Option (Two Lane Crossing) - Bridge to the east of the existing Britannia Bridge carrying 2 eastbound lanes. Existing Britannia Bridge reconfigured to carry all westbound traffic in two lanes. The new structure would carry all eastbound traffic in two lanes and additional facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

Purple Option (Four Lane Crossing) - Bridge to the east of the existing Britannia Bridge carrying 2 eastbound lanes and 2 westbound lanes. Two-lane dual carriageway located to east of Britannia Bridge, to carry all ‘through traffic’. The Britannia Bridge and junctions would be reconfigured to carry ‘local traffic’ and additional facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

2.7 The study also looked at indicative structural aspects of the package under consideration.

- Cable Stayed Bridge Single Span over the Menai Strait
- Extrados Bridge Single Span over the Menai Strait
- Extrados Bridge Two Spans over the Menai Strait
- Balanced Cantilever Bridge Two Spans over the Menai Strait

2.8 This Statement of Results summarises the scheme’s technical, economic and environmental aspects and the views expressed during the public consultation which took place between 15 December 2017 and 9 March 2018. It also explains the Cabinet Secretary’s decision, acting in his capacity as Minister for the Economy and Transport.

2.9 The public consultation brochure at Annex A describes the options in more detail.

3 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

3.1 We consulted on the Options in a twelve week consultation period which took place between 15 December 2017 and 9 March 2018.

3.2 Information was displayed on the Consultation pages of the Welsh Government’s website for the duration of the consultation including a bilingual questionnaire to capture views. In January 2018, four public exhibitions were held where people could meet with the Study Team to discuss the options; paper versions of the questionnaire and Consultation Document were available at these events. The Consultation was publicised via letters to local premises, posters, press releases and BBC and ITV news both reported on the exhibitions. 437 people attended the public exhibitions. Statutory and Non Statutory consultees were also invited to provide their views.

3.3 The exhibitions were held over four days with each event being open to the public from 10am until 8pm. The exhibitions were held at:

Memorial Hall, Llanfairpwll, LL61 5JB (Tuesday 16th January & Wednesday 17th January); and

Ty Menai, Ffordd Penlan, Parc Menai Business Park, Bangor, LL57 4HJ (Tuesday 23rd January & Wednesday 24th January).
3.4 437 people in total attended the public consultation exhibitions. By the close of the consultation period we received 637 valid completed questionnaires. 145 paper questionnaires were returned; 121 of which were completed using the English language version and 24 used the Welsh language version. A further 79 responses were received from residents, stakeholders, statutory and non-statutory consultees via telephone, e-mail, letters and during the exhibitions.

A summary of the views expressed is below.

4 ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

Analysis of Questionnaire responses

4.1 All questions in the consultation were optional and only valid responses are shown, bases (the number of responses to each question) are shown for all questions. Census data, where mentioned, is taken from the 2011 Census and includes all England and Wales, as responses were received from both areas.

4.2 The questionnaire asked people about their current use of the Menai Strait crossing, what is important to them, their highway alignment option preference and bridge construction option preference. Analysis of the responses to the eleven questions is as follows.

*Question 1 – How frequently do you cross the Menai Strait?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 or more days a week</td>
<td>263 41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 days a week</td>
<td>196 30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>81 12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>58 9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less often</td>
<td>36 5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1 0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of respondents (85%) cross the Menai strait on a regular (weekly or more) basis.
**Question 2 – Which mode of transport do you typically use to cross the Menai Strait?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Transport</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Column N %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car driver</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van/HGV driver</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car passenger</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On foot</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondents</strong></td>
<td>636</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

89.0%, cross the Strait as a car driver so are likely to be familiar with the existing Britannia Bridge. Of those respondents who cross the Menai Strait 5 days or more a week, 95% do so as a car driver. This is significantly higher than those who cross “Less Often” (75%).

**Question 3 – How important to you is it that capacity of the A55 across the Menai Strait is increased for…?**

Bases: Pedestrians = 572, Cyclists=578, motorists=633

The majority of respondents viewed improving capacity of the A55 across the Menai Strait as important for motorists and cyclists.

Respondents who cross the Menai Strait frequently (weekly or more) were significantly more likely to consider capacity improvements for motorists (82%) as being important than those who cross less often (62%).
**Question 4 – Which highway option do you prefer? Please indicate your first and second choices.**

First choice number of respondents = 486,

Second choice number of respondents = 412

The Purple Four lane Option is the most popular option with 25% of the 486 respondents selecting it as their first choice. This was closely followed by Orange Four Lane Option with 24% of respondents selecting it as their first choice. Almost a fifth of respondents selected ‘do nothing’ as their first choice and 12% selecting the Red Option.

When first and second choices are combined (898 respondents), the Orange four lane highway option secures the highest proportion of preferences at 24%. The Purple four lane highway secures 20% of combined choice preferences with ‘do nothing' securing 13%. Pink and Orange 2-lane options each account for 12% of combined preferences with the Red Option achieving 11%.
**Question 5 – Which bridge construction option do you prefer?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bridge Option</th>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extrados One-span</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrados Two-span</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable-stayed</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Cantilever</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do nothing</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First choice number of respondents = 522,  
Second choice number of respondents = 469

The Balanced Cantilever bridge secured the highest proportion of first choice preferences with 31% of respondents selecting this bridge option. ‘Do nothing’ was the second most popular first choice selection (23%) followed by Extrados One-span (21%).

When first and second bridge choices are combined (991 respondents), the Balanced Cantilever bridge secures the highest proportion of preferences (26%). ‘Do nothing’ secured 22% and Extrados one-span secures 21%.

**Question 6 – Please explain your reasons for the highway and bridge combination that you have selected &**

**Question 11 – If you have any further comments on the study, please write them below.**

Respondents were given two opportunities to offer verbatim comments regarding the new crossing. The first was specifically regarding their choice of highway and bridge options: “Please explain your reasons for the highway and bridge combination that you have selected.” The second was an open comment section for any further views on the crossing “If you have any further comments on the study, please write them below”. 
All comments were read and summarised into similar categories. Almost half (43%) of comments wished the current view along the Menai Strait to be changed as little as possible. The balanced cantilever bridge was commented as having less impact on the current views.

A third of respondents (33%) stated they wanted the new bridge to be able to take power cables from Wylfa Newydd, the proposed new nuclear power plant on Anglesey, to avoid further building in the Strait.

For those respondents who answered 'Do nothing' as their option choice, almost half (48%) felt that the delay did not justify a third crossing with a third of respondents preferring the money to be spent elsewhere either on roads or other non-transportation projects such as hospitals and schools.

Question 7- Which of the following best describes you? (tick all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident in Gwynedd area</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business owner in Gwynedd area</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student in Gwynedd area</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I travel to work in Gwynedd</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident on Anglesey</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business owner on Anglesey</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student on Anglesey</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I travel to work on Anglesey</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not live or own a business in this area but I travel through it regularly</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents 532

Responses suggest that the majority of respondents are familiar with the area. Eighty six percent of respondents who answered this question are residents of either Anglesey (71%) or Gwynedd (15%). 'Other' responses included ‘occasional visitor/tourist’, ‘just bought a house here but not yet moved’ and ‘resident of neighbouring areas’

Question 8 – Are you Male, Female or Prefer not to say?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Consultation Frequency</th>
<th>Consultation Percentage</th>
<th>2011 Census Frequency</th>
<th>2011 Census Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>536</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample contains a high proportion of males; of those respondents that answered the question, a third are female compared with 51% in the Census.
Question 9 – Please indicate which age band you are in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Band</th>
<th>Consultation Frequency</th>
<th>2011 Census Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>530</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All age ranges are represented although the older age ranges are over represented compared with the Census: two thirds (66%) of the sample are aged over 45 compared with 52% in the Census.

Question 10 – What is your home postcode?

The map above shows respondents’ postcodes indicating a good spread of responses across Anglesey and Bangor. An additional 18 postcodes where given outside the area shown on the above map.
4.3 **Gwynedd Council** (GC) supports the scheme in principle and recognises its importance locally and regionally and offers economic advantages and opportunities for the area. GC doesn’t have a preference for a preferred route option but requests a commitment of further consultation throughout the process to ensure there are opportunities to contribute constructively to the development of the scheme and assist to overcome and associated challenges. Given the nature of the scheme and the sensitivity of the location, GC expect that robust and detailed assessments and consideration will be made of all the material planning considerations in the formal Environmental Impact Assessment. GC understand that potentially three major schemes will be built concurrently (3rd Menai Crossing, Wylfa Newydd and National Grid crossing) and there is concern about the cumulative effect of the three schemes during the construction phase. GC remains completely committed to ensuring that the challenges stemming from the scheme will be addressed and that maximum advantage of every opportunity is taken as a result of the scheme.

4.4 **Isle of Anglesey County Council** (IoACC) state that with Wylfa Newydd progressing forward it is essential that the 3rd Menai crossing is constructed and its exceptionally important that the bridge can carry National Grid’s new cables across the Menai. This would save spending over £200m on an unnecessary tunnel with its construction work causing substantial difficulty in the Llanfairpwll area. By saving £200m, IoAC hopes that more undergrounding of NGs cables could be achieved on the island.

IoAC support the Red Option and highlighted that a balanced cantilever type bridge, which has a sufficiently deep deck, could carry NGs proposed power cables from Wylfa Newydd power station, and would not visually affect the Britannia Bridge. IoAC note that the Red Option is the only option that does not affect National Trust’s inalienable land and this option is also one of the cheapest.

4.5 **Regulation and Economic Development Service of Isle of Anglesey County Council** (IOACC) responded and is supportive of proposed construction of 3rd bridge, as A55 is a major transport route and an additional crossing would protect and grow local and regional economies. IOACC also feel there would be substantial journey time improvements with Holyhead Port and its freight users also seeing a major benefit. IOACC of view that a 3rd bridge would maximise accessibility for all transport modes especially foot, cycle and public transport. IOACC prefers the Red Option with balanced Cantilever as having least impact, providing reasons and ranking, and queried whether Wylfa Newydd electric cables could be constructed with the new bridge. IOACC provided detailed supporting information, made suggestions and set out their requirements in relation to further assessments that are required as part of the next stage of the project in the development. With both the Pink and Red Options, IOACC suggest that consideration should be given to the removal of the Anglesey and Gwynedd National Grid pylons/cables and integrating the existing and proposed cables (Wylfa Newydd connection) within the new design structure providing reasons.

4.6 **Natural Resources Wales** (NRW) agree that an Environmental Impact Assessment is required due to the location and scale of this proposal. They consider that marine habitats outside Protected Sites are also of significant importance and that impacts on these habitats should be assessed. NRW will look to see how attention to design quality (TAN12 objectives) would be employed in project design alongside work to
mitigate environmental effects. NRW advised that considerable assessment will be needed to prove 'no deterioration' under the Water Framework Directive. NRW consider that the development is likely to have a significant effect on material resources during construction, as this could coincide with the National Grid ‘New Connections’ and Horizon’s Wylfa Newydd projects. NRW noted that mobile species including marine mammals and some birds from SACs over a much wider area could be affected directly or indirectly and therefore many more SACs should be included in the assessment once further detail of construction methods is known. NRW can provide guidance on aspects of construction which will need to be considered fully in an Appropriate Assessment once sufficient design detail is available.

4.7 National Grid (NG) responded and stated the existing high voltage overhead line would not be impacted by red, pink, purple and orange two lane options assuming carriageway height does not change. They noted the possibility that orange and purple four lane options may impact on a couple of existing towers as proposed carriageway would be getting close to their foundations. NG provided information on their existing apparatus and noted design constraints and requirements that must be built into the design and operation of the scheme. NG also referred to the proposed new 400kV connection to the new power station at Wylfa Newydd.

4.8 National Trust (NT) support the Red Option as it offers the greatest potential to incorporate the existing 400kV cables. National Trust does not support the use of their inalienable land for a 3rd Crossing. National Trust considered that insufficient information had been provided to enable an informed opinion to be made on the consultation options. NT noted that more details on how the bridge would be built, the areas needed for construction and how materials and plant will be delivered is required as all these could have significant landscape and ecological impact.

4.9 University of Bangor (UoB) responded and noted that 3rd Menai crossing could help alleviate current and predicted future congestion and improve provision for pedestrians and cyclists. Although welcoming the developments, UoB noted that eastern options will have major short and long term impacts on their land and facilities. Whilst UoB noted a number of other potentially adverse impacts, they wish to engage constructively with the project team to ensure the worst impacts can be mitigated.

4.10 Sport Wales responded noting that the proposed Purple and possibly Orange route encroach on Bangor University's playing fields at Treborth. They wish to record that they will be calling for adequate compensation should the playing fields be affected.

4.11 Irish Ferries and Stena Line responded together with both organisations welcoming plans to increase capacity across the Menai Strait, stating that freight market in and out of Holyhead has grown consistently over the past seven years and they expect this to continue. They stress importance that access from the main road networks is as hassle free as possible. Current bottlenecks experienced at peak times on the approaches to Britannia Bridge cause concern for their customers impacting on fuel costs, journey times and reliability.

4.12 The Institution for Civil Engineers (ICE) support the overriding aim of the project and favoured a new four lane balanced cantilever bridge along the Purple Route. The new bridge should be designed to carry vehicles traffic at speeds of up to 70mph with appropriate wind shielding to allow operation during high wind. ICE believes it is
important to make more and better provision for walkers and cycling and the bridge should be designed to encourage tourism. The ICE noted there may be construction and health and safety problems associated with the construction of a bridge on the Red Option.

4.13 **Sustrans** responded and acknowledged the inclusion of pedestrians and cyclists at this early stage of the project. Whilst Sustrans accept that this consultation and the outline scheme proposals are at a very early stage of development, active travel routes must also be fully considered and planned in at this early stage so as to maximise the opportunities. The requirement for a detailed Non-Motorised User audit including stakeholder engagement was noted and that sufficient time and resources must be allowed prior to any final decisions being made by the project team, or the scheme moving forward to the next key stage.

4.14 **Menai Bridge Community Heritage Trust** (MBCHT) highlighted that any development should have minimum effect of the environmental and construction heritage of the area. MBCHT welcome the intention to make adequate provision for pedestrian and cyclists. They advocate WG and National Grid work together to ensure the most economic and environmentally acceptable solution for a new high voltage electricity crossing and a new road crossing in this sensitive location. MBCHT highlighted the importance of the views between the existing Menai and Britannia bridges and consider the Red Option as the only option which avoids these assets. MBCHT would welcome the project team to visit them to discuss the project in more detail.

4.15 **Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service** (GAPS) responded stating it is clear that all of the proposed Menai Crossing options are likely to have a negative adverse impact on the historic environment and therefore they oppose any plan to construct a third crossing without significant justification founded on a substantial and robust evidence base. GAPS identified the assessments that should be undertaken and the need to recognise that, if an intervention is to be made into this sensitive landscape, it must be one distinctive enough to contribute alongside the existing Menai crossings. GAPS feel that there is currently insufficient information available to form a view on which of the options ought to be considered a ‘preferred option’ and would be happy to make further comments once more detailed design proposals are available and sufficient assessment has been undertaken to form a view.

4.16 **Design Commission for Wales** (DCfW) welcomed the commitment to early and strategic engagement. DCfW felt the consultation information had been over-simplified and recommended that design quality objectives be developed as they are critical to a project that will irreversibly impact on a key location, areas of cultural and environmental value, tourism and national profile. They recommended carrying out further analysis on the site context with the existing and proposed bridges. This analysis should be completed to inform the form of the new bridge crossing.

4.17 **CPRW Caernarfonshire Branch** (CPRW) do not think that the present consultation documents give a clear enough justification of why a third crossing is needed at this time. CPRW noted the value of both existing bridges, landscape, AONB and landmarks, stating that any development that impinges on this needs to be treated with caution. CPRW cannot see a justification for a four-lane bridge in preference to a two-lane bridge. CPRW consider the choice of bridge design is the most critical issue
in relation to potential visual impact. CPRW welcome the proposed introduction of pedestrian and cycle access on the existing or new bridge and noted that the proposed wind screens will be important to increase safety and usability of the crossing but their visual appearance needs to be carefully considered, while ensuring they minimise impact on the views from the bridge. CPRW noted that if power cables have to cross the Menai, they would support their integration into the bridge structure as an alternative to National Grid’s present proposal to run them in a tunnel under the Menai whilst also urging serious consideration of routing the existing overhead cables within the structure of the bridge crossing. CPRW not in favour of a third bridge crossing, but if a choice were needed they would opt for the Pink Option and a Balanced Cantilever design.

4.18 Royal Yachting Association and Royal Yachting Association Cymru Wales responded acknowledging that proposals are at an early stage but asks Welsh Government to consider recreational boating clubs and centres that use the Strait for racing especially during August. Ask that any closure or narrowing of the Strait is minimised during construction and operation and well communicated in advance. The request a navigational risk assessment be completed as part of future planning to include impacts on smaller recreational vessels as well as commercial traffic.

4.19 Gwynedd Friends of the Earth (GFE) responded concluding that all of the options will have significant negative environmental impacts. GFE feel that the benefits in terms of journey time are very modest even at peak times and consider that the case has not been made for a third Menai crossing. Instead, GFE favours maintenance of the status quo, in combination with well-funded promotion of measures to reduce traffic volume. If the decision is made to go ahead with one of the options, Organisation regard it as essential from an environmental perspective that the pink option is selected, preferably involving only extension of the Britannia Bridge. GFE also note that the ability to carry power cables would potentially be desirable.

4.20 Movement along Welsh Roads (MAWR) responded by stating that access for AIL (abnormal indivisible loads) needs to be maintained at all times. MAWR consider a new structure to be most suitable option with the bridge being designed to accommodate heavy loads. MAWR provided heavy load requirements and requests that they are consulted on the final design.

5 OUTCOMES

5.1 The public consultation was considered to be effective as it generated a high level of interest with 437 people attending the public consultation exhibitions, and a high level of returned questionnaires and written responses.

5.2 The analysis of the questionnaires shows that there is clear support for a 3rd crossing of the Menai Strait.
Actions Taken Following Comments Received During Public Consultation

We listened carefully to the views expressed and carried out further work described below:

Buildability of the Red Option

Due to the proximity of the Red Option proposed between the Britannia Bridge and National Grid’s (NG) overhead lines, a further detailed review was carried out relating to how this option could be constructed within the existing conditions and constraints. This review included additional detailed information from National Grid on the location of their existing pylons and 400kV overhead power transmission lines that cross the Menai Strait adjacent to the Britannia Bridge. Consideration has also been given to, Health and Safety regulations, Network Rail constraints, construction access requirements and environmental designations all of which were considered as part of the review.

The WG buildability review concluded that the Red Option could not be safely constructed without the permanent or temporary diversion of NGs overhead power lines. The review also highlighted that construction of a new bridge within a narrow corridor between NGs powerlines and the Britannia Bridge offered too high a risk of contact with 400kV power lines by construction equipment on one side and a high risk of affecting use of the Britannia Bridge on the other and is against the principles of health and safety regulations. Diverting NGs powerlines would also result in programme and cost implications for the 3rd Menai Crossing.

For the above reasons, the Red Option was not considered any further in the route selection process.

Selection of bridge type

Four indicative bridge types were presented to the public for their comments which have been reviewed as part of this consultation process. However, in view of the sensitivity of placing a new crossing over the Menai Strait and following comments received as part of the consultation, further visualisation assessment and analysis work is being carried out before the bridge type is selected and taken forward to the next stage of scheme development.

6 REASONS FOR SELECTING THE PREFERRED ROUTE

6.1 There is significant support for an improvement to the transport problems in the Menai area with the majority of respondents viewing improving capacity of the A55 across the Menai Strait as important for motorists and cyclists.

6.2 The four lane options are more popular than the two lane options with around a quarter of the respondents selecting either the Purple (25%) or Orange (24%) four lane option as their first choice.

6.3 The four lane options provide better provision for walkers and cyclist as these can be accommodated on the existing Britannia Bridge which will accommodate local traffic
with lower speed and volume. The four lane options also provide greater benefits to strategic traffic due to higher speed limit in both directions. The local road network also benefits as a greater volume of traffic diverts from Menai Bridge with the four lane options.

6.4 The use of Britannia Bridge would remain and therefore the risk of closure due to high winds would continue for both two lane options therefore network resilience is significantly greater for the four lane options.

6.5 The Purple Option has a superior highway alignment compared with the Orange Option and is further away from the population of Llanfairpwllgwyngyll resulting in reduced impacts in terms of noise, dust and vibrations during construction and beyond.

6.6 The Purple Option alignment allows more flexibility in terms of the type and form of the proposed bridge compared to the Orange Option which is likely to need to defer to the existing Britannia Bridge. The Purple Option also provides better opportunity to maximise the separation from the Britannia Bridge which allows more freedom to adopt an aesthetically outstanding design.

6.7 Overall the WelTAG appraisal concluded the Purple Four Lane Option is the best performing option although further more detailed investigations will be carried out as part of the next stage of scheme development to select either a two or four lane crossing. The Purple Option provides the best combination of economic benefits, highway alignment and overall offers ‘high’ value for money.

7 CABINET SECRETARY’S DECISION

7.1 Having taken into account the technical, social, economic and environmental aspects of this scheme and the outcome of the public consultation, the Cabinet Secretary has decided to:

Adopt the Purple Option as the Preferred Option to address the transport problems identified in the A55 Third Menai Crossing Improvement Key Stage 2 Study;

- Publish a TR111 Plan (Annex B) to protect the entire Purple 4-Lane Route for planning purposes.
- Complete additional visualisation assessment and analysis work to confirm the preferred bridge type for the Purple Option.
- Carry out further work to assess the benefits of the two and four lane options along the Purple Route.

7.2 The TR111 shows the Preferred Route as a broad black line. This is indicative only and may change slightly during the next stage of design.
8 PROTECTION OF THE PREFERRED ROUTE

8.1 By publishing a TR111 plan, we protect the route under the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995. This means that the Local Planning Authority will refer to the Welsh Assembly Government all future planning applications that are near the Preferred Route. You may inspect the TR111 plan at Gwynedd Council, Shire Hall Street, Caernarfon, and at our Offices in Llandudno Junction, Conwy.

8.2 In certain circumstances, any owner having difficulty selling property on the line of the route may apply for blight. If any case meets set criteria, we will purchase the property.

8.3 The protection of a Preferred Route does not commit us to the line of that route. We are only committed once the Line Order is made, described in the next section.

9 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

9.1 We will undertake further work during the next stage of scheme development to confirm an appropriate highway option and bridge form combination that can be taken forward as the Preferred Option to the next stage of scheme development.

9.2 We will investigate further and design the scheme in more detail – known as Preliminary Design. In particular, we will be looking at the environmental and engineering issues in more detail, taking account of the comments made during consultation. This will include a more detailed review before confirming the type of bridge and selection of a two or four lane crossing.

9.3 After Preliminary Design, we will 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 we need to deliver the scheme. There will be a period during which people who have an interest in, or might be affected by the proposals may object to the draft Orders and even suggest alternative proposals. If we cannot resolve these objections, and depending on the issues raised and the weight of objection, we may hold a Public Local Inquiry. An independent Inspector would hear and consider the evidence and make a recommendation for the Cabinet Secretary to take into account when deciding whether to make the Orders.

9.4 The scheme is a “relevant project” under Regulation 48 (1) (a) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994/No 2716) in relation to Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. This means that we will carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment and produce an Environmental Statement. We will publish this together with a statement to inform an Appropriate Assessment decision at the same time we publish draft Orders.
ANNEX A

PUBLIC CONSULTATION BROCHURE AND QUESTIONNAIRE
ANNEX B

PREFERRED ROUTE PLAN - TR111