

20th July 2020



CECA Wales Monday Briefing

A shape of things to come? Prioritising investment in infrastructure.

Last week I shared with you an update on the newly established Welsh Construction Forum, bringing together public and private sectors, to help shape the recovery of our sector from the pandemic and to “build back better”. What that means we are yet to see but I wanted to bring out a few things that were discussed in the Senedd last week which may give a flavour of the future. We also held a webinar, last week, for members and other stakeholders on “Politics and Infrastructure” to get a flavour on how politics would shape our infrastructure for the future. That was really helpful in making sense of how politics will shape things. To be fair though, I don’t think that there’s that many surprises but worth considering all the same.

Climate change and the need to decarbonise what we build and how we build it will increasingly take centre stage. Last week the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee published their report on [decarbonisation of transport](#), making 15 recommendations to Welsh Government. We’ll focus on these in more detail in our Autumn conference on “decarbonising our infrastructure”.

The South East Wales Transport Commission also [published a report](#) setting out its key findings and emerging conclusions which will frame the future recommendations to tackle congestion on the M4. This has been a hot potato for such a long time but, whatever happens at Newport, the report is worth considering in the light of future transportation schemes elsewhere across Wales.

And still on the “transportation” theme MSs have backed plans to make [20mph speed limits](#) the default in residential areas by 2023. A [report published](#) on Wednesday by the 20mph Task Force Group cites “overwhelming evidence” that lower speeds result in fewer collisions and a reduction in serious injuries. This will involve potentially significant infrastructure works, albeit mainly of a minor nature, to allow this to happen safely. If you remember this was part of the focus of our report, last year, on “Healthy and Active Lives”.

And finally, do you remember Storms Dennis and Ciara in February? It seems like a long time ago given all that’s happened but those events had a huge impact on communities across Wales, from Llanrwst and Llansannan to Pentre and Pontypridd. The Welsh Government has just [published](#) an updated National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales. And if you’ve been following the links under the “business opportunities” section of these briefings you’ll have seen the rise in investment in this area of work. I expect this to continue rising.

So, what does this mean? Well potentially or probably (take your pick) I would expect the emphasis on how we prioritise investment in infrastructure to change over the coming months with a greater emphasis on social and environmental priorities. This doesn’t mean a lack of focus on the economics (given the hit taken by the economy recently that’s unlikely) but business cases will certainly need to change to give a more balanced view of the “sustainable development equation”.

CECA Wales Political Update

Infrastructure matters in the Senedd :

- The First Minister set out his government’s [legislative priorities](#) for the remainder of this Senedd term.
- The Leader of the Opposition in the Senedd, Paul Davies MS, reshuffled his [Welsh Conservative front bench](#) following the return to the Parliament of Laura Anne Jones following the untimely death of Mohammad Asghar. Russell George MS retained his Economy, Business and Infrastructure portfolio.
- The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee has published a report on [decarbonisation of transport](#), making 15 recommendations to Welsh Government.
- The South East Wales Transport Commission [published a report](#) setting out its key findings and emerging conclusions which will frame the future recommendations to tackle congestion on the M4. See the [Welsh Conservatives’](#) reaction.
- The Economy Minister [announced](#) he has agreed to write off £43.1 million of the costs incurred following the decision not to proceed with the M4 corridor around Newport scheme. See the [Welsh Conservatives’](#) reaction.
- The Welsh Government [published](#) an updated National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales. See the Welsh Conservatives’ reaction [here](#).
- MSs have backed plans to make [20mph speed limits](#) the default in residential areas by 2023. A [report published](#) on Wednesday by the 20mph Task Force Group cites “overwhelming evidence” that lower speeds result in fewer collisions and a reduction in serious injuries.

- The First Minister responded to questions on supporting the [Welsh manufacturing sector](#) and dismissed Russell George MS's proposition that the slower rate of reopening the economy in Wales has impacted livelihoods as absurd.
- The Welsh Government published a [strategy document](#) setting out its priorities for the planning system following the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Minister for Housing and Local Government [issued an update](#) on the progress of the NDF, which has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Welsh Government published its [response](#) to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's report on the Impact of Covid-19: Summary of Initial Findings.

The Senedd will largely break for summer recess until Monday 14 September. Members will, however, convene on Wednesday 5 August and Wednesday 26 August, dates which coincide with the Welsh Government's review of coronavirus regulations.

CECA Wales Director Activities

Here's a summary of my week :

- Hosting a webinar for members and other stakeholders on "Politics and Infrastructure" to get a flavour on how politics would shape our infrastructure for the future
- Meeting RICS to discuss their Conflict Avoidance Pledge
- Meeting Vale of Glamorgan Council officers to discuss how construction can support the foundation economy
- Meeting of the CECA Wales Foundation Group for young members to "re-energise" their programme of work
- Meeting with RWE to discuss potential opportunities for CECA Wales members in the renewables sector
- Discussions with NRW ahead of a webinar to set out the proposals for their new framework
- Engaging with members on business opportunities
- Meeting WGov officers and WLGA to prepare and publish 6-12month programmes of work to instil greater confidence across the sector.

Business opportunities

Here's a taste of some of the opportunities that are out there (some speculative, some committed) :

- Having written to all the Leaders of Wales' local authorities requesting details of their programmes of work for the next 6-12 months I am now collating the responses as they come in and will prepare a short report for members, setting out opportunities across Wales.
- The Welsh Government has allocated [funding of £15.4m](#) to local authorities to introduce measures to improve the safety and conditions for sustainable and active travel modes in their area and to achieve sustained changes in travel behaviour in the future.
- Transforming Towns funds : <https://gov.wales/15-million-covid-proof-travel>
- Northeast Wales Metro funds : <https://gov.wales/north-wales-metro-investment-flintshire-electric-bus-services>
- Natural Resources Wales will be inviting bids for their new construction framework. I am awaiting dates from them for a webinar in the next fortnight to accompany the launch.
- The Minister for Economy and Transport [announced](#) the allocation of over £16 million in transport grants to local authorities across Wales for schemes that mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. The Resilient Roads Fund of £16.9 million will support 18 schemes across 13 local authorities.
- The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters MS, confirmed that the UK and Welsh Governments have agreed to approve the [Pembroke Dock Marine project](#) business case.
- The Welsh Government announced that detailed design work is underway on the £30m Aber Tai'r Meibion A55 improvement scheme, with construction scheduled to begin in September.
- I hope to host a webinar soon with RWE for members to better understand opportunities in the renewables sector.
- We will be hosting our next rail forum on 27th July at 1330pm with Network Rail Wales and Transport for Wales.

Training Events

Please note that our events programme, which was temporarily suspended pending the coronavirus crisis, is now recommencing, albeit slowly. Please refer to the CECA Wales website. You can also access a range of webinars which are advertised on the CECA Covid-19 updates.