

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

DATGANIADAU O DDIDDORDEB

Mae gofyn i aelodau o'r panel, arsyllwyr a phartion perthnasol eraill ddatgan unrhyw ddi-ddordebau sydd ganddynt **ymlaen llaw** mewn perthynas â'r eitemau Panel Adolygu Dylunio Bydd unrhyw ddatganiadau o'r fath yn cael eu cofnodi yma ac yng nghofnodion canolog Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare **in advance** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCfW's central records.

Statws adolygu/Review status

Cyfrinachol/Confidential

Dyddiad cyfarfod/meeting date	July 6th 2011
Dyddiad cyhoeddi/issue date	July 19th 2011
Lleoliad y cynllun/scheme location	Heads of the Valleys, Tredegar to Brynmawr
Disgrifiad y cynllun/scheme description	New road
Statws cynllunio/planning status	Pre-Draft Orders

Datganiadau o ddi-ddordeb/declaration of interests:

Andrew Linfoot declared that Halcrow have been appointed as part of the team to develop the design for the section of the A465 Brynmawr to Gilwern.

Adran 1/part 1

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This scheme was seen previously at Design Review in November 2010. The team have responded to the recommendations contained in the Design Review report and developed the design to the point where draft orders will be submitted in September 2011 and a public inquiry (if needed) would take place in March/April 2012. A target price was set at the tender stage and the scheme is still within the original budget. Design quality is protected in the environmental statement and by the possible scrutiny of a public inquiry.

At the Ebbw Vale West junction the layout has been refined by removing the northernmost roundabout, and the extent of the cutting therefore reduced. Rock cuts will be left with a natural finish. On the Garn Lydan bridge, the alignment of abutments has been modified to be parallel with road. A roundabout has been

removed and the layout simplified at the Rassau Industrial Estate junction. Land to the north of the Ebbw Vale East junction will be graded out, and planting to the south will connect with existing vegetation. Within the junction there will be no planting, as this could disturb bat flight paths.

A new rest area has been introduced at the highest point of the new road at Garn Lydan, in the form of an extended layby, bunding and planting to create interest and a public viewing point.

Proposals for the Carno embankment and Llangynidr road bridge remain unchanged. The team believe that the embankment provides the best holistic design solution and that the bridge design fits within the 'family of structures' referred to in the Heads of the Valleys landscape strategy.

Noise mitigation has been addressed through the use of concrete and timber barriers and earth bunds (false cuttings). Pedestrian links and cycleways have been reinforced and there is a long term management plan for the Rassau woodland. Boundary treatments will be mainly post and four rails, with post and wire used for open moorland and stone walls for the Garn Lydan rest area and some field boundaries.

Crynodeb o'r prif bwyntiau a gododd o'r drafodaeth, i'w darllen ochr yn ochr ag Adran 2 yr adroddiad hwn.

Summary of key points arising from discussion, to be read in conjunction with Part 2 of this report.

The Panel appreciated the way in which previous issues had been addressed by the team. We acknowledged the constraints involved, and we were pleased to note that the local authority is addressing some of the problematic contextual issues and building them into future plans. However, we think that major issues remain to be resolved. In summary:

- There is a lack of any design ambition in the client's brief. The level of design detail and quality in the bridge structures remains disappointing.
- The proposals for the rest area are very basic and would be improved by further design input.
- We saw no detailed proposals for any footbridges and no illustrative material on the nature of the linkages and how they would connect with the community. (Additional material was provided following the review.)
- We welcome the positive work that has been done on the environmental and landscape design and integration. The drainage strategy, grading out of slopes and mitigation of visual and noise impacts are all well considered.

The Panel found no evidence of qualities which would mark this out as an exemplar scheme, as advocated in our previous Design Review report. We accepted that progress has been made in the broad outline of the development. However, it is the design details which in our view will 'make or break' the scheme, and we intended to concentrate discussion particularly on three main areas of: severance and connections; water and drainage; earthworks and structures.

The Panel contrasted the level of detail provided along the corridor of the road with the generally limited detail provided on the quality and character of the connections that cross the road line. We would have liked to see more material on the experience of the driver and the cyclist/pedestrian using this road and surrounding networks. We were concerned that the use of underpasses for 'non motorised users' could create an oppressive and intimidating environment. After some discussion the Panel accepted that, with generous widths built in and no blind corners, these could be made user-friendly and provide a more direct connection. However, the quality and character of these connections needs to be given more weight in the design. The team stated that, while they had improved north/south connections at certain points, there was no brief for a cycle route all the way along this new stretch of road. They have worked with the local authority and Sustrans to provide sections of a cycle route which should facilitate a complete Sustrans route to the north of Ebbw Vale.

The team confirmed that they are aiming for a balance of cut and fill material. The original estimate of 850,000 m³ of excess material has been reduced to 150,000m³ and this roughly corresponds with the amount of fill required. All the stone for capping and facing will come from the site.

The surface water drainage will be a closed system, with runoff passing through petrol interceptors to natural waterways. The team have tried to use swales as part of a sustainable drainage system, but no suitable site was found owing to alignments, natural features or land ownership. Balancing ponds will be used however, and the Panel emphasised the need for these to become natural parts of the landscape and not fenced-off 'pits'. The 5 year aftercare programme involves twice yearly inspections and will form the basis of a handover plan for long term management. The team confirmed that they are using the CEEQUAL performance standard.

The Panel thought that opportunities had been missed to showcase excellent design within this scheme. The newly created rest area is one such opportunity. The team explained that they are operating under the constraint of the Highways Act which limits what they can deliver. Their intention therefore is to provide a basic rest area and picnic site which they hope others may be able to develop into a more comprehensive facility. The Panel thought that the issue was not the extent of facilities but the quality of the initial design input into the creation of the basic earth forms. We were disappointed that the design quality of the bridges remains unrefined and the resulting structures appear to be standard and uninspiring.

The Panel queried the use of grass within the Ebbw Vale East junction and we were informed that a sterile environment to deter bats attempting to cross the road, was a client requirement. However, they are looking to introduce some native planting and wild flowers. Slopes will be graded out to shallower inclines, avoiding hard edges or flat plains, and returned to grazing. The final finish to newly cut rock surfaces will depend on the type of rock and whether explosives are necessary. The naturally occurring rock at the western end tends to fracture into cubes and these are more easily stabilised. The rock fall fence will be about 1m high and the use of mesh on the rock face will be avoided.

The Panel observed that one effect of the new road might be to encourage very large development, particularly next to roundabouts, and asked whether a margin strategy was being considered. We were informed that one of the key purposes of this project was exactly to encourage new development and employment opportunities. While the Panel accepted this, we pointed out that the Brecon Beacons National Park was part of the context and therefore a sensitive response would be required. We thought that the proposal should distinguish between those areas protected from development and those areas where future development may be promoted. This needs to be set out and clarified in the overall strategy, with a balance shown between natural heritage considerations and employment opportunities.

Mae Panel Adolygu Dylunio Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru a'r staff yn croesawu rhagor o ymgynghoriad, a bydd yn hapus i ddarparu rhagor o adborth am yr adroddiad yma a/neu lle bo'n briodol, dderbyn cyflwyniadau pellach. Diolch am ymgynghori â'r Comisiwn a chadwch mewn cysylltiad â ni os gwelwch yn dda ynglŷn â hynt eich prosiect. A fyddech gystal â'n hysbysu o ddatblygiad eich prosiect. Diolch yn fawr am ymgynghori â'r Comisiwn.

The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel welcomes further consultation and we will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Please keep us informed of the progress of your project. Thank you for consulting the Commission.

***Mae copi iath Gymraeg o'r adroddiad hwn ar gael ar ofyn.
A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.***

Atodiad 1/appendix 1 Mynychwyr/attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr
Agent/Client/Developer

Welsh Government (Matt Enoch)
Carillion (Mike Cummine)

Pensaer/Dylunydd Trefol
Architectural/Urban Designer

Arup (Ben Sibert)
TACP (Jo Wall, Lee Jones)

Ymgynghorwyr/Consultants	n/a
Trydydd Parti/Third Party	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/Planning Authority	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Chris Engel)
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel Cadeirydd/Chair Swydog/Officer Prif Banelydd/Lead Panellist	Ewan Jones Cindy Harris Andrew Linfoot Ashley Bateson Richard Parnaby Roger Ayton
Sylwedyddion/Observers	n/a