



21 May 2012

Barry Woodman  
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Dear Barry

#### **A465, Heads of the Valleys Section 2: Brynmawr to Gilwern Inc. Clydach Gorge**

We would like to thank you and your team for bringing forward the above project for early consultation with DCfW. We appreciate the explanatory presentation material you provided in advance which enabled us to familiarise ourselves with the background to the scheme. Your explanation clearly set out the opportunities and constraints for the project, in terms of topography and designations. It was helpful and encouraging to hear that the consultation process to date had been thorough and in some cases had influenced the design development.

In view of the historical importance and environmental sensitivity of the Clydach Gorge and the multiple designations, we expect this scheme to be exemplary in terms of design quality and we were pleased to hear this ambition echoed by the client. The Welsh Government has an opportunity here to lead by example and realise the long term benefits of a high quality project addressing the road infrastructure needs whilst enhancing an important element of the landscape and its economic potential, through greater access and opportunity for increased tourism, heritage and cultural activity. These are after all, broadly speaking, the desired outcomes of the scheme.

Careful consideration of the following areas, arising from the consultation with DCfW would be beneficial to the process and helpful in terms of the subsequent engagement with the Commission:

- The importance of the landscape setting is paramount. We wish to see a much stronger reference to the HoV Landscape Strategy prepared by White Young Green, and clear evidence that this is driving all aspects of the design, including that any arts strategy should come forward swiftly and be one of some

sophistication of approach, informed by the specific content of the WYG document. It would also be valuable to examine the recent experience of the Arup team in working with a professional artist in strategic role in the M4 Castleton Project. While we welcomed the early involvement of the landscape consultant, we found insufficient detailed information on the relationship between the proposed new structures and the landscape setting. For future meetings we would like to see this relationship made more explicit, in terms of a developing response to the topography, the historic landscape and ecology, and the man-made archaeology and post-industrial heritage. This should form a narrative describing the journey along the route through a series of views, and would be helpful in your work in relation to structures and materials.

- In terms of the proposed new 'family' of structures, it will be important to develop a hierarchy of design and function, along with a consistency of materials. Currently there is a need for further refinement of the bridge proposals, and at this critical point in the design development while plans are still sufficiently fluid, it is vitally important that this design work is carried out by an appropriately skilled designer. There is currently a gap in the team relating to this necessary expertise which needs to be filled. We look forward to seeing the progress of this aspect of the scheme at our next meeting.

In preparation for our next meeting we will invite input from all the consultee bodies which you mentioned and I would be grateful for a list of the relevant contacts within each of these, including the statutory bodies, for completeness

Finally I would like to thank you again for your positive and constructive response to our comments and your willingness to engage and collaborate with us to achieve the best possible response to the brief and the site. We look forward to hearing from you about possible dates for the next meeting.

Yours sincerely,

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