



CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE LEVELS MOTORWAY

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RENEWED CALM CAMPAIGN TO HALT THE M4 BLACK ROUTE

Campaigners against plans for the £1.6 billion motorway bypass through the wildlife-rich Gwent Levels have appealed to the Welsh public to blow the whistle on the project, which the campaign's Chair believes has “*lost all credibility*” during the closing weeks of the Public Inquiry.

CALM is launching a new Campaign pack including bilingual leaflets and posters for use across Wales, as well as in the local area around Newport and Cardiff. Two of the new poster designs are shown below. The new material is available by post or to print out direct from <https://savethelevels.org.uk/take-action/>.



CALM Chair Rob Hepworth said “*When the Public Inquiry resumed at the end of February, the Government’s consultants thought their deal with Newport Docks would be a platform for the Black Route. Instead, it may herald its rejection. The Government has offered Newport Docks compensation to withdraw its opposition to the Black Route. This will end up taking an eye-watering extra £190m from public funds. There has been no adequate scrutiny of how this backroom deal was negotiated. Escalating costs at every level mean that a project originally estimated by the First Minister at ‘well below’ £1 billion, will need funds of at least £1.6 billion if the motorway is to be built. On top of that, two Welsh Government bodies – Natural Resources Wales and the Future Generations Commissioner – firmly maintain their objections to the Black Route. NRW called the potential damage to the Gwent Levels SSSIs ‘too great’ and ‘unprecedented’ in its closing statement to the Inquiry. It’s high time to blow the whistle.*”

Vic Warren, Vice Chair of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales commented “*Our request for legal guarantees to protect the remaining Gwent Levels was roundly rejected by the Government, opening up the entire area to ribbon development which always follows when new motorways are opened near cities. The Welsh Government was also unable to counter evidence showing the Black Route breaches national legislation and international treaties by destroying wetland and breeding sites for cranes and bats. The*

Government must have been relieved when the Inquiry closed at the end of March, saving them from further punishment.”

Dr Hugh Mackay of Cycling UK added: *“Now that the Public Inquiry is over, we are approaching the moment of truth. During the year-long Inquiry, CALM and other objectors argued that the case for the Black Route was based on flawed traffic modelling and simplistic ideas about the relationship of road-building to economic growth. In reality, building another road – in a place there is a well-established network – will only lead to more traffic and shifting the problem to other congestion bottlenecks across south-east Wales. Instead, what’s needed is a sustainable transport system, which means less space for cars and more for public transport and active travel. The motorway proposal has been driven by powerful construction and road haulage interests – it is not a proposal to develop Newport as a living city.”*

In recent months AMs across the political spectrum have questioned the Black Route’s cost as well as the environmental destruction it would cause. However CALM is concerned that a political vacuum before the retirement of the First Minister will provide motorway advocates with their last chance to drive it through and to present his successor with a ‘fait accompli’.

“The Black Route has lost all credibility” said Rob Hepworth. *“CALM strongly supports the request made last week by Mike Hedges AM, Chair of the Assembly Environment Committee, that the incoming First Minister should take the M4 decision given that it is such an important and costly project. The new First Minister should also be given time to look at alternatives not considered at the Public Inquiry, which was too narrowly focused on road ‘solutions’ rather than the strategic transport and access needs of future generations.”*

In their closing statement to the Inquiry CALM advocated the *“sustainable low-carbon alternative – a public transport based network which puts local people, businesses and our environment in South Wales at its heart.”* This would focus on *“integrated transport where trams and radically improved bus services link Newport, Cardiff and the valleys combined with frequent electrified rail services, new and safer routes for cyclists and walkers, and improvements to existing roads.”*

CALM believes a new First Minister needs time to look at the options of using the Metro, railways, buses, active travel, bus lanes, car-sharing, workplace parking levies, congestion charging and the latest technology in traffic management to find a solution which does not sacrifice the treasured communities and wildlife of the Gwent Levels on the altar of old-fashioned motorway ideology. We have a global responsibility to plan for a low-carbon future.

Note to editors

1. For further comment, please contact Rob Hepworth, Chair, CALM on: 07507 162147 or rghepworth@gmail.com
2. Os hoffech chi roi sylwadau yn y Gymraeg, cysylltwch â Jeremy Randles ar 01873 854993, neu ebostio jeremy.randles@talk21.com



The **Campaign Against the Levels Motorway** is an alliance of local people and organisations formed to protect the Gwent Levels from the proposed M4 Relief Road and find better solutions to travel needs in south-east Wales.