

Isle of Anglesey County Council	
Report to:	The Executive
Date:	29th February 2024
Subject:	Improving the reliability and the resilience across the Menai Straits
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr. Llinos Medi (Economic Development) & Cllr. Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Highways, Waste and Property)
Head of Service / Director:	Christian Branch Head of Service – Regulation & Economic Development Huw Percy Head of Service – Highways, Waste and Property
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Local Members:	Relevant to all Elected Members

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s

Recommendations:

The Executive:

1. Agrees that the Chief Executive formally writes to Welsh Government appealing that they change their policy position on the Menai Straits crossing and recognise the need to resolve the inadequacies and lack of resilience that exists.
2. Agrees that the Chief Executive shares our reports with regional Senedd members, partners and stakeholders to influence and for them to support the Councils position for the benefit of the North Wales region.

This report builds upon the previous paper presented to the Executive on the 18th of July 2023 ([Executive 18072023](#)) where the Executive agreed to :

- 1) Endorses the report and its conclusion that Welsh Government should not view the Menai Crossing as a simple road project and adopt a positive policy position recognises the critical need to improve the reliability and resilience of the Menai Straits.
- 2) Delegates authority to the Chief Executive to submit the Council's evidence base to the North Wales Transport Commission ahead of the July 28th deadline.

The North Wales Transport Commission (NWTC) was established following the Welsh Governments decision to cancel the construction of a potential 3rd crossing across the Menai Straits and was to conclude its investigations in July 2023. They reported back in December 2023 and its findings can be found here: <https://www.gov.wales/NWTC>

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s

The Council has two fundamental concerns with the findings of the NWTC:

- 1) The premise on which the report is written is incorrect – it does not consider options for improving the resilience of connections across the Menai Strait in the round since the option for improving the infrastructure for vehicles appears to have been ruled out at the outset.
- 2) This leads to recommendations that are completely inadequate for addressing the challenges facing Anglesey and the wider area. The recommendations will either have limited effect in improving connectivity across the Menai Strait or have serious delivery risks/ uncertainties (including having already been ruled out).

A more detailed response prepared by the County Council in response to the NWTC's findings can be found in Annex A.

The County Council has considered these recommendations/ options previously and is of the view that these will not sufficiently address the lack of resilience that exists.

The County Council has made its position clear on the need to strengthen the issues in relation to the Menai crossing. The congestion and lack of resilience is severely limiting or having a profound negative impact on social, economic, educational, health and cultural connections to and from the rest of the country.

Worse than that, it is hampering the island's ability to attract the businesses and economic activity it needs to reduce a cycle of job losses, lower on-island employment and increasing reliance on off-island jobs. It will also exacerbate the challenges faced by the island's economy and hinder the successful implementation of key policies that seek to rebuild its employment base and reduce the need of its residents to leave the island to work.

The Menai Bridge is currently the subject of recent emergency works due to its age, resulting in reduced capacity and this will continue until at least 2025.

Fundamentally, the recommendations from the NWTC are an inadequate response to the challenge we face.

The resilience and reliability of the Menai crossing goes beyond just transport related benefits, it is more than simple road scheme and demands to be looked at within a wider, more long-term strategic context.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

Doing nothing is not an option – given the historical issues with the resilience of the crossing to the mainland, the Council must respond robustly to the inadequacies of the NWTC report.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

Securing the formal support and endorsement of the Executive is important given the importance of the subject at hand and the high degree of local stakeholder interest.

This also builds on previous discussions held, including that at the Full Council on 23rd May 2023

<https://democracy.anglesey.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=127&MId=4173&Ver=4&LLL=0>

Also, 18th July 2023

<https://democracy.anglesey.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=4208&Ver=4&LLL=0>

Ch – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

Yes.

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

No – no impact on the budget.

Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):

1	How does this decision impact on our long term needs as an Island?	N/a
2	Is this a decision which it is envisaged will prevent future costs / dependencies on the Authority? If so, how?	No
3	Have we been working collaboratively with other organisations to come to this decision? If so, please advise whom.	No
4	Have Anglesey citizens played a part in drafting this way forward, including those directly affected by the decision? Please explain how.	N/a

Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):		
5	Note any potential impact that this decision would have on the groups protected under the Equality Act 2010.	N/a
6	If this is a strategic decision, note any potential impact that the decision would have on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.	N/a
7	Note any potential impact that this decision would have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.	N/a

E – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	Supportive
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	Supportive
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	Supportive
4	Human Resources (HR)	
5	Property	
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	
7	Procurement	
8	Scrutiny	
9	Local Members	

F - Appendices:
Annex A - Response to the North Wales Transport Commission's Report: 'Improving the Resilience of Connections Across the Menai Strait'

Ff - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):

Ynys Môn

THE ISLE OF Anglesey

Response to the North Wales Transport
Commission's Report: 'Improving the
Resilience of Connections Across the
Menai Strait'

January 2024



CYNGOR SIR
YNYS MÔN
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COUNTY COUNCIL

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1 Overview of our response

- 1.1 This report sets out the Isle of Anglesey County Council's (IACC's) response to the North Wales Transport Commission's (NWTC) report 'Improving the Resilience of Connections Across the Menai Strait'.
- 1.2 The Council has two fundamental concerns with, and challenges of, the report:
- 1.2.1 **The premise on which the report is written is wrong** – it does not consider options for improving the resilience of connections across the Menai Strait in the round since the option for improving the infrastructure for vehicles appears to have been ruled out at the outset.
- 1.2.2 **This leads to recommendations that are completely inadequate** for addressing the challenges facing Anglesey and the wider area. The recommendations will either have limited effect in improving connectivity across the Menai Strait or have serious delivery risks / uncertainties (including having already been ruled out).
- 1.2.3 As well as the severe local impacts, this has regional and national impacts as it risks undermining the success of Holyhead Port, the delivery of Anglesey Freeport, the effectiveness of the Growth Deal, and makes the delivery of a new nuclear power station at Wylfa more difficult.
- 1.3 The purpose of the NWTC report is to improve resilience across the Menai Strait whilst also achieving Llwybr Newydd goals of improving Active Travel and Public Transport. We do not consider that the report's recommendations adequately deal with any of these. Similarly, behavioral changes are unlikely to reduce congestion sufficiently.

The remit of the report is too narrow – and so its premise is wrong

- 1.4 The report is clear that the recommendations of the panel are based on a pre-determined decision that a third crossing, or indeed any other approach to improving the physical infrastructure for vehicle traffic, had already been ruled out.

- 1.5 The opening paragraph states:

'We were asked to provide options that align with the purposes and conditions for investment in roads set out in the Welsh Government's response to the Roads Review Panel's recommendations.'

- 1.6 And Section 1.1 'The Commission's Remit' states:

'The report recommended that the A55 Third Menai Crossing should not proceed. The Panel thought that the case for change was not well-aligned with Welsh Government's aim to reduce car mileage. The scheme would lead to increased traffic and carbon dioxide emissions, and a mode shift from public transport to car travel, inconsistent with the target to increase sustainable transport mode share.'

1.7 The reasons given for not proceeding with the Third Crossing show a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of the crossing within the local economic and social context. It appears that the Third Crossing has been ruled out because of:

- an increase in traffic between two areas that the report acknowledges are fundamentally economically and socially linked;
- an increase in carbon emissions which does not take into account the impact of the introduction of electric vehicles; and
- a mode shift away from public transport which the report itself acknowledges is currently poor, and so there is limited mode shift that can occur.

1.8 Taking each point in turn, our understanding of Welsh governments no new roads policy is that it does not apply in the case where new road would unlock the delivery of new economic activity, such as an industrial estate. The report acknowledges the linkages between Anglesey and the mainland. Section 1.3 cites:

Although separated by the Menai Strait and in different local authority areas, the towns on both sides of the Strait form a single economic area.

1.9 It does not however appear to consider the fact that the unique Island nature of Anglesey's economy means that a Third Menai Crossing would unlock or deliver economic activity in the same way that a road may unlock an industrial site. Neither does it fully acknowledge the importance of either Anglesey Freeport or a new nuclear power station at Wylfa in meeting strategically important national and regional policy objectives. Given the timescales to plan and build infrastructure projects, the Third Crossing need to be urgently progressed now, to maximise value from any potential investment – it cannot wait for a final decisions on Wylfa or for the Full Business Case for the Freeport to be signed off.

1.10 We acknowledge that previous Wylfa Newydd project had a strategy that meant that it was deliverable without a new bridge – but given the combined scale of growth that could occur on Anglesey as a result of the Freeport, Wylfa and the North Wales Ambition Board Growth Deal projects, it is crucial to assess the need for a Thar Crossing in the round.

1.11 However, the report appears to disregard the impact that either the Freeport or Wylfa would have on traffic demand by saying it is unable to secure firm evidence of the potential impact. While we acknowledge that detailed evidence is not yet available for either project given their relative levels of maturity, there is some evidence in the public domain and we would be happy to assist the commission with information where necessary. It is crucial that the demand as a result of economic development, including Wylfa and the Freeport, are considered.

1.12 The report acknowledges the importance of the crossing in communities being able to access services:

These events and closures have a significant impact on people's ability to cross the Menai Strait to access employment, education, health and other services, and they make it difficult for emergency services and businesses to operate.

- 1.13 But the importance of this function, does not appear to be reflected in the recommendations of the report.
- 1.14 The second reason that a Third Crossing has been ruled out is because of the increase in carbon emissions. Previous evidence submitted by IACC shows that the carbon impact over the lifetime of the project is very small. The preferred option for the Third Menai Crossing would increase Wales's carbon emissions by an estimated 0.01% between 2024 and 2050, which could be offset by 12,380 diesel cars switching to EVs between 2024 and 2050 – equivalent to just 1.7% of all diesel cars and vans in Wales or 0.1% per year between 2024 and 2050.
- 1.15 It does not appear that there has been an assessment that considers the economic, social and environmental effects in the round – nor does the introduction of electric vehicles appear to have been appropriately considered within the decision making process.
- 1.16 The final reason given for Third Crossing being ruled out is that it would create a mode shift from public transport to private. The report rightly identifies that both public and active travel routes across the Menai straits are extremely limited:
- We also recognise that opportunities for non-car travel between settlements, employment opportunities, and services, is limited by accessibility, cost, service frequencies, reliability, and a lack of infrastructure for bus, rail and active travel.*
- 1.17 The report acknowledges that it is not permitted for people to walk across the Britannia Bridge and only the most confident cyclists do cycle across it. The bus network is poor and has got worse as a result of Arriva cutting bus services which was largely as a result of delays caused by the closures of the Menai Bridge.
- 1.18 Therefore, if a reason for not improving vehicle access across the Menai Straits is because of a concern that people will move from public or active transport to driving, this report presents a complete misunderstanding of the current context. There is only a negligible number of trips that could shift to driving.

The recommendations are an inadequate response to the challenge

- 1.19 As set out above, the panel is essentially answering the wrong questions. Therefore, while the Isle of Anglesey County Council may support the recommendations in principle, these do not go anywhere near far enough to solving the challenges faced by Anglesey's community and economy.
- 1.20 The panel does appear to understand most of what these challenges are both to the economy, the existing network, and to people's ability to access services (including health and education). Yet the recommendations do not mirror the scale of these challenges. The following bullet points are all direct quotes from the report that helpfully summarise the challenges faced:
- *Actual and perceived resilience issues with the crossings have a negative impact on the attractiveness of Ynys Môn for economic investment.*
 - *Britannia Bridge closures have more significant consequences than closures elsewhere on the strategic road network.*

- *Recent Britannia Bridge closures have been exacerbated because of works on the Menai Suspension Bridge.*
- *[The Menai Suspension Bridge] has narrow lanes and is not well suited to being a relief road when the Britannia Bridge is closed, particularly for high sided vehicles. It has a speed limit of 30mph and a capacity of about half of the Britannia Bridge capacity.*
- *These events and closures have a significant impact on people's ability to cross the Menai Strait to access employment, education, health and other services, and they make it difficult for emergency services and businesses to operate.*
- *For much of the day, the bridges operate at a level close to their capacity. The volume of traffic can lead to delay and congestion, and hence long journey times, especially during the summer tourist season.*
- *Delays can affect emergency vehicle response times.*
- *The communities on Ynys Môn are not well served by the rail network*
- *Currently, bus journey times are uncompetitive with the car which limits the potential to achieve mode shift.*
- *Overall, public transport does not provide a good level of service for crossing the Menai Strait.*
- *The Port of Holyhead plays a vital role in freight and cargo transportation to Ireland and is the next busiest roll on /roll off (RORO) port in the UK after Dover.*
- *There remains a prospect of a new facility, Wylfa Newydd, which would be a significant contributor to Wales' energy infrastructure and provide employment opportunities.*

1.21 The report proposes 16 recommendations across five broad themes – resilience, public transport, active travel, route planning, further traffic management – which we will consider in turn.

1.22 Our overarching concern is that, while the report acknowledges that both bridges are operating close to capacity for most of the day, a large portion of the recommendations do not focus on increase in capacity. They are either about reducing the number of closures (from either accidents or high wind), about mitigating the impacts when closures do happen, or increasing active travel and public transport (which will have limited effect on capacity across the bridges).

1.23 The significant emphasis of the recommendations is around mode shift, either to public transport or active travel, or through behavioural change. This significantly overestimates the potential for mode shift since:

- There are only very few journeys that are short enough to be active travel trips;
- There is very limited latent demand for active travel trips;
- The public transport service is poor – it is not frequent enough and does not link people to where they need to go;
- The issues with the Menai Strait has directly led to a reduction in the bus service;

- The types of trips where people are crossing the Menai Strait are not easily suited to active travel or public transport trips – for example, people travelling to do their weekly shop in Bangor.

1.24 The only recommendation that really considers increasing capacity across the bridges is the three-lane tidal flow option, yet the appendix to the report states that the conclusion of the Atkins report which considered this option previously was that the risk could not be mitigated to an acceptable level and that tidal flow should not be progressed. **Instead, the decision at the time was to progress work on the preferred option of a Third Crossing across the Menai Strait.**

1.25 The move towards a ‘mitigate and increase resilience’ approach is therefore inconsistent with the conclusion drawn previously which (rightly) concluded that an increase in capacity was required.

The Council supports further work on (most of) the recommendations in the short term but work on the Third Crossing urgently needs to be restarted

1.26 While the council supports further work on the recommendations in the short term, work on the Third Crossing urgently needs to be restarted - this includes planning, consenting and implementing.

1.27 We are also concerned that these recommendations could deter from the focus on Third Crossing, which is crucial to providing resilience and reliability across the Menai Strait. If these recommendations are pursued, then we would want assurance that this would not deter from the focus or funding of work to progress the Third Crossing. Some of the project would require substantial investment and based on current evidence, we believe are unlikely to offer the same value for money as the Third Crossing. The Council would want assurance that any short-term measures would be monitored and evaluated, so that information can be feed into the design process and business case for a Third Crossing.

1.28 The report includes a high-level consideration of the Third Crossing including the potential for cost sharing with Wylfa and/or the Freeport and appears to recognise the economic development that may be reliant on improved resilience. It then goes on to say that any future bridge would need to meet the Welsh governments policy tests for road building. At this point in the report (Section 7.2), it appears to be an open question however this was not the premise on which the report was written as above appears to have already concluded that a Third Crossing is not in line with Welsh government policy.

1.29 The report notes that a Third Crossing would take a ‘considerable period of time to deliver’. The IACC agrees with this conclusion which is why we are disappointed and concerned that work on the Third Menai Crossing has been paused.

1.30 As already set out, while the Council supports most of the recommendations in the report, they are inadequate for solving the problem in question. Therefore, we urge the Welsh government to reconsider its position on the Third Crossing so that a long term economically, socially and environmentally sustainable solution can be found. In the meantime, we look forward to working with Welsh government colleagues and other important stakeholders to move forward the recommendations set out in the report.

1.31 The remainder of this report considers each of the five themes and the 16 recommendations in turn.

2 Resilience

Over-reliance on the future role of Menai Bridge

- 2.1 The report talks about the ‘the two bridges as a combined system’. We agree with the premise, but we are concerned that there may be too much confidence placed on the role of the Menai Bridge once refurbishment is complete.
- 2.2 The current refurbishment work on the Menai Bridge should create a bridge that is structurally resilient, and is not usually affected by high winds. But the Menai Suspension Bridge is nearly 200-years old and has been subject to consistent ongoing maintenance work resulting in reduced capacity due to partial or full closures. It therefore may be optimistic to assume that the resilience of the Menai Bridge will not be an issue in the future.
- 2.3 It also has a more limited role than the Britannia Bridge – it is not on the A55, it is restricted to 20mph, has limits on vehicle size (even when structurally sound) and all traffic is required to drive through the town of Menai Bridge, which creates other health, safety and environmental issues.
- 2.4 When the Menai Bridge is used as relief for HGVs when the Britannia Bridge is shut, the height and width restrictions (particularly of the arches) slow vehicles down and cause congestion, reducing capacity.
- 2.5 This causes two significant issues. Firstly, the arches are vulnerable and any vehicle strike could close the bridge – this is a higher risk when Britannia is closed and results in island isolation since both bridges are closed.
- 2.6 Secondly, drivers are required to get out of their vehicles and fold in their wingmirrors, and then get out again to unfold them, in order to avoid hitting the arches of the Menai Bridge. This is both a safety issue and significantly affects the flow and speed of traffic.

Effectiveness of the intervention and deliverability risks

- 2.7 The IACC is largely supportive of the recommendations set out subject to caveats below. However, there is an overarching concern that the recommendations are either uncertain or limited in their likely effectiveness.
- 2.8 The recommendations are split into options that either reduce the risk of accidents, reduce the likelihood of the bridge needing to shut in high wind, or reduce the impact when a closure does occur.
- 2.9 While the IACC is supportive of these aims, we are concerned that these recommendations will only make marginal differences and will not provide the resilience or reliability that the Island requires.
- 2.10 For example, the report shows that the collision rate on the bridge is higher than on other roads. Even if the safety record could be made to be closer to or even match other roads (which is unlikely), there would still be accidents which results in the bridge shutting. As long

as accidents occur, there is a direct consequence on the Island's economy both as a result of the closure itself and of the perception that there may be a closure. This can only be mitigated by investment in improved infrastructure for vehicles.

2.11 Specific comments are set out next to each recommendation in the table below. The recommendations are the priority recommendations (as per the report).

Table 2.1: Resilience Recommendations

	Recommendation	Comment
R1	We recommend a scheme is developed and delivered to provide wind deflectors on Britannia Bridge with the aim of reducing the number of times the bridge needs to be closed.	<p>Support investigating the option to improve resilience.</p> <p>Wind Deflector needs to be sufficient to provide protection to high sided Heavy Goods Vehicles.</p> <p>Deliverability risk: Concerns over deliverability given planning considerations on a listed bridge. This is critical to maintaining HGV flow - an early view from Cadw will be essential given the listing before this progresses.</p> <p>Effectiveness: We acknowledge that the placement of Wind Deflectors will improve resilience by assisting in keeping the Britannia Bridge open to vehicular traffic during high wind events. There is a potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait unless (almost) all instances of the bridge closing due to high winds can be prevented. This is a measure that has been considered by the Council in the past and deemed insufficient.</p>
R2	We recommend the introduction of a system for temporarily lowering the mandatory speed limit on Britannia Bridge and the management of the reduction in speed of traffic on the approaches to the bridge. This will involve using variable mandatory speed limit signs with enforcement by average speed cameras, which will reduce the probability of collisions and mitigate the effect of high wind on moving vehicles.	<p>Support investigating the enhanced signage and introduction of variable speed limit control measures. The investigations need to explore collision causation factors since not all collisions are speed related.</p> <p>Investigating the option will reduce the risk of a collision and may also assist with smoother flows and reduced emissions/enhanced air quality.</p> <p>The option of permanent changes should be assessed alongside temporary/variable speed limits and led by collision data analysis.</p> <p>More advance warning signs warning of restrictions, queues, TM or other risks should also be considered.</p>

		<p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait unless accident rate can be reduced to achieve (almost) zero bridge closures.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Report acknowledges that driver compliance with speed limits is low. Compliance with any mandatory speed limit could only be achieved through effective enforcement and the use of average speed cameras.</p>
R3	<p>We recommend a study to consider layout changes to the mainline across Britannia Bridge, the position of lane drops, and the merges and diverges at Junction 8, Junction 8A and Junction 9, with the purpose of smoothing flow and reducing the probability of collisions.</p>	<p>Support the introduction of central hatching to emphasise the no over-taking restriction. The effects upon cyclist should be considered.</p> <p>Care needs to be taken as to what type of markings are placed on the highway. Double solid white lines across the bridge deck were introduced to prevent vehicles exiting the bridge on the incorrect side of the dual carriageway.</p> <p>The A55 is part of the E22 Trans-European Transport Network, it is very much the exception to have a section of single carriageway on an expanse of dual carriageway and a two-lane merge into single lane on a bend approach with two on-slips will always generate risk.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait unless accident rate can be reduced to achieve (almost) zero bridge closures, which for the reasons set out above seems unlikely.</p>
R4	<p>We recommend that a study is undertaken to investigate improvements to traffic management at both roundabouts at Junction 9 to assist particularly when there is a bridge closure and create priority for buses.</p>	<p>Support but note that the works would not be on Anglesey. Any features to prioritise buses would assist with public transport provision.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait unless accident rate can be reduced to achieve (almost) zero bridge closures.</p>
R5	<p>We recommend that a study is undertaken to investigate improvements to the layout and</p>	<p>Support a study, however significant road improvements joining and leaving the A55 would be required here. Any engineering works would be detrimental to vehicular movements. The problems encountered with four lanes merging into one lane to</p>

control of the A55 slip roads with the A5 at Junction 8A.

cross Britannia Bridge will not be overcome. The short length of junction 8 and 8A Eastbound coupled with a merging dual carriageway is significant.

The accident statistics should be reviewed to ascertain the risk and justification and a safety review and audit assessment undertaken. The brief could be extended to explore schemes other than traffic control. If a scheme is proposed, the extent of the Trunk Road/County Road interface would need to be agreed to determine the maintenance responsibilities of any revised layouts.

We would not support any proposals to close on/off-slips, due to the effects upon the local highway network.

Effectiveness: Collision causation factors need to be considered first to determine the effectiveness of any proposal in reducing accidents.

Effectiveness Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait unless accident rate can be reduced to achieve (almost) zero bridge closures.

R6

We recommend that the Multi-agency Response Framework relating to Britannia Bridge and Menai Suspension Bridge incidents and closures is updated and enhanced particularly in relation to leadership, communication, and traffic management.

Support but the lead agency must be established and escalation criteria, but within and outside of normal working hours.

Developing suitable arrangements for HGVs during any bridge closure/restrictions should also be included.

HGV stacking protocols and the procedures for managing traffic need to be prioritised.

Layup facilities for Heavy Good Vehicles on national and international journeys must be included. The loss of facilities in Parc Cybi cannot be overlooked.

Reviewing and improving the multi-agency response coincides with views expressed by the IoACC Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and reported in a letter dated 20/12/23 from the Chief executive to the Chief Constable of the North Wales Police.

Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since the focus is on mitigating impact when closures happen rather than

preventing them happening or finding alternative routes.

3 Public Transport Provision

Limited effectiveness

- 3.1 The IACC supports recommendations to improve public transport on the Island and across the Menai Strait. However, we are concerned that the effectiveness of any recommendations will be very limited in addressing the issues of reliability and resilience across the Menai Strait.
- 3.2 The report acknowledges the challenges associated with public transport on Anglesey. For rail, the report acknowledges that:
- *There are very few rail services at stations on Ynys Môn other than Holyhead, and that many residents are forced to cross the Menai Strait to catch a train from Bangor.*
 - *Many Anglesey residents do not live close to a train station; of the five most populated towns on Anglesey, only one (Holyhead) has a rail station.*
 - *There are challenges associated with increasing rail services to existing stations, Avanti West Coast services cannot stop at Llanfair PG due to the length of the platform.*
- 3.3 And for buses:
- *There is limited availability of fast, frequent and affordable bus services in the area.*
- 3.4 We are concerned that the report underestimates the level of investment that would be needed to drive a fundamental shift in public transport use in such a rural isolated setting.
- 3.5 The types of trips that are made across the Menai Strait are not typically ones that can be made by public transport. The majority of people who live in the east of the Island travel to the mainland in order to do their shopping. Very few trips will start and end near a public transport node. Even for those who live near the station (for example in LlanfairPG), they are likely to travel to their weekly shopping in Bangor by car, since the station is not near the retail centre. Significant mode shifts will be hard to achieve.
- 3.6 Subsidies to bus operators (and users) on Anglesey are already large (and user numbers low) and they are likely to fall in the short term. We agree with the need for a multi-year funding allocation but have serious concerns whether such funding will be forthcoming.

The lack of resilience across the Menai Strait has directly contributed to a reduction of bus services across the Menai Strait and yet the report relies on increase in public transport usage to reduce private transport demand

- 3.7 The report acknowledges that reliability is crucial for buses:

To ensure the reliability of bus services that cross the Menai, minimise journey times and improve competitiveness with the private car it is important that buses are not delayed by congestion.

3.8 And it acknowledges that the closure of the Menai Bridge has affected the bus service. It does not however acknowledge that the lack of resilience of crossing the Menai Strait has directly contributed to Arriva cutting bus services.

3.9 Arriva’s announcement specifically links the need to reduce the bus service to the closure of the Menai Bridge and the ongoing works resulting in lengthy diversions:

“The closure of the Menai Suspension Bridge has caused major disruption to the service with extra resource invested to maintain the current timetables due to the lengthy diversion we must undertake between Bangor and Menai.

The change is not something we have taken lightly given the impact it will have, but the service needs to be revised to improve its viability, reduce the funding required to operate it and reflect the long term works on the Menai Bridge.”

3.10 The frequency of bus routes was reduced, and several places are no longer served, including the Menai Science Park, a core pillar in the economic regeneration of the Island as well as the more isolated rural communities.

3.11 The report seems to be heavily relying on the idea that public transport can solve the issues of reliability and resilience in crossing the Menai Strait and yet in reality the lack of resilience is leading to a reduction in bus services – directly opposite of what the Welsh government is trying to achieve.

Table 3.1: Public Transport Recommendations

	Recommendation	Comment
R7	We recommend increasing the frequency of trains calling at LlanfairPG station to enhance frequency between Ynys Môn, Bangor, Llandudno and beyond.	<p>Support additional frequency and consideration of measures to extend the platform to allow more trains to stop. There is an identified need for enhanced and reliable public transport facilities to and from Anglesey, both during normal conditions and during any bridge closures.</p> <p>We note that vehicle access to the railway station is not practical during bridge closures due to heavy congestion. Responsibility and actions for managing access and retaining to the A5 Gaerwen-Llanfairpwll as local access only during any closure of Britannia Bridge should be included.</p> <p>Effectiveness: would be limited unless the platform is extended:</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since any shift to public transport is likely to be small in the context of the volume of</p>

		<p>traffic crossing the Menai Strait and, as set out above, the types of trips that make the journey.</p>
	<p>We recommend the introduction of the enhanced bus network and frequencies for Ynys Môn developed by Transport for Wales supported by multi-year funding</p>	<p>Support, especially the need for long term funding commitments.</p> <p>We would also support a study into the long-term resilience of Pont Menai, the future of any 7.5T weight limit restriction and the potential to prioritise public transport vehicles and an action plan to educate, promote and enforce any residual restrictions.</p> <p>We do not consider that Pont y Borth is suitable for 44T vehicles even after the recent hanger scheme has been completed, due to width restrictions.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since any shift to public transport is likely to be small in the context of the volume of traffic crossing the Menai Strait.</p>
R9	<p>We recommend that locations where buses may be delayed are identified and bus priority schemes developed and implemented accordingly</p>	<p>Support investigation and refer to R8 above.</p> <p>We note this requires a long-term commitment and financial constraints coupled with the introduction of 20mph speed limits have resulted in a reduction in services to some communities on Anglesey as-well as the reduction in service to and from Anglesey from neighbouring towns during 2023.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since any shift to public transport is likely to be small in the context of the volume of traffic crossing the Menai Strait and, as set out above, the types of trips that make the journey.</p>
R10	<p>We recommend that opportunities to develop new or improved park and ride sites are explored on Ynys Môn to complement the enhanced bus network.</p>	<p>Support but note that the existing sites are not well used. Based on current provision and usage, greater incentives needed to encourage use of park and share facilities.</p> <p>Consider measures to subsidise public transport between the sites and major employment areas in Bangor. Other behavioural changes to make car sharing/public transport more attractive could be included linked to R15.</p> <p>The introduction of additional Park & Ride should be considered as part of a wider multi-modal shift project to alleviate pressures on Britannia Bridge.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since any shift to public transport is likely to be small in the context of the volume of traffic crossing the Menai Strait. Note that existing sites are not well used.</p>

4 Active Travel Provision

- 4.1 As with the recommendation around public transport, the IACC supports recommendations to improve active travel on the Island and across the Menai Strait but we are concerned that the effectiveness of any recommendations will be very limited in addressing the issues of reliability and resilience across the Menai Strait.
- 4.2 The report acknowledges '*there is no doubt that creating active travel routes across the Menai Strait is challenging*'.
- 4.3 We have two underlying concerns about the effectiveness of increasing active travel as a way of increasing the capacity across the Menai Strait.
- Firstly, there is limited population within walking and cycling distance of the bridges. This is set out in more detail below.
 - Given the likely scale of scale of the capital investment required to deliver active travel on the Britannia bridge – we would not want resource to be directed away from the works on the Third Crossing.

Limited number of trips where a mode shift would be possible

- 4.4 There is a limited population within walking and cycling distance of the bridges – and limited routes where a mode shift could occur.
- 4.5 In 2019, there were only 24 cycle trips recorded across the Britannia Bridge. While we acknowledge that some of this is due to safety concerns that could be improved by the recommendations in the report this is a very low base on which to build.
- 4.6 Those (limited numbers) of people who already cycle are those who have the highest propensity to travel (i.e are most likely to do so). There is going to be limited latent demand who do not currently cycle but would do so because of active travel improvements.
- 4.7 The report considers 5 kilometres as a reasonable cycle distance and identifies Bangor, Menai Bridge, LlanfairPG, Ysbyty Gwynedd and Park Menai as key employment destinations. The map below shows a 5km catchment from Bangor, LlanfairPG and Menai Bridge. This shows that there are relatively few trips where cycling would be possible, this includes:
- Bangor (including Ysbyty Gwynedd) to Menai Bridge and vice versa
 - LlanfairPG to Bangor and vice versa

Figure 4.1: 5km catchment



Option for delivering active travel

- 4.8 The IACC supports the vision to promote active travel across the Menai Strait.
- 4.9 A Third Crossing could include active travel provision, or suitable active provision can be made by reallocating road space and priority within the residual capacity of the Menai and Britannia Bridges (were a Third Crossing to be provided).

Table 4.1: Active Transport Recommendations

	Recommendation	Comment
R11	Recommendation: We recommend that an active travel route is provided across Britannia Bridge preferably at rail deck level but possibly on a cantilever structure at road deck level.	<p>Support consideration and refer to R3 comments. We consider that Option 1 is more desirable, since it does not limit future 2 railway track capacity enhancement proposals.</p> <p>Whilst we accept that an active travel route needs consideration over Britannia Bridge, we have concerns over public safety of cyclists and pedestrians travelling across at Rail Deck Level. Infrequent train movements coupled with the type of environment that exists below road deck level is unlikely to be conducive to personal safety.</p> <p>Such a proposal can be incorporated into any wind deflector measures. Considered that active travel improvements at the Britannia Bridge would only be effective if additional active travel is seen on the wider highway network in the area. We note that there is already work being undertaken to investigate options under WELTAG processes, but highlight the need to link with any potential rail capacity enhancements from the Commission's main NW Transport Report.</p> <p>Deliverability risk: Would need to be able to demonstrate at an early stage that this would deliver value for money.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since any shift to active transport is likely to be small in the context of the volume of traffic crossing the Menai Strait.</p>
R12	Recommendation: We recommend a ban on overtaking along the full length of the Menai Suspension Bridge.	<p>Support the re-allocation of road space and giving priority to active travel users.</p> <p>The option of central hatching for the central road markings prohibiting over-taking should be considered, maintaining the bridge arch widths. This may also reduce the risk of arch damage and improve resilience.</p> <p>TSRG 2026 Chapter 5 3.1.4 notes Centre double white lines should not be installed on a carriageway less than 6.1m wide.</p>

		<p>Existing no overtaking signs are confusing as they refer to a section of the bridge on each approach to the archways where it is physically impossible to pass.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since any shift to active transport is likely to be small in the context of the volume of traffic crossing the Menai Strait.</p>
R13	<p>Recommendation: We recommend investigating the potential for implementing signal-controlled gating to allow cycle traffic to cross the Menai Suspension Bridge separately from motor traffic</p>	<p>Support but after a review of R12 effectiveness and compliance with active travel users.</p> <p>We would like to see a consideration of measures to prioritise buses such as a review of the 7.5T weight restriction and exemptions.</p> <p>Delivery risk: We note there may be planning constraints with regard to the placement of traffic control / signal infrastructure on a historical listed structure.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since any shift to active transport is likely to be small in the context of the volume of traffic crossing the Menai Strait.</p>
R14	<p>Recommendation: We recommend the development of a comprehensive, comfortable, attractive and safe active travel network extending from both ends of both bridges to connect communities and important destinations in Ynys Môn and north Gwynedd.</p>	<p>Support and link to R15 measures.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since any shift to active transport is likely to be small in the context of the volume of traffic crossing the Menai Strait.</p>

5 Travel Planning and Management

- 5.1 The IACC supports recommendations to improve travel planning and management on the Island and across the Menai Strait but we are concerned that the effectiveness of any recommendations will be limited in the context of the overall problem.
- 5.2 Much of the change in working patterns (working from home, flexible working hours) has already shifted post covid and therefore there is a limited extent to which further significant changes will be made.

Table 5.1 Travel Planning and Management Recommendations

	Recommendation	Comment
R15	Recommendation: We recommend the development of comprehensive partnership working between the public, private and third sectors to develop and deliver travel behaviour change measures including travel planning partnerships, local work hubs, cycle and e-cycle hire schemes, support for e-cargo bikes for local deliveries, and provision of dedicated multi-year (5-6 years) revenue funding.	<p>Support but as per R6, the lead agency must be established. There is the potential to reduce congestion if all relevant agencies co-operate and consider measures to extend the peak period with staggered work start times, car sharing incentives, cycle hire or public transport provisions from P&Sh sites.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Potentially limited overall effect on resilience across the Menai Strait since any changes in behaviour is likely to be relatively small in the context of the volume of traffic crossing the Menai Strait.</p>

6 Further Traffic Management Options

- 6.1 The report recommends that a future study is undertaken for a three-lane tidal system. The report acknowledges the need for increased capacity, which the IACC supports.
- 6.2 The report itself appears sceptical that this is the right solution – either in terms of safety or in terms of benefits:
- *A tidal flow scheme would be expensive to implement and have ongoing substantial revenue costs.*
 - *Its benefits would be seen only during weekday peak periods.*
 - *A peak time three-lane tidal flow arrangement on the A55 Britannia Bridge, coupled with a suitable speed limit, may reduce congestion.*
 - *Lane widths of 3.5m for each of the nearside lanes with a central lane width of 3.0m could be achieved, although that would require a departure from standards.*
 - *Significant design work will be required to ensure a safe road layout and safe speed management.*
 - *We think that such a system [a moveable barrier] is unlikely to be useful on Britannia Bridge because of the narrow lane widths, revenue costs, and limited time in the day when benefit will accrue.*
- 6.3 The 2015 Safety Assessment concluded that mitigation measures would not sufficiently reduce levels of risk and that “*tidal flow should not be progressed*” – the IACC is not clear how or what has changed sufficiently to warrant this option being progressed, and is concerned these safety issues remain. This option could increase the number of collisions, and therefore reduce the reliability of crossing the Menai Strait.
- 6.4 The proposed mitigation for resulting safety issues in the Appendix includes prohibition of cyclists from using the bridge – this is a clear contradiction to what the Welsh Government is planning to achieve.

Table 6.1 Travel Planning and Management Recommendations

	Recommendation	Comment
R16	Recommendation: We recommend a study is undertaken for Britannia Bridge of a three-lane tidal system with and without a moveable barrier so that such a system could be deployed quickly if appropriate for resilience and incident management in the future.	Do not currently support. Effectiveness: The main concerns of CSYM in terms of the Menai crossings, relate to the resilience, especially Britannia Bridge.

Any 3-lane proposal is considered as a congestion mitigation measure, rather than addressing resilience.

Effectiveness: This option has previously been considered – and for reasons set out in the appendix to the NWTC’s report, it was not supported at that time.

. Road space is insufficient for such an undertaking. The section through the arches is too narrow and there is a risk that would increase the likelihood of collisions. This option is likely not to be resilient.

Effectiveness We are concerned that capacity enhancements could increase the risk of a collision, hence having an adverse effect upon resilience.

Deliverability: We consider that this proposal could conflict with R1 and R3. R1 deals with wind resilience but three lanes means vehicles would be more likely to collide if veered off course due to high winds. R3 which is aimed at improving resilience by highlighting making overtaking restrictions.