

Ken Skates MS
Minister for Economy,
Transport and North Wales

CC: Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister of Wales

14th September 2020

Re: Stop the Red Route A55-A548 destroying Leadbrook Woods and meadows, Flintshire

Dear Minister,

We, the undersigned, write to you as farmers, business people, homeowners, local politicians and lovers of the landscape and wildlife of the Leadbrook Woods and Meadows area. We urge you not to destroy our businesses and livelihoods, and the countryside we love, by approving the construction of a huge new four-lane highway, which would go straight through this ancient and beautiful landscape in Flintshire, North Wales.

This enormous dual carriageway is by far the largest new highway proposal in the whole of Wales. It would destroy massive areas of our precious farmland, including an award-winning organic farm, sever our businesses, which are already suffering from the COVID pandemic, destroy our homes and communities and cause irreparable damage to our wildlife and landscape heritage. It would rip through ancient woodland and old flower-rich meadows, damage this historic landscape, and destroy viable farm holdings.

Your government's own estimates of the costs have risen from £210 million in 2016, to £242 million in 2017 and to £300 million in 2019, showing that the costs are spiralling out of control, at a time when Wales' economy is struggling with emerging from the COVID pandemic. At a cost of approximately £23 000 per metre, this would be a vast misdirection of funds, at a time when we are desperately short of nurses, doctors and agricultural support in Wales.

Your government is rightly concerned about sustainability, and passed a ground-breaking law on it. Sustainability is all about finding solutions to problems such as traffic congestion which don't destroy the environment, and we urge you to do just that in this case. The Future Generations Commissioner, Ms Sophie Howe, has expressed concern about the processes you have used to develop this road plan (WelTAG).

In stating on the 10th June this year in the plenary of the Welsh Parliament, that the government is "looking at the longer term recovery from coronavirus in a way that builds back a fairer, greener, more resilient economy", you rightly pointed out that things will not be the same in a post-COVID Wales, and that recovery must be green.

Pursuing this highway scheme would take no account of the likely large reduction in traffic because of changed work patterns after the coronavirus pandemic, with working from home for example remaining far higher than before. It also would not take into account the big changes which are afoot on the international scene from the 1st January next year, when changing trade arrangements between the UK and Ireland may well result in a further reduction in the need for a huge new dual carriageway in this area.

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The increase in carbon emissions which would happen as a result of this highway constitute swimming against the tide of public opinion and your government's own policies, in an era when we are supposed to be taking serious steps at all levels to avoid catastrophic climate change.

We recognise that there are problems with congestion in this area, but we are equally confident that they could be addressed without massive new highway construction, using imaginative sustainable solutions that create a more resilient Wales.

Please rethink this damaging mega-scheme, and let us work together to create a sustainable and productive Flintshire and Wales.

Yours sincerely,

Iolo Williams, Naturalist and TV presenter
Rachel Sharp, CEO, Wildlife Trusts Wales
Natalie Buttris, Director of Wales, Woodland Trust / Coed Cadw
Frances Cattanach, CEO, North Wales Wildlife Trust
Mick Green, Chair, Welsh Ornithological Society
Ryland Jones, Interim Deputy Director, SUSTRANS
Joe Mault, County Advisor (Clwyd and Montgomeryshire), NFU Cymru
Jenny Hawley, Policy Manager, Plantlife
Bob Gaffey, Chair, Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales, Clwyd Branch
Sarah Kessel, CEO, Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales
Clive Faulkner, CEO, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust
Adam Taylor, CEO, Gwent Wildlife Trust
Darylle Hardy, CEO, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust
Mark Hughes, Chair, Clwydian Range Branch, NWWT
Keith Davies, Chair, Clwyd Beekeepers
Keith Davies, Clwyd Bat Group
Andrew Charles-O'Callaghan, Môn Gwyrdd Environmental Youth Forum
Roberta Owen, Holywell Transition
Cllr Chris Dophin, Flintshire County Council
Cllr Vicky Perfect, Flintshire County Council
Cllr Rita Johnson, Flintshire County Council
Cllr Marion Bateman, Flintshire County Council / Northop Community Council
Cllr Haydn Bateman, Flintshire County Council
Cllr Paul Ashley, Northop Community Council
Cllr John Carling Northop Community Council
Cllr Alison Brebner, Northop Community Council
Cllr Pauline Lawton-Hughes, Northop Community Council
Cllr Rachel Hayward, Northop Community Council
Cllr Alan Watkin, Northop Community Council
Cllr Rob Mackey, Northop Community Council
Cllr Linda Deane, Northop Community Council
Cllr Jarred Livesey, Northop Community Council



For all communication enquiries please contact: Ian Campbell, Communications Officer
ian.campbell@northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk / 01248 351 541

North Wales Wildlife Trust, Llys Garth, Garth Road, Bangor Gwynedd, LL57 2RT