

Transport Solutions for Lancaster & Morecambe

Response to LCC Written Representations

This is TSLM's response to Lancashire County Council's Written Representations on:

2.7 Natural Environment & Ecology

2.8 Drainage (Construction)

2.9 Drainage (Operation)

2.10 Socio-economic Impact

LCC 2.7 Natural Environment and Ecology

Para 1.2.3 discusses the mitigation proposals for protected species, and begins with the Great Crested Newt, a species not noted in the area, but which is having annual surveys conducted. TSLM contest the validity of the survey methodology. Meanwhile Otters, which have an abundance of local information about their presence (including in LCC through their provision of mitigation), do not have updated surveys from the originals in 2004.

This contravenes the IPC Scoping Opinion which clearly instructed LCC as the applicant to provide current information. TSLM contend the vague and unsupported statement at Para 1.2.5 (e) and refer to our evidence (and others) regarding the proximity and regularity of Otter sightings near to the proposed bridge site.

The area of Valley Meadow, despite having the Pink Waxcap downgraded from the Red Data Book, is continuing to have mitigation measures for the habitat loss. It would be expected that such mitigation, where applied, would be to the benefit of the natural environment in question, but that does not appear to be so.

Para 1.2.4 (f) clearly states "*Despite expert opinion suggesting that translocation may not be successful, the applicant intends doing mitigation in the form translocating turves, sowing spores and translocating cores to mitigate some inevitable loss*". TSLM consider this approach inappropriate and refer to the detailed arguments found in their Written Representation: Ecology and the Natural Environment.

LCC 2.8 Drainage (Construction)

TSLM consider this to be vague and incomplete. Para 1.2.3 suggests that pre-earthworks drainage is "*a combination of filter drains, pipe runs and ditches - and acts as containment of water from adjacent watercourses.*" TSLM question where this water will actually go.

In Para 1.2.4, on the one hand the applicant intends to manage water within the guidelines set out in the Site Environmental Control Plan. In the very next sentence it states that where this is not possible planned alternatives will be carried out.

TSLM consider that if they are planned, they should be contained within the Site Environmental Control plan rather than being put together piecemeal outside the control of the Development Consent conditions.

Para 1.2.5 indicates that the Water Management Plan is still being developed. Despite the considerable planning resources and length of time that the project has been under development, these details are still not available for consideration at the enquiry.

LCC 2.9 Drainage (Operation)

The LCC Written Representation refers to the Application Documents and merely provides a vague and somewhat misleading summary. Para 1.1.8 skips over the HAWRAT results on water quality by referring to an answer provided to the ExA's Question 18. This response refers to the HAWRAT results submitted with the ES of the Application Documents and replicates the main results in Table 1 of the answer. The failures to meet quality standards in catchment areas C, D, E and F are then discussed in subsequent paragraphs 18.2 to 18.5.

LCC attempt to mitigate the failures by referring to HAWRAT as having a "*precautionary approach*" with "*conservative estimates on the potential impact on water quality*." LCC further state that it also assumes velocity thresholds of less than 0.1 m/s will lead to sediments accumulating. Para 18.8 of the answer then suggests that storm events will themselves produce an increased chance of reaching that velocity threshold and disperse the sediment.

TSLM counter this argument by referring to their Written Representation: Flood Risk and Drainage Management, particularly Para 4.3.7 containing a flow velocity diagram. This shows that even above the 0.1 m/s threshold flow rate, contrary to LCC suggestions, there is still substantial deposition of contaminated sand particles. LCC admit work is still ongoing and agreement with the EA is yet to be concluded. TSLM consider that until an acceptable position is reached that the progression of the application for Development Consent should be halted.

The Infrastructure Planning (EIA) Regulations deal with the situation where the application for Development Consent has been accepted but the ES is inadequate is dealt with in Regulation 17. The passage goes further in the way that the ExA should respond where Regulation 17.1(c) states: "*The application should be suspended until further appropriate information has been provided*".

2.10 Socio-economic Impact

This is also a response to LCC's Comments on Relevant Representations (RRs) Section 7 Socio-economic benefits.

1. Business support

LCC's Response to RRs affirms that "business groups ... are strongly in favour of the scheme" (7.1.2).

This support is qualified by the refusal of any business, local or national, to offer any financial contribution towards the costs of the scheme. Businesses were asked to contribute in November 2010, at the conclusion of the new coalition government's Comprehensive Spending Review. In the light of the financial benefits claimed by some businesses, it would seem that a financial contribution would be appropriate, or a Public Private Partnership (PPP) would be possible. However, no contribution was offered.

WR 1.1.40 refers to the business questionnaire of 2005, which has been printed in each version of the Economic Impact Report (EIR) including that of 2010. A close reading of this shows that transport links are not perceived as a major factor limiting growth. The major limiting factor is seen as the shortage of people with the right skills.

More recently, the support shown for the scheme by businesses in representations to IPC/NID has been far from impressive.

2. Heysham Port

The WR puts forward the argument that Heysham Port is fast growing and well placed to capitalise on a growing market for Irish Sea freight transport. But it is a small player in a highly competitive and volatile market for Irish Sea ferry traffic, and arguments for a new road should not be based on the extreme uncertainty and unpredictability of Heysham's importance over the next 5 or 6 decades.

Peel Ports owns both Heysham and Liverpool, and has plans for a 70% increase in the throughput of the Port of Liverpool by 2030. Liverpool is located close to very large centres of economic concentration, and able to benefit from the trend for short land journey/longer sea passage (WR 1.1.10) more than Heysham.

In spite of the claim in WR 1.1.9, DfT does not regard routes including Heysham and its connections with Northern Ireland as of "strategic national importance". (The chosen route for Northern Ireland is via Bootle and Birkenhead.)

“Seatruck and Stena Line have invested ... in a fleet of new, faster and bigger ships” (WR 1.1.11). But by their nature, these assets are not static, and can be moved to another port at will.

The majority of HGV traffic using Heysham Port does so outside the peak periods for congestion, so does not contribute to peak congestion as much as is claimed.

3. Regeneration of Morecambe

The WR (1.1.23) sees poor road access as one of the biggest constraints on the regeneration of tourism in Morecambe. However, it is unlikely that a reduction in a journey to the resort of at most 5 to 6 minutes – less outside peak hours when most visitors would travel - would make or break a decision to visit Morecambe. Evidence from elsewhere points to the quality of visitor experience as the overriding determinant of visitor choice.

4 Economic Development

4.1 Heysham 3

The WR (1.1.35) claims that the Heysham M6 Link is essential for the possible construction of a Heysham 3 Power Station. EDF, the French owners and operators of Heysham 1 and 2, have gone public and stated the following about their intentions for Heysham 3:

Plans for a third nuclear power station at Heysham in Lancashire have been put on ice. French company EDF Energy has cancelled an agreement with the National Grid to set up any new connection to the grid from Heysham. EDF Energy said all its plans for new stations will be focused on their sites at Sizewell and Hinkley Point. The company, which operates two plants at Heysham, said it had no plans to take the so-called "Heysham 3" option.

Source: BBC News North West, March 2012-05-31

This statement makes it clear that a new road connection to Heysham will not be needed with regard to the transportation of materials into a site for the sole purpose of constructing a new Nuclear Power Station. It also invalidates the argument about how many jobs would be created during construction and how many long-term jobs would be created around that site. If EDF were to re-visit its decision to build at Heysham it would be many years down the line, when the existence of a short stretch of dual carriageway will have little bearing on that decision.

4.2 Development Land

WR 1.1.41 repeats that much development land is “unserved or located in areas that are not considered viable in terms of accessibility”. Yet Lancaster Business Park, which is adjacent to Junction 34 of the M6, where motorway access to could not be better, has seen only a partial take-up of land.

WR 1.1.44 refers to White Lund Industrial Estate as an area, at present “inaccessible”, which would be “opened up” by the HM6L. But information in the EIR indicates that development land there was in fact taken up by 53% between 2007 and 2010. So there is no clear link between motorway access and the take-up of development land that would justify building the HM6L on the grounds of economic regeneration. Therefore the forecast increase of 898 new jobs (1.1.45) which is based on this logic is unjustified.

4.3 Accessing other areas.

“Another benefit of the scheme is that it will enable residents of the Regeneration Area to access employment opportunities outside of the area” (1.1.47). But clearly the corollary is true: it will enable people outside the area to access jobs in the area, which would otherwise be available to local residents. This is an aspect of the “Two-Way Road Effect”, which the EIR (but not in LCC’s WR) discusses as a “Risk Factor”, and estimates that “1,095 residents will lose jobs as a result of this impact” (EIR 6.6).

4.4 Journey Time Savings

The WR (1.1.54) refers to the forecast journey time savings in 2014 between Do Minimum (No Scheme) and Do Something (With Scheme) (EIR Tables 5.3 and 5.4), and quotes the journey time saving of about 5 minutes (at peak times) on the journey from Lancaster Business Park (M6 J34) to White Lund. Of the 8 journeys in the tables, 4 could be expected to benefit from reassigning to the new road. On these, the mean time saving at peak times is 4.09 minutes.

This is not the “significant reduction” referred to in the text. It is significantly lower than the time savings given in the previous version of the EIR, but without an explanation. It is so low as to be barely noticeable in the real world by drivers travelling on those journeys.

Incidentally, on the other 4 journeys in the tables, which could be expected to benefit from reduced congestion as other traffic reassigns to the new road, the mean time saving at peak times is 0.78 minutes. This is entirely insignificant.

5. Upgrade of Retail Offer in Lancaster

Lancaster LIR (quoted in WR 1.1.58) believes that the scheme would benefit a major retail upgrade in Lancaster City Centre. This claim was made at the 2007 Inquiry, when a planning application from Centros was under consideration. Since then, the application was rejected at its own Public Inquiry. Now more than ever it seems probable that a new road would be a disbenefit in this regard, as it enabled customers to travel further to shopping centres in other towns rather than continue to shop in Lancaster.

6. Complementary measures

The WR believes the scheme will “create a breathing space to allow other measures to be brought in, including Park & Ride and public transport improvements.” (1.1.59). But LCC have consistently failed to provide any evidence that the complementary measures, which are agreed are necessary to tackle the district’s transport problems, cannot be introduced without the scheme. For example, the Park & Ride scheme would include bus services from Junction 34 to Lancaster City Centre on Caton Road (A683). The journey time savings referred to above (EIR Tables 5.3 & 5.4) show a mean journey time saving on that route at peak times of 1.06 minutes. Such a minimal saving could have very little influence on the efficient operation of the P&R scheme.

7. Conclusion

What is lacking in LCC’s WR is any description in real terms how jobs will be created. Many other locations in Lancashire are trying to attract new or relocating business to their area, and there is no proof that the proposed road will act as an incentive to lure companies here in the absence of other and more desirable attractions e.g. skilled workforce, availability of critical grant aid, etc.

Jobs are far more likely to be created in the Lancaster area because of its natural and built environment and the high quality of life that residents consistently say is a huge factor in the attractiveness of the area to any potential workforce that may be created or may be moved *en bloc* from another location. Such an environment is very high on the wish list of any company looking to move here.

The disruption and destruction that the proposed road will bring are not factors that will endear them to potential employers or companies seeking to relocate. Indeed the danger is that this scheme will destroy the very environment that companies say they find attractive and would bring them to this area.