

Notes from Trunk Road Agency on the closure of the A470 on the 31st of October for 7 weeks – please refer any further questions to your local Councillor or the Clerk, Sarah Reast on 07743 689912 or machinations@btconnect.com

The retaining walls that support the A470 here, have been monitored for some time due to bulging in the walls. Cracks in the road surface became evident and temporary traffic lights were set up to reduce the traffic loading close to the walls and monitoring of the walls continued. During early November 2023 a part of one of the retaining walls collapsed into the river, taking some of the carriageway with it. The A470 was completely closed on safety grounds and temporary repair works undertaken to allow the A470 to reopen under temporary traffic light control again. Since then, NMWTRA have been working closely with Consultants/Contractors to undertake detailed site surveys, ground investigations, etc investigations to allow solutions to address the failed wall to be worked up. These solutions have considered all options including their pros and cons and worked up detailed designs for a replacement retaining wall. The constraints on site have a big impact on what can and can't be done on site and when and include:-

Proximity on site to Ancient Woodland;

Proximity to water course;

Restricted width of carriageway and verge;

Size of wall needed and depth to construct it and more recently,

The urgent need to bring forward a solution given fresh cracking in the carriageway at the upstream and downstream ends of the temporary repaired section.

As well as these constraints, the impact on the local community by any works and how they are carried out has been at the forefront of any considerations. Be in no doubt we do appreciate the impact a closure will have given the impact last year when the road closed in November.

In simple terms there will be a large mass concrete retaining wall that will replace the failed section and extend to cover other areas of concerns with adjacent retaining walls. Unfortunately, such a structure can only be safely constructed under a full road closure. Again NMWTRA has worked closely with the Consultant and a Contractor, brought in very early to advise on the buildability of solutions, to come up with a solution that minimises the impact of the works and any closures.

NMWTRA has also been working closely with Powys CC Highways, Powys CC School Transport Officers and Bus Company to put arrangements in place to minimise any disruption and to try to manage the impacts on the local highway network.

To come to the notes made on Wednesday.

- **Impact on works by depth of water in watercourse** – the normal water level is below the limit of the works but it is appreciated that this level will rise given likely weather conditions. The Contractor is aware of this and the impact it will have and will undertake measures to mitigate this. As works progress upwards, any impact of water level changes will reduce.
- **Pool in Ancient Woodland on topside of road** – there is already a pipe that drains this and outfalls alongside the retaining wall put in after the water main burst several years ago. Thus there are no plans to drain this pool. This pool does not seem to have a

negative impact on the road. Deep trial holes dug at the time of the collapse found the ground underneath the road to be dry and very stable.

- **Was a Piling solution considered** – yes it was but ruled out on engineering considerations and ground conditions.
- **Programme of works** – the detailed programme of works for the works will be shared.
- **Diversion route** – the official route will be via Caersws/Newtown/Welshpool/Mallwyd/Cemmaes Road, preferred to the alternative route via Caersws/Llangurig/Aberystwyth/Machynlleth/Cemmaes Road given potential winter impacts.
- **Bont Road** – NMWTRA is all too aware of the impact a closure will have on this road. The amenity weight limit Powys CC is setting up will deter a lot of traffic but to help with this, the critical points either side will be manned to try to manage it's use by inappropriate traffic during the early part of the works. Depending on how things go, the duration of this management may need to be extended. Key critical points suggested include in the vicinity of Tyrpeg but best at a location where there is room to turn vehicles around – Carno Windfarm junction – and at the Bont Road/B4518 junction. In addition, advanced notice signs will be put out at key locations – north of Welshpool bypass/Mallwyd junction/Llanidloes. As regards enforcement of the weight limit, it is unlikely the Police will take any action but it will be brought to their attention.
- **Communication** – concern was raised about the lateness of this meeting. It is only recently that approval to move forward with the solution that needs a road closure has been given. The various processes and procedures that Welsh Government and NMWTRA have to follow have meant things have been brought forward as soon as things allowed. It is recognised that this is something we need to review to react quicker in the future.
- **Gritting** – plans are in place to continue to grit the severed lengths of the A470, either side of the closure, plus the Bont Road will be gritted as part of our primary treatment service during the closure. The B4518 is already part of this primary treatment regime.
- **Temporary traffic lights on Bont Road** – given the lengths involved this would be unworkable but appreciate what is suggested to try to keep road free flowing.
- **School Transport** – we are arranging with Powys CC and Bus company for minibuses to bring school children to and from either side of the site, and be safely guided through on foot to the awaiting minibus the other side for taking to school/home – hope this make sense. The issue of DBS checks was highlighted but the children will be led by their usual driver(s) and just the group led through the site safely by a site representative. The route used will be safe for pedestrians and machinery operations will be halted during the walk though. If details of other school events can be provided to us we will endeavour to accommodate these in the same manner – swimming, etc.
- **Minimise closure by 24hr working** – this had been considered but there is very little to be gained given the logistics of setting this up. There will be some operations where this would not be possible regardless e.g. concrete curing periods. It is recognised that any reduction of the closure period, no matter how small, will help local businesses so the Contractor will be asked to reconsider 24hr working where the operation would allow.
- **Impact on local timber hauliers** – unfortunately these will be affected the same as other road users and will have to comply with the amenity weight limit set up on the Bont Road.

- **Make Bont Road One way** – whilst I can appreciate how this would maybe help, in reality the ‘other way’ could only be via the B4518 to Llanidloes and is not really viable given the time of year.
- **Current issues with Bont Road including cattle grid and weak areas** – these are being discussed with Powys CC. In addition, the Bont Road and B4518 road will have their conditions assessed before the closure starts to agree their current conditions so that this condition can be restored upon completion. The roads will also have their conditions periodically monitored during the closure.
- **Temporary Over-bridge to span works** – such a temporary structure would not save any time. The scale and size needed would take a few weeks to build under a road closure and then a few weeks to take down so there would be no benefit. This type of option was thought about along with other types of work-arounds.
- **Closure period** – every effort will be made to minimise the closure period. The 7-week period is the potentially ‘worst case scenario’.
- **Ministerial correspondence** – concerned that people have written to the minister with concerns about the rumoured closure several weeks ago but still heard nothing yet. This will be looked into.
- **Adjacent land owners** – they have heard nothing and not sure if their land is impacted. Their land isn’t so should be no implications. They will be contacted in plenty of time if this changes.
- **Approach speed limits** – can signs be put out on the approaches to Tyrpeg to address speed concerns. Yes, this will be done.
- **Contact numbers** – a list will be provided as will links to the public facing website and FAQ’s.
- **Accesses off Bont Road** – is there any compensation if private drives/gateways suffer damage. Not through the scheme – usually the person causing the damage is liable.
- **Timber extraction along Bont Road and Llanerfyl Road** – these companies will be contacted about their operations but they will be exempt from the amenity weight limit as will any deliveries to properties along the Bont Road. Agricultural vehicles and emergency vehicles are also exempt.
- **Other road closures clashing** – Powys CC’s Streetworks have been liaised with to avoid such.
- **Other works along closed length** – other works will also be done to take advantage of the closed length including works by Network Rail to Pont Bell. The issue of Dolgoch bridge was raised. I will check with our Structures as per the email forwarded by Sarah Reast after the meeting.
- **Bus Service** – discussions are ongoing between Casey Dunn(WG) and the service bus providers but such services will unfortunately be impacted.
- **Doctors Surgeries** – these will be contacted about the closure, Caersws and Glantwymyn and Machynlleth.