



**Campaign Against the Levels Motorway**  
Website: [www.savethelevels.org.uk](http://www.savethelevels.org.uk)

## **NEWSLETTER – July 2009**

### **From the Chairman**

As the new Chairman of CALM, I am delighted to announce that the M4 'Gwent Levels' Motorway is no more. Julian Branscombe has moved to pastures new in Orkney and had asked me to become Chairman of CALM. We wish him all the best for his years of hard work and dedication he has put into CALM and Gwent Biodiversity in general.

CALM are delighted that the publication of the **draft Wales Transport Plan** has, we hope, saved the Gwent Levels and their unique wildlife from the concrete pourers, at least for now.

While, the economic conditions were given as the major reason for the road being scrapped (the motorway would have cost over £1 billion), the work of CALM cannot be over-estimated. Since this new scheme was 'launched' several years ago, CALM has constantly and continuously stated to politicians, business leaders and the general public that building a motorway would:

1. destroy nationally important wildlife habitats
2. reinforce and encourage the continued and expanded car use, adding to carbon emissions
3. the road would be too expensive - while there are cheaper and more sustainable alternatives to relieving congestion on the M4

This rationale was accepted by the Assembly. Ieuan Wyn Jones, Deputy First Minister & Minister for the Economy and Transport, announced on the 15<sup>th</sup> July, that "Government is committed to reducing congestion, restoring capacity and reliability to this absolutely vital East/West corridor. And today we are pledging to do so in a way which is **financially and environmentally sustainable**, as well as improving the resilience of the road with urgency"

However, we cannot afford to switch off: this Transport Plan is only a draft. Business leaders will be calling for its inclusion. Thus, each of us needs to respond individually as CALM members to support its exclusion – go to [www.wales.gov.uk/topics/transport](http://www.wales.gov.uk/topics/transport) and click on the National Transport Plan – comments need to be submitted before the Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009. To help you with this, CALM will be providing a standard response soon.



**But before that - do what the CALM Committee did on 15th July - have a glass or two of champagne and clap yourselves on the back. The M4 is dead, long live CALM!**



**Many thanks are due to all the people who attended the demonstration on 29th September last year.**

Alan Williams, who chaired CALM for several years, has written the following article showing the history of the Project and CALM's role in fighting it.

**New M4 Project – history of the scheme and early CALM response:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Timeline of New M4 Project</b>	<b>CALM response</b>
<b>1945-1967</b>	1945 - investigations into M48 Newport bypass, 1947 - Public Inquiry into M4 motorway north of Newport, 1967 - M4 north of Newport opened as 2 lane dual motorway.	
<b>1982</b>	M4 widened between junct 24 (Coldra) and 29 (Castleton)	
<b>1990 - 1991</b>	1990 - Need for improvement identified, 1991 - M4 relief road included in Welsh Office Trunk Road forward programme	
<b>1993-1995</b>	Public consultation exercises on proposal to proceed with road announced in June 1993.	CALM founded in August 1993 (see history)
<b>1995</b>	Preferred route announced	CALM researches traffic demands and looks at public transport alternatives.
<b>1997-2002</b>	Welsh Office look at multi modal studies and produce Common Appraisal Framework	CALM continues to meet to discuss alternatives.
<b>2002</b>	Welsh trunk road forward programme revised and M4 relief road put on hold.	CALM stands down but does not disband.
<b>2005</b>	Following Wales Spatial Plan 'New M4' is included in Trunk Road review	CALM is re-established using original membership (where available) and format.

**History**

Formed in August 1993 following the commencement of public consultation on building the road in June 1993.

**Original membership:** Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales; Community Councils of Coedkernew, Goldcliffe, Llanwern, Magor with Undy, Nash, Marshfield and Wentloog; Friends of the Earth, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Gwent Ornithological Society, Royal Society for Nature Conservation \*, RSPB, Save our Severnside \*, Transport 2000, Worldwide Fund for Nature.

\* Organisations no longer in existence or status unknown.

CALM met regularly over the intervening years, its frequency depending on the likelihood of the development proceeding. It drew up the following mission statement:

*The Secretary of State should withdraw the proposal to build a motorway across the Gwent Levels, by whatever route, and carry out a comprehensive study to establish future transport needs along the South Wales transport corridor, as well as the full range of options that could meet these needs. All options should be subjected to Environmental Impact Assessment and the results published for public consultation before any preferred solution is announced.*

The meetings were serviced by Gwent Wildlife Trust and the key participants in the early years were local residents Bob Harris, Amanda Martin and David Phillips, together with representatives from the membership organisations. A key task was the consideration of the alternative options that would meet the transport needs of the area. The participating organisations were asked to contribute and a small fighting fund was raised administered by Jon Winder as treasurer.

**WAG and CALM activities 2005 to 2009**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Timeline of New M4 Project</b>	<b>CALM response</b>
<b>2006</b>	Public consultation on revised route.	CALM submits its list of objections to the proposal (see below)
<b>2007 - 2008</b>	WAG working on Outline Business Case.	CALM maintains publicity campaign against M4 culminating in demonstration at Senydd on 23/09/08
<b>2009</b>	Timetable for production of Business Case subject to delay.	CALM asks for Business case to be published under Freedom of Information act and lines up experts to review the document. Produces 'Prospectus for better transport in south Wales'.
<b>2009</b>	Ieuan Wyn Jones, Deputy First Minister announces the scrapping of the New M4 in the Senydd on 15 July 2009.	CALM members celebrate the good news.

## List of objections in response to consultation (2006)

'CALM has looked at the recent proposals to build a new M4 Motorway from Magor to Castleton across the Gwent Levels and wish to object on the following grounds:

- Road-building does not ease congestion. It creates more traffic with inevitable further congestion leading to even more road-building;
- Extra traffic is a major cause of CO2 emissions leading to global warming; an increasing and worrying problem and soon to be subject to mandatory cuts of 60% by 2050;
- The environmental costs are unacceptable, with loss of habitat in sensitive areas including sites of special scientific interest, air pollution leading to health problems and noise pollution;
- The proposed scheme, with road tolls for the new road and traffic restrictions on the existing road is flawed and will not ease congestion in south Wales in the long term;
- The road will cost hundreds of millions of pounds;
- The effects of new road developments such as the Southern Distributor Road and the dualling of the Heads of the Valley road have not been sufficiently taken into account;
- Insufficient weight has been given to the development of alternative proposals such as public transport and road pricing;

We look to you to take note of our objections and produce alternative, less damaging proposals to ease traffic problems in South East Wales.'



Dear Ieuan,

The threat of a new M4 motorway has cast a dark shadow over the wildlife rich Gwent Levels for decades. With the Wales Transport Plan due to be published any day, we are writing to you as the Minister in charge of transport to plead for this special place to be saved from tarmac forever.

The Gwent Levels are protected for the rare plant and insect life living in the ancient reens (ditches). We have lost so much of our floodplain grazing marsh to development that this area is now one of most important examples of this habitat and it hosts many of the species - water voles, otters, bats and lapwings, to name but a few - that the Welsh Assembly Government has committed itself to protecting.

And then there's climate change. Road transport is the one of the largest single sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Wales - almost 12% of the total - and it keeps on rising. Your Government's commitment to a 3% per year reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is a welcome start to fighting climate change, but how can you then allow the building of a new motorway that will only serve to encourage car use?

The decision on a Gwent Levels motorway is a real test of the Government's commitment to sustainable development and coherent policy making. The decision on a Gwent Levels motorway is therefore a real test of the Assembly Government's commitment to sustainable development and coherent policy making.

In a time of global recession, global warming and increasing loss of wildlife, the estimated £1 billion for this motorway, could be far better spent elsewhere. Use the money to make better use of the existing road capacity, and significantly improve public transport in South East Wales.

We and the Campaign Against the Levels Motorway (CALM) Alliance urge you drop the proposed M4 extension from the Transport Plan and support cheaper alternatives, reducing traffic problems without harming the environment.

**An open letter from CALM to the Minister for Economy & Transport, Ieuan Wyn Jones, written on 2nd July 2009**

**When the statement on 'New plans to ease congestion and improve safety on the M4' came out on 15th July it took on board most, if not all, of the points we made.**

Another recent announcement is relevant to our situation .....

The exclusion of the M4 from the National Transport Plan is in line with a recent refusal by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, John Denham, for the proposed bypass at Westbury, Wiltshire, which was refused partly on increases in greenhouse gases. The refusal notice stated that:

**"The scheme would do little to encourage modal shift from cars..." and that it "would increase climate change emissions..."**

Is the tide turning against building our way out of congestion? Let's hope so.

**Get in Touch with CALM:**

**James Byrne:**

**Sorrel Jones:**

**Steve Rawlings:**

[James.Byrne@rspb.org.uk](mailto:James.Byrne@rspb.org.uk)

[sjones@gwentwildlife.org](mailto:sjones@gwentwildlife.org)

[steve@alg.myzen.co.uk](mailto:steve@alg.myzen.co.uk)

Tel: 01600-740600

Tel: 01291-625977