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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Welsh Government  
Consultation - summary of responses

A55/A494/A548 Deeside Corridor Improvement study

Consultation outcome report

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.  
This document is also available in Welsh.

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 In 2015 the Welsh Government commissioned a study to address transport problems on the A55/A494/A548 Deeside Corridor. This study utilised earlier work undertaken which recommended two highway options (Blue and Red Options) to be progressed for further appraisal under the Welsh Transport Planning and Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) Stage 2.

1.2 The Blue Option includes:

- widening the A55/A494 route
- junction improvements including Ewloe Interchange
- parallel link roads
- removal, modification and improvement of junctions
- 3 lanes in each direction, and
- 9.8km of highway improvement.

1.3 The Red Option includes:

- increased capacity along the existing A548
- a new road between the A55 and A548
- modification and improvement of junctions
- 2 lanes in each direction, and
- 13km of partly on-line improvement and new length of highway.

1.4 This Statement of Results summarises the scheme's technical, economic and environmental aspects and the views expressed during the public consultation which took place between 13 March and 5 June 2017. It also explains the Cabinet Secretary's decision, acting in his capacity as Minister for the Economy and Infrastructure.

## **2 DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL OF OPTIONS**

2.1 The Key Stage 2 Study placed specific emphasis on the social, economic and environmental, impacts – the Welsh Government's main themes of sustainable development

2.2 The main issues raised by the study were:

- sub-standard highway alignment along the A494 between the A55 / A494 Ewloe Interchange and the A550/A5117 at the Wales / England border;
- increased and increasing journey times on the A494 resulting in congestion along the A494 between Ewloe Interchange and the Wales / England border;
- traffic Congestion on the local road network as a result of drivers choosing local routes to avoid delays on the strategic road network;
- adverse effects on Community Severance and Quality of Life in settlements and dwellings adjacent to the A494 due to high volumes of traffic;
- safety – the current highway layout along the A494 is perceived as unsafe; and
- resilience issues along the existing A55 / A494 corridor which is particularly apparent when incidents such as vehicle breakdowns or accidents occur, causing

an obstruction, resulting in severe delays to other road users on the A494 thus highlighting the lack of a suitable alternative route with capacity to divert traffic.

2.3 The study used Welsh Transport Planning and Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG)<sup>1</sup> principles.

WelTAG was developed by the Welsh Government and is aimed at ensuring that public sector transport proposals demonstrate the following criteria:

- A positive contribution to objectives for transport;
- Good value for money;
- Overall economic, social and environmental benefits;
- Maximum benefit and minimal impact.

2.4 To address the problems raised, an in line with strategic network objectives, the following ten Transport Planning Objectives were identified as part of the WelTAG Stage 1 study:

Objective 1:

- To reduce journey time variability and enhance the transport network resilience of the A55 / A494 study corridor to periods of high demand, incidents and maintenance events;

Objective 2:

- To improve transport connections for businesses within the study area to key economic centres and employment sites;

Objective 3:

- To improve access between employment sites and workforce catchment areas;

Objective 4:

- To improve the actual and perceived safety and personal security of all transport users along the A55 / A494 study corridor;

Objective 5:

- To improve the permeability across the A55 / A494 corridor for non-motorised modes at key point of desire;

Objective 6

- To ensure that the study area transport network facilitates necessary national and regional trip movements of people and freight;

Objective 7

- To reduce carbon emissions from transport along the A55 / A494 study corridor;

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Transport Planning and Appraisal Guidance WelTAG, June 2008 – available on the [Welsh Government website](#).

#### Objective 8

- To minimise adverse impacts on the human environment including air, noise and light pollution, and landscape and townscape;

#### Objective 9

- To minimise adverse impacts on the natural environment including local air quality, water and soil pollution, and biodiversity impacts; and

#### Objective 10

- To maintain and make more efficient use of the existing transport infrastructure along the A55 / A494 study corridor.

- 2.5 The traffic modelling analysis undertaken indicates that highway trips are expected to increase on a year-by-year basis if nothing is done. By 2037, highway trips during the morning and evening peak periods are forecast to increase by 16% and 14% respectively. Public Transport trips are forecast to decrease by 10% in the same period if nothing is done
- 2.6 As a result, if nothing is done, increased congestion and journey times along the A55/A494 corridor is expected.
- 2.7 The public consultation brochure at Annex A describes the Blue and Red options in more detail.
- 2.8 The Technical Appraisal Report<sup>2</sup> records the findings of the study in detail.

### **3 PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 We consulted on the Blue and Red Options in a twelve week consultation period which took place between 13 March and 5 June 2017, all compared to the Do Minimum.
- 3.2 Information was provided on the Consultation pages of Welsh Government's website for the duration of the consultation including a bilingual questionnaire to capture views. Paper copies of this information was also available at local council offices and libraries. In order to give people the opportunity to view and discuss the options with the study team, public exhibitions were held over five days these being publicised by letter drops, posters and a press release in the study area. The local press also ran articles for the duration of the consultation period and BBC North East Wales provided coverage both on television and on-line at the outset. Statutory and Non-Statutory consultees were also invited to provide their views.
- 3.3 The public consultation exhibitions were held on five days with each event being open to the public from 10am until 8pm. The exhibitions were held at:

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<sup>2</sup> A55/A494/A548 Deeside Corridor Improvement – Technical Appraisal Report, (in two volumes), September 2017

- Ewloe Social Club, Mold Road, Ewloe, Deeside – Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March & Wednesday 22 March;
- Coleg Cumbria – Deeside, Kelsterton Road, Connah’s Quay – Thursday 23 March – Friday 24 March; and
- Wrexham Glyndwr University, Northop Campus – Wednesday 10 March.

3.4 1,842 people in total attended the public consultation exhibitions. By the close of the consultation period we received 2,436 completed questionnaires. This was made up of 1,036 paper questionnaires and 1,046 on-line responses. Of the on-line responses, 1,102 were completed with 298 being partially completed. A further 100 responses were received via letter from stakeholders, individuals, interested groups and local authorities, email and telephone with 51 comments being recorded by exhibition staff following conversations with the public to indicate the nature of the comments made. A summary of the views expressed is below and the consultation report<sup>3</sup> describes the findings in more detail.

## 4 ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

### Analysis of Questionnaire responses

4.1 The questionnaire asked people about the perceived problems in the area of the study, the measures needed for improvement, what was most important to them and their option preference. Analysis of the responses to the seventeen questions is as follows.

***Question 1 – Are you: Resident in the Deeside area, Employed in the Deeside area, Business Owner in the Deeside area, Student in the Deeside area, I do not live or work in the Deeside area but I travel through it regularly or other?***

Residents in the Deeside area (63.3%)  
 Business owner/operator in the Deeside area (6.1%)  
 Do not live or work in the Deeside area but travel through it regularly (9.6%)  
 Employed in the Deeside area (14.8%)  
 Students in the Deeside area (1%)  
 Other 5.2%

***Question 2 – How frequently do you travel along each of the corridors in the study area?***

A55/A494:

5+ days a week (57.7%)  
 2-4 days a week (29.3%)  
 Weekly (9.3%)  
 Monthly (2.2%)  
 Less often (1.3%)

<sup>3</sup> A55/A494/A548 Consultation Report - May 2017 – available on [Welsh Government Website](#)

Never (0.2%)

A548:

5+ days a week (24.5%)  
2-4 days a week (20.8%)  
Weekly (19.9%)  
Monthly (12.0%)  
Less often (19.1%)  
Never (3.7%)

**Question 3 – For each corridor travelled, please indicate which mode of transport you typically use? – to be confirmed**

A55/A494

Car Driver (93%)  
Van/HGV driver (4%)  
Vehicle passenger (14%)  
On foot (6%)  
Bicycle (5%)  
Bus (4%)  
Other. (1%)

A548

Car Driver (92%)  
Van/HGV driver (5%)  
Vehicle passenger (12%)  
On foot (2%)  
Bicycle (3%)  
Bus (3%)  
Other. (1%)

Mode use is similar for both routes with the majority of respondents travelling by car as driver, accounting for just over 90% of modes selected. Around 13% of users of these routes are car passengers with around 5% being van/HGV drivers. Walking and cycling is more prevalent on the A55/A494, both accounting for around 5% of mode choice compared with around 3% on the A548. Bus use accounts for around 4% of mode choice on both routes.

Of the respondents who use the A55/A494 at least five days a week, the most commonly used mode is car driver, accounting for 71%. Private vehicle use increases to 81% of daily trips when car passengers are included. 6% of people using the A55/A494 at least five days a week do so on foot with 5% cycling on the route; 3% travel the route by bus.

Mode choice amongst frequent users of the A548 reflects that of the A55/A494 with car as driver accounting for 74% of daily mode choice, this increasing to 82% when passengers are included. Four percent of people using the A548 at least five days a week do so on foot with three percent cycling; 4% use the bus.

**Question 4 – How important is to you that the transport network in this area is improved?**

Very Important (55%)  
 Important (28%)  
 Neither (9%)  
 Unimportant (5%)  
 Very unimportant (2%)

83% of the respondents indicated that it was important to improve the transport network with over half (55%) selecting ‘very important’.

When frequency of route use is cross tabulated with how important it is that the transport network for the area needs improving, it shows that users of the A548 have a higher tendency to believe that it is “Very important” to improve the transport network, regardless of the frequency in which they use the route. Users of the A55/A494 are less likely to suggest the need for improvement, unless they use the route at least weekly.

Over 50% of participants in each mode and route stated that it was either “Very Important” or “Important” that the network should be improved in the area. Just seven percent of users both of the A55/A494 and A548 said that improvement to the network in their area was “Unimportant” or “Very Unimportant”.

**Question 5 – How well do you think the BLUE OPTION addresses the Welsh Government’s Transport Planning Objectives for this project?**

TPO	Very well	Well	Neither	Not well	Not at all well	Don’t know
<i>Provide more reliable journey times</i>	17.3%	12.3%	9.5%	19%	39.6%	2.4%
<i>Improve business connections</i>	15.9%	11.9%	11.9%	19.9%	36.5%	3.9%
<i>Make it easier for people to get to work</i>	16.7%	12.9%	11.5%	17%	39.4%	2.4%
<i>Improve safety along the corridor</i>	15.9%	13.5%	11.9%	14.8%	40.6%	3.4%
<i>Enable pedestrians/ cyclists/ equestrians to cross the A55/A494 more easily</i>	56.3%	5.9%	6.6%	7.6%	17.9%	5.7%
<i>Improve journeys for people and freight using the corridor</i>	16.1%	13.7%	10.7%	16.3%	39.7%	3.5%

<i>as part of a long regional or national journey</i>						
<i>Reduce vehicle carbon emissions</i>	9.3%	5.9%	13.8%	12.5%	50.9%	7.6%
<i>Minimise impact on local people (air, noise, light pollution)</i>	10%	7.5%	7.8%	12.1%	59.4%	3.1%
<i>Minimise impact on natural environment (water quality, biodiversity, landscape)</i>	12.7%	8.4%	14.0%	14.7%	44%	6.2%
<i>Makes best use of existing transport infrastructure</i>	19.3%	10.4%	9.5%			2.8%

The Blue Option was rated “Well” or “Very Well” by no more than 30% of respondents for 9 out of the 10 objectives.

The only objective where the Blue Option scores well is that of enabling non-motorised users to cross the A55/A494 route safely. For this, 62% of people believe that the Blue Option will address this issue “well” or “very well”.

**Question 6 – How well do you think the RED OPTION addresses the Welsh Government’s Transport Planning Objectives for this project?**

<b>TPO</b>	<b>Very well</b>	<b>Well</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Not well</b>	<b>Not at all well</b>	<b>Don’t know</b>
<i>Provide more reliable journey times</i>	54.3%	21.9%	4.6%	5.7%	11.2%	2.5%
<i>Improve business connections</i>	55.1%	20.3%	5.3%	5.4%	10.7%	3.2%
<i>Make it easier for people to get to work</i>	51.9%	21.8%	6.8%	6.1%	10.4%	3%
<i>Improve safety along the corridor</i>	51.5%	20.1%	8.2%	5.5%	10.4%	4.3%
<i>Enable pedestrians/ cyclists/ equestrians to</i>	34.9%	18.2%	15.1%	5.6%	11.7%	14.4%

<i>cross the A55/A494 more easily</i>						
<i>Improve journeys for people and freight using the corridor as part of a long regional or national journey</i>	58.8%	18.1%	4.0%	5.2%	11.3%	2.6%
<i>Reduce vehicle carbon emissions</i>	41.7%	17.0%	13.5%	6.9% (144)	12.9%	8.0%
<i>Minimise impact on local people (air, noise, lightpollution)</i>	53.5%	16.7%	5.5%	5.1%	16.2%	3.0%
<i>Minimise impact on natural environment (water quality, biodiversity, landscape)</i>	36.0%	15.8%	12.1%	9.1%	19.8%	7.2%
<i>Makes best use of existing transport infrastructure</i>	50.8%	17.5%	5.3%	6.2%	16.8%	3.5%

The Red Option scored best for nine out of the ten objectives, with over 50% stating that they thought this Option would address these objectives “Well” or “Very Well”.

Fifty three percent or respondents indicated that the Red Option will of enable non-motorised users to cross the A55/A494 route safely “well” or “very well”.

**Question 7- Which option do you prefer for:**

*Improving the local economy*

Blue Route (21.6%)

Red Route (71.6%)

Do nothing (6.8%)

*Environmental impacts (noise, air quality, bio-diversity)*

Blue Route (21.2%)

Red Route (71.8%)

Do nothing (7.1%)

*Society impacts (safety, social inclusion, fitness)*

Blue Route (21.1%)  
Red Route (71.3%)  
Do nothing (7.7%)

The Red Option is preferred for each of the three elements with over 70% of respondents preferring it. A small proportion (between 7% and 8%) of respondents selected the 'do nothing' option.

***Question 8 – Which Option do you prefer overall - Blue Option, Red Option or Do Nothing ?***

Blue option (21%)  
Red option (74%)  
Do nothing (5%)

When option preferences are reviewed against route user type the split between Option preferences is less pronounced. Respondents that live, work and study in the Deeside area are strongly in favour of the Red Option with 80% of residents selecting this as their preferred Option and just 16% preferring the Blue Option. Those who do not work or live in Deeside but pass through it regularly, whilst still favouring the Red Option (52%) have the highest support for the Blue Option with 41% of this group supporting it. This difference between residents and non-residents is also reflected when participants were asked about economic, social and environmental reasons separately. Despite these differences, the Red Option is the preferred Option for the majority of respondents in all of the demographic groups.

***Question 9 – Why do you prefer the option selected at the previous question?***

205 respondents (10% of the total) reasserted their preference for the Red Option and 47 respondents (2% of the total) reasserted their preference for the Blue Option. Fifty respondents (2% of the total) suggested that the Blue Option was not the solution to traffic issues in the area. Fewer respondents (34; 2% of the total) suggested that the Red Option was not the solution. 137 respondents (6% of the total) used the space to suggest alternative uses for the money such as improvements elsewhere on the road network or helping the homeless.

***Question 10 – Are you Male, Female or Prefer not to say?***

Male (53%)  
Female (45%)  
Preferred not to say (2%)

***Question 11 – Please indicate which age band you are in?***

Under 18, (1%)  
Between 18 and 25 (3%)  
Between 25 and 44 (26%)  
Between 45 and 64 (38%)  
Between 65 and 74 (22%)

Over 75 (7%)  
Preferred not to say (4%)

**Question 12 - What is your working status?**

Full time employed (57.8%)  
Students (2.3%)  
Retired (33.1%)  
Looking after the home (1.6%)  
Unemployed (0.2%)  
Other (3.1%)  
Preferred not to say (1.9%)

**Question 13 – What is your home postcode? This will only be used for mapping purposes; you will not be contacted.**

Analysis of the postcodes provided by respondents indicate that there is a large cluster of support for the Red Option around the existing blue route and vice versa. However, it should be noted that several of the postcodes only have one or two responses within them.

When the ten postcodes which generated the highest response rates were plotted, it became clear that those living close to the existing blue route favour the Red Option and those living close to the Red Option favour the Blue Option. The analysis indicates that respondents in the postcode which surrounds Ewloe, for example, favour the Red Option with 710 people favouring the Red Option compared with 44 favouring the Blue Option. In the postcode which houses the new road section of the Red Option, 130 respondents favour the Blue Option compared with 22 favouring the Red Option.

**Q14 – Do you have any further comments?**

Under further comments, respondents gave their main reason to explain their reasoning behind their overall Option preference and this was that they believed their selected Option would have less impact on emissions, pollution and the environment. The second most popular reason was the offer of an alternative route felt to improve network resilience.

**Q15 – Which exhibition venue did you attend?**

Ewloe venue (57.1%)  
Connah's Quay venue (13.9%)  
Visited both Ewloe & Connah's Quay, (17.3%)  
Northop venue (7.1%)  
Visited all three exhibitions (0.4%)  
Did not visit an exhibition (17.3%)

**Q16 – We would appreciate your feedback on the exhibition?**

Feedback on notification and advertisement of the public consultation exhibitions, the suitability of the locations, the organisation and quality of the exhibition materials were

obtained from some of the respondents. These will be used to inform future consultation events.

**Q17 – How did you hear about this consultation?**

- a) Letter (28%)
- b) Local Radio (2.1%)
- c) Word of Mouth (42.4%)
- d) Local poster (16%)
- e) Newspaper advertisement (11.5%)

**Stakeholder and other Organisations Views**

- 4.2 **Flintshire County Council** responded and stated that on balance, the most beneficial route for the County and the wider North Wales region would be the Red Route Option. Flintshire County Council state that in order to maximise benefit from the overall scheme, a number of additional elements (some of which are contained within the Blue Route option) should be included within the final proposals.
- 4.3 **Cheshire West & Chester Council (CW&CC)** in their response welcome the steps being taken by Welsh Government to bring forward proposals to address the problems associated with this route and, in doing so, help support growth and regeneration goals that will have benefits on both sides of the border. CW&CC considers that the Red Option is the best route to take forward.
- 4.4 **Holywell Town Council** have expressed a view to support any option which strengthens the social and economic links from the tow to Deeside Industrial Estate, Chester and beyond and have asked for consideration to be given to a slow lane for heavy goods vehicles similar to the road system used on the A55 Rhualt hill.
- 4.5 **Northop Community Council** responded to the consultation and set out their objection to both the red and blue options and have asked that a third route, Green Route to be considered.
- 4.6 **Flint Town Council** responded to the consultation by rejecting the Red Option and stated that that the case for the Blue option is overwhelming.
- 4.7 **National Farmers Union – Clwyd & Montgomeryshire** responded to the consultation and is supporting the Blue Option.
- 4.8 **Highways England (HE)** were consulted and they have examined the implications of the study proposals in terms of the future operation and safety of the strategic road network managed by Highways England. HE have not stated a preference but provided comment on concerns they have on the Red Option which they have confirmed can be addressed as the scheme is developed during the next stage.
- 4.9 **North Wales Economic Ambition Board** response state that the board recognise there is an urgent need for the existing A55 / A494 and the Deeside road network to be improved in order to sustain current and future levels of economic growth in North Wales and that the Red Route is the preferred option of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board.

- 4.10 **Natural Resources Wales (NRW)** commented on the Environmental Impact Assessment and Assessment of Implications on European Sites for both route options and have identified European Sites of Special Area of Conservation status that are likely to be significantly effected. NRW have set out their requirements in relation to further assessments that are required as part of the next stage in the development of the chosen route option.
- 4.11 **Natural England** commented on the Environmental Impact Assessment and Assessment of Implications on European Sites for both route options and advised that there are likely to be significant effects on the following two European Sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation for both route options. Natural England have set out their requirements in relation to further assessments that are required as part of the next stage in the development of the chosen route option.
- 4.12 **Sustrans** response state that improved active travel alongside and through the scheme should be considered at the early planning stage to maximise opportunities and benefits for the local communities who are affected by the scheme. Sustrans accept that this consultation and the outline scheme proposals are at a very early stage of development and have suggested a list of improvements that would need to be considered with reference to both route options.

## 5 OUTCOMES

- 5.1 The public consultation was considered effective as it generated a high level of interest with 1,104 people attending the public consultation exhibitions, and a high level of returned questionnaires and written responses.
- 5.2 The analysis of the questionnaires shows that there is clear support for improvements along the corridor.

### **Actions Taken Following Comments Raised During Public Consultation**

We listened carefully to the views expressed and carried out further work described below:

#### Junction Arrangement adjacent to Shotwick Solar Farm.

We investigated options on alternative junction arrangements adjacent to the Shotwick Solar Farm following comments from the solar farm operator and landowner. By re-arranging the junction arrangement, the impacts on the solar farm are reduced. Further consultation will be undertaken with these businesses during the next stage of the design development to ensure that any impacts on the solar farm are minimised.

#### Green Option

The Green Option was put forward by a number of respondents to the Public Consultation. The Green Option involves changing the signage at the junction of the M53 (J11)/M56 (J15) to try and encourage traffic to North Wales to divert onto the M53/A55 to the east and south of Chester. Whilst the M53/A55 is an alternative route from the M56 to North Wales, it is 8.6 km's (46%) longer than the route via the A494

and suffers from congestion during peak periods therefore it is not believed that that the Green Option would meet the scheme objectives.

## **6 REASONS FOR SELECTING THE PREFERRED ROUTE**

- 6.1 There is significant support for an improvement to the transport problems in the Deeside area with 83% of the respondents indicated that it is important to improve the transport network in the area.
- 6.2 The Red Option is the most popular of the three choices, with three quarters of the respondents choosing it. The Blue Option is preferred by just under a quarter of respondent, with a minority of respondents preferring the option to Do Nothing.
- 6.3 The WelTAG appraisal concluded the Red Option performs best against the transport planning objectives. The Red Option provides greater travel time benefits for both business and commuting traffic compared to the Blue Option and the Red Option has better benefits to cost ratio.

## **7 CABINET SECRETARY'S DECISION**

- 7.1 Having taken into account the technical, social, economic and environmental aspects of this scheme and the outcome of the public consultation, the Cabinet Secretary has decided to:
  - Adopt the Red Option as the Preferred Option to address the transport problems identified in the A55/A494/A548 Deeside Corridor Improvement Key Stage 2 Study;
  - Publish a TR111 Plan (Annex B) to protect the entire Red Route for planning purposes.
- 7.2 The TR111 shows the Preferred Route as a broad black line. This is indicative only and may change slightly during the next stage of design.

## **8 PROTECTION OF THE PREFERRED ROUTE**

- 8.1 By publishing a TR111 plan, we protect the route under the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995. This means that the Local Planning Authority will refer to the Welsh Assembly Government all future planning applications that are near the Preferred Route. You may inspect the TR111 plan at Gwynedd Council, Shire Hall, and at our Offices in Llandudno Junction, Conwy.
- 8.2 In certain circumstances, any owner having difficulty selling property on the line of the route may apply for blight. If any case meets set criteria, we will purchase the property.
- 8.3 The protection of a Preferred Route does not commit us to the line of that route. We are only committed once the Line Order is made, described in the next section.

## **9 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

- 9.1 We will investigate further and design the scheme in more detail – known as Preliminary Design. In particular, we will be looking at the environmental and engineering issues in more detail, taking account of the comments made during consultation and looking at a junction strategy and options for side roads and accesses.
- 9.2 After Preliminary Design, we will publish draft Orders under the Highways Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. The draft Orders comprise the powers to establish a line, modify the side roads, purchase land and put in place any other rights we need to deliver the scheme. There will be a period during which people who have an interest in, or might be affected by the proposals may object to the draft Orders and even suggest alternative proposals. If we cannot resolve these objections, and depending on the issues raised and the weight of objection, we may hold a Public Local Inquiry. An independent Inspector would hear and consider the evidence and make a recommendation for the Cabinet Secretary to take into account when deciding whether to make the Orders.
- 9.3 The scheme is a “relevant project” under Regulation 48 (1) (a) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994/No 2716) in relation to Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. This means that we will carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment and produce an Environmental Statement. We will publish this together with a statement to inform an Appropriate Assessment decision at the same time we publish draft Orders.



