

Powys County Council (PCC)  
North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (NMWTRA)  
MP Montgomeryshire and Glyndwr - Steve Witherden -  
MS for Montgomeryshire - Russel George -  
Councillor for Caersws - Les George

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached a proposal entitled 'Proposal for Pedestrian Safety Improvements at Caersws Bridge (A470)'. The Caersws Community Council has created this proposal to take account of feedback from the 2018 consultation, subsequent changes in traffic flows following the opening of the Newtown bypass, and current Welsh Government priorities around active travel, air quality, and carbon neutrality. We note that Powys County Council was scheduled to discuss an A470 improvement motion on the 9<sup>th</sup> October and this proposal aligns closely with the priorities expressed within that agenda.

The document outlines two practical solutions to the long-recognised pedestrian safety risks at Caersws Bridge: installation of traffic lights with a pedestrian phase, or, preferably, the construction of a dedicated pedestrian footbridge adjacent to the existing Grade II listed structure. Both options documented in the proposal are assessed in light of community needs, traffic impacts, and wider policy objectives.

We believe that improved pedestrian provision is now urgent, particularly given the volume of regular crossings by residents, visitors, and spectators attending events at Caersws Football Club and Charity events at a local venue. The proposal demonstrates how these improvements would directly support Welsh Government objectives under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 and contribute to environmental and health goals by reducing vehicle emissions caused by stationary traffic.

We respectfully request that Powys County Council and the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent commission traffic and pedestrian surveys, reassess the consultation options in light of today's conditions, and develop a funded design for the preferred solution. Further precedent examples of Welsh Government investment in active travel and bridge schemes are set out in Appendix A of the attached proposal.

This application has the full support of our local councillor Les George, our MP Steve Witherden, and our MS Russell George. Without action, there remains a credible risk of serious injury or loss of life at Caersws Bridge

Caersws Community Council respectfully requests a formal response within six weeks of receipt of this proposal confirming how and when Powys County Council/North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency intends to review the recommendations and initiate the required surveys. This time scale will enable us to provide a transparent update to residents who remain deeply concerned about safety on the A470 bridge.

Yours faithfully,

## Caersws Community Council

### Proposal for Pedestrian Safety Improvements at Caersws Bridge (A470)

#### Executive Summary

The A470 bridge in Caersws currently has no footpath, forcing pedestrians to share the narrow carriageway with vehicles. This presents a persistent and significant safety hazard, especially for children, the elderly, parents with prams, people with disabilities, dog walkers, and a 4000-capacity football ground.

In 2018, the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent (NMWTRA) conducted a consultation on possible improvements, including a traffic signal control trial (WG36781). However, this was prior to the opening of the Newtown bypass in 2019, which has materially changed local traffic flows.

The consultation also showed that whilst the majority of respondents wanted pedestrian improvements, signal-controlled crossings were among the least popular option due to the increase in traffic congestion they created. A pedestrian footbridge adjacent to the Grade II listed bridge would avoid this problem while directly addressing safety concerns. It would also better align with Welsh Government sustainability goals by reducing stationary traffic and associated emissions.

- A recent mapping published as part of Powys County Council's Active Travel Network consultation (October 2025) identifies a future walking and cycling route linking Caersws railway station across the existing A470 bridge. This confirms the Council's strategic intent to develop active travel connections at this location. Our proposal to improve pedestrian and cycling safety across the bridge therefore directly supports the County's emerging Active Travel Network and will help deliver the objectives of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.

Given the increased pedestrian demand (particularly from Caersws Football Club spectators and youth players), it is appropriate and urgent that the council revisits the issue. Two potential solutions exist: (1) install traffic lights with a pedestrian phase, or (2) deliver a dedicated pedestrian footbridge, which is more practical for traffic flow and long-term sustainability.

Further precedent examples of Welsh Government investment in active travel and bridge infrastructure are provided in the attached Appendix.

#### The Problem

- The bridge is narrow with no dedicated footway, requiring pedestrians to walk in live traffic. There have been several verbal accounts to the Caersws Community Committee of 'close calls' on the bridge.

- Visibility for drivers and pedestrians is limited due to the camber of the bridge

- National Cycle Route 81 runs through Caersws and uses the A470 bridge, meaning cyclists currently share the narrow carriageway with vehicles

- Risk groups include children, elderly residents, disabled users, and visitors unfamiliar with the road layout.
- In 2022, the Football Association of Wales funded a £110,000 expansion of Caersws Football Club. This demonstrates both the scale of investment in the ground and the expectation of sustained community use. Safe pedestrian access to the club is therefore a necessary complement to this long-term commitment.
- Caersws Football Ground, located directly across the bridge, has a capacity of up to 4,000 spectators (including 500 seated). All spectators and players must cross the bridge on foot or by vehicle to reach the ground.
- Home matches at Caersws Football Club generate regular pedestrian demand across the bridge. Spectators at Caersws FC generate significant matchday spending in the village, which depends on safe access for sustainability.
- Evening training sessions and youth football add further pedestrian crossings, often in poor light conditions. We have been advised by the local school governors, that children from disadvantaged families are not prepared to cross the Caersws Bridge on foot due to the traffic conditions
- While average attendances are lower, the 4000 capacity demonstrates the scale of pedestrian movement the bridge must be able to safely accommodate, particularly during high-profile fixtures, cup games, or community events.
- Regular youth training sessions and smaller matches also ensure consistent weekly footfall, not just occasional peaks.
- Visitors staying at the nearby Love2Stay/Maesmawr holiday parks regularly walk into Caersws village to access pubs, shops, and other amenities. This generates additional pedestrian demand, often from people unfamiliar with the road layout, further increasing risk.
- Local charity events (SWS on the Loose etc.) being held on Season Café grounds throughout the summer period. This generates additional pedestrian demand, often from people unfamiliar with the road layout, further increasing risk.

### Evidence to Date

- 2018 NMWTRA consultation identified pedestrian safety concerns and trialed traffic signals, showing queues but feasibility. However, respondents preferred non-signal solutions due to congestion.
- Newtown bypass (opened 2019) altered traffic flows, likely increasing reliance on the A470 through Caersws as a direct route to the Welsh coast, raising traffic volumes above 2018 levels.
- The consultation data showed that under normal conditions, around 4 vehicles were stationary at any one time. When temporary lights were trialed, this rose to 10–15 stationary vehicles. Today, these figures are likely to be even higher.
- A recent exchange with a Powys Highways representative confirmed that the 2018 consultation data remains valuable but now requires revisiting due to changed traffic

and pedestrian patterns following the opening of the Newtown Bypass. The representative also noted that signal-controlled crossings were the least favourable option among the public, and a pedestrian bridge would be the more practical, traffic-efficient solution for our community

- Comparable schemes exist elsewhere (Islip, Froggatt, Newenden) showing precedent for traffic light control, but other communities have also pursued pedestrian bridges as lower-impact solutions.

### Why This Matters Now

- Traffic volumes have increased post the opening of the Newtown bypass; old models are outdated and underestimate current congestion levels.

- Stationary traffic contributes to poor local air quality and higher carbon emissions, directly contradicting Welsh Government goals of carbon neutrality and reduced emissions.

- Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 obliges councils to promote safe walking and cycling routes. A safer bridge crossing directly supports this.

- Significant public and sporting investment has already been made in Caersws Football Club, reinforcing its importance as a community hub. Without safe pedestrian access, this investment risks being undermined by safety concerns.

- Equality duties require infrastructure to serve disabled and vulnerable users, who are most at risk on the current bridge.

- Limited parking in Caersws forces many to park in the village and walk across the bridge, increasing daily pedestrian demand.

- Tourism is actively encouraged in Powys, so safe infrastructure is necessary to support the local economy without creating safety hazards

- Caersws Bike Park, established in 2004, has grown into one of the most iconic venues in British downhill mountain biking. In 2024, the Park—supported by its title sponsor, Gravity—hosted the largest race on the national calendar, attracting virtually every major factory team and reaffirming its reputation as the UK’s most technically challenging downhill track. This has firmly positioned Caersws as a regional destination for outdoor recreation and adventure tourism. The Bike Park has benefited from significant recent investment, with national sponsorships from Shimano, Saracen, and Hefare, complemented by successful community crowdfunding campaigns that have funded new trails and visitor facilities. These developments have brought riders and spectators from across Wales and the wider UK, increasing visitor numbers and providing measurable benefits to local accommodation providers, shops, and hospitality venues. Many Bike Park users access the site via Caersws railway station and Cycle Route 81 requiring them to cross the A470 bridge, reinforcing the case for safe, segregated crossing provision

- Mid Wales Arts Centre, located on the Severn valley approach to Caersws, is an established educational and cultural attraction drawing between 12,000 and 15,000 visitors each year. The centre operates as a not-for-profit arts and education hub, hosting regular exhibitions, community workshops, and an extensive sculpture s. Many visitors express a preference for arriving via public transport, particularly given the proximity of Caersws railway station; however, the absence of a safe pedestrian crossing between the station and the site acts as a significant deterrent. In addition, local schools have indicated a desire to make greater use of the centre’s educational facilities, exhibitions, and newly established community woodland, yet share the same concerns about safe access for pupils and staff. Addressing this issue would therefore deliver tangible benefits for cultural tourism, arts education, and community engagement, while improving sustainable travel connections within Caersws

- Safe pedestrian access also supports the local economy. Visitors staying at the nearby holiday parks, as well as spectators attending matches, regularly use the bridge to reach Caersws village. Improved safety would encourage more footfall into local pubs, shops, and services, helping to sustain rural businesses and reinforcing Powys' strategy of linking active travel with economic vitality.

In October 2025, Powys County Council formally debated a motion calling on the Welsh Government—alongside Network Rail and Powys Council—to prioritise measures to improve safety and alleviate traffic issues on the A470. This live council motion demonstrates that the need for coordinated action on the A470 corridor is now officially recognised at local government level. Incorporating pedestrian safety improvements at Caersws Bridge would directly respond to the intent of that motion and help deliver its stated objective of prioritising safety and accessibility on this strategic route.

### Proposed Solution

Two options should be considered:

#### Option 1: (Interim) Traffic Lights with Pedestrian Phase Only

- Install traffic lights with pedestrian phase to allow safe crossing.
- Consider narrowing the carriageway to a single lane over the bridge with signals.
- Conduct updated traffic modelling and safety audits post-bypass.

#### Option 2: (Longterm) Dedicated Pedestrian Footbridge- preferred option

- Construct a pedestrian footbridge adjacent to the Grade II listed bridge, avoiding additional traffic congestion from signals.
- This option reduces stationary vehicle emissions, supports climate and sustainability objectives, and offers long-term resilience.
- Would directly support Active Travel ambitions and address pedestrian safety comprehensively.

From a cost-efficiency perspective, traffic signals may provide a workable interim measure but would entail ongoing operational and maintenance costs. A dedicated footbridge, by contrast, represents a one-off capital investment that would deliver safe access, resilience, and sustainability benefits for decades with minimal recurrent expense and maintenance. A phased delivery approach—signals first, followed by the bridge—balances immediate safety needs with long-term economic efficiency.

Both options should be subject to updated public engagement, reflecting on the 2018 consultation feedback and today's changed circumstances.

As detailed in the Appendix, similar bridge and active travel schemes have already been delivered across Wales, demonstrating the feasibility and fundability of this proposal

### Future Housing Growth

Pedestrian demand at Caersws Bridge will continue to increase due to housing developments, including:

- 29-home Pen-y-Borfa scheme (recently approved).
- 12 homes completed 2022–2024 at Plas Maldwyn / Ty Gwyn Road.
- 22 further homes under construction at Plas Maldwyn.

These developments will bring new residents who will regularly walk into the village for school, shops, pubs, and services, significantly increasing pedestrian crossings of the bridge.

### Policy Alignment

This proposal supports and aligns with several Welsh Government policy commitments:

- Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013: requiring councils to promote safe walking and cycling routes. Powys Active Travel Network Maps, produced under this Act, identify the need for safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure.
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: obliges decision-makers to consider long-term community safety, sustainability, and requires compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- The proposal also advances public health objectives by encouraging walking and reducing reliance on short car trips. Creating a safe crossing will make it easier for residents and visitors of all ages to choose active modes of travel, supporting healthier lifestyles and lowering long-term pressures on health services.
- Welsh Government’s Programme for Government 2021–26 (links to active travel and climate goals)
- Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget: emphasises the need to reduce emissions, which this project supports by avoiding additional stationary vehicle emissions.
- Recent Welsh Government and Powys County Council investment in the Newtown Active Travel Bridge further demonstrates the viability of pedestrian bridge schemes within the county. Delivered in 2025 with Welsh Government funding, the Newtown bridge spans 53 meters across the River Severn, providing safe active-travel connectivity. This successful delivery provides a clear precedent for a similar intervention at Caersws, showing that such infrastructure can be achieved within the local policy, funding, and technical environment.
- Powys County Council Motion on the A470 (October 2025): calls for Welsh Government collaboration with Powys Council and Network Rail to identify and deliver safety measures on the A470. The Caersws Bridge proposal represents a direct, deliverable action that fulfils the aims of this motion.
- Appendix A outlines Welsh Government-funded projects which set clear precedents for the type of intervention required at Caersws.

### Conclusion

Caersws Bridge remains a serious hazard for pedestrians, with no safe footway and increasing use by vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and visitors unfamiliar with the area. The volume of crossings linked to Caersws Football Club, new housing, and the local holiday parks means this risk is now both constant and significant.

The proposal directly supports Welsh Government commitments under the Active Travel Act, Well-being of Future Generations Act, and Net Zero Wales. It also complements recent public and sporting investments in Caersws Football Club and wider efforts to promote tourism and sustainable transport. Without safe access, these investments risk being undermined.

The successful completion of the Newtown Active Travel Bridge illustrates how Powys County Council and Welsh Government can collaborate to deliver safe, sustainable pedestrian crossings. A similar approach at Caersws would extend these benefits westwards along the A470, improving safety and accessibility while reinforcing regional active-travel priorities.

Two practical options exist: interim traffic signals with pedestrian phase only, and a long-term dedicated footbridge. Both require updated surveys and public engagement, but the footbridge offers the most sustainable, low-emission solution. A phased approach—signals first, bridge as the ultimate goal—ensures immediate safety improvements while delivering lasting resilience.

Continued inaction will not only increase the likelihood of serious injury or loss of life, it will also expose the responsible authorities to significant reputational and legal risk. We therefore request immediate commission of an updated traffic and pedestrian surveys, followed by funded design and delivery of appropriate mitigation

This proposal has the full support and backing of our local councillor Les George, Steve Witherden MP, and Russell George MS. We urge Powys County Council and NMWTRA to prioritise this issue and initiate the necessary steps to ensure pedestrian safety at Caersws Bridge and commission updated traffic and pedestrian surveys.

- Reassess the 2018 consultation options in light of current conditions.
- Undertake public engagement
- Develop a funded design for either traffic signals or a safe pedestrian footbridge on the A470 bridge in Caersws.

## Appendix: Precedent & Benchmarking – Welsh Government Investment in Pedestrian and Active Travel Infrastructure

### 1. Powys County Council – Active Travel Route Funding

Source: Welsh Government Active Travel Fund (ATF).

Details: Powys has secured ATF funding to extend and improve active travel routes, including:

Llanidloes (Llangurig Road / Smithfield Road improvements).

Newtown (Dolfor Road active travel scheme).

Funding Awarded: Powys received a core ATF allocation of £500,000 plus £249,000 for Newtown East Active Travel Project in the 2025–26 round.

Relevance to Caersws: Demonstrates that Powys is an active recipient of WG active travel funds; your bridge proposal would be a logical addition to this portfolio.

### 2. Active Travel Bridge, Llanfoist – Abergavenny (River Usk)

Source: Welsh Government funding commitment (2023).

Details: A new £10.4 million bridge for pedestrians and cyclists across the River Usk, connecting Llanfoist and Abergavenny, providing a traffic-free active travel link.

Relevance to Caersws: Strongest direct precedent — Welsh Government has funded a stand-alone pedestrian/cycle bridge as part of its active travel and climate objectives.

### 3. Pont y Werin (Cardiff Bay, River Ely Bridge)

Source: Funded by Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council, and Sustrans.

Details: Opened in 2010, £4.6 million pedestrian & cycle bridge, linking Penarth with Cardiff Bay.

Relevance to Caersws: Historic precedent of WG support for bridge infrastructure to enable walking/cycling, showing long-term policy consistency.

### 4. Levelling Up Funding – Powys (Ystradgynlais, Pont y Milgy Replacement)

Source: UK Levelling Up Fund, supported locally by Powys CC.

Details: Replacement of Pont y Milgy footbridge, plus wider active travel and rights of way improvements to support tourism and connectivity.

Relevance to Caersws: Demonstrates that bridge replacements and active travel access schemes in Powys have already been deemed fundable and strategically important.

## 5. Wider Active Travel Barrier Removal Schemes (Wales-wide)

Source: Welsh Government, 2024–25 delivery programme.

Details: Over 30 schemes to remove access barriers, improve dropped kerbs, install tactile paving, and enhance safe routes.

Relevance to Caersws: Shows WG’s willingness to fund a range of pedestrian improvements, even small-scale — making the case that a larger intervention (like Caersws Bridge) aligns with the same principles.

### Key Takeaways for Caersws Proposal

Direct precedent: The Llanfoist–Abergavenny Active Travel Bridge provides a near-identical example of WG funding a new pedestrian bridge.

Local track record: Powys is already drawing on WG ATF grants, proving eligibility and alignment.

Tourism & regeneration funding: Bridge schemes in Powys (Pont y Milgy) show viability under broader regeneration/tourism funding streams.

Policy alignment: All examples are anchored in WG’s Active Travel Act, Well-being of Future Generations Act, and Net Zero Wales objectives — the same framework supporting the Caersws Bridge proposal.

A similar Community highway Scheme (CHS) process operated by West Sussex County Council demonstrates that community-led road safety and active travel improvements can be successfully developed in partnership with local authorities. This model could inform Powys’s approach to the Caersws Bridge project.