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-------- **MEMBER IN THE SPOTLIGHT 8** ---------

WALES AND ITS

The context

The 133 km of motorway and 1575 km of strategic trunk roads in Wales are monitored by Traffic Wales, a partnership of the Welsh Assembly Government and Atkins, an engineering consultancy. Traffic Wales is also responsible for traffic data collection and the delivery of travel information to road users. ITS is key to managing key areas of the Welsh road network.

In this country of some 3 million people, two traffic control centres manage the motorway and trunk road network including two TERN (Trans-European Road Network) routes 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

The centre in north Wales (Conwy) manages traffic in the northern part of the country, including several tunnels. The centre in the south of Wales at Coryton was opened in 2004 and is a flagship project of the Welsh Assembly. It is the traffic information centre for the whole of Wales, collating and dissemination information via various media, and manages traffic in south Wales.

Partnership working

One of the most successful aspects of Traffic Wales is the partnership working and information sharing with other high profile organisations. Based at the South Wales Traffic Management Centre (SWTMC), these include the South Wales Trunk Road Agency Staff, the South Wales Police officers and radio broadcasters.

Partnership working is not just confined to network operations but extends to other areas including research and development and networking. Traffic Wales is a keen player in national and EU research and development projects, placing its infrastructure at the disposal of those projects that have the potential to realise the aims and objectives of the Wales Transport Strategy. Other initiatives include:

- *Streetwise*: a Euro-Regional project deploying traffic control and travel information facilities on the Trans European Road Network (TERN), which aims to stimulate a harmonised and synchronised deployment of ITS and services on the TERN ITS Direct,
- *IBEC*: an international co-operative working group to co-ordinate and exchange information and techniques, and evaluate benefits and costs of ITS.
- *PIARC*: the World Road Association
- *eSafety* support: a European initiative to enhance road safety by reducing fatalities through the development of the Intelligent Car Initiative and introduction of E Call across Europe

The Future

So what does the future bring for Wales? Focus will be on a number of different areas and initiatives:

- Implementing enhanced cross-border activities and communication in line with EU direction along the two TERN routes crossing Wales. This will be through enhanced strategic planning and operational interaction with cross-border traffic management centres. Consideration will be given to the implementation of Datex II to upgrade data exchange, which currently uses OTAP standards.

- Freight management will continue to become more prominent notably across the two TERN routes. It will be vital to align overall Welsh freight policies with ITS policy to ensure robust synergies and to maximise the benefits of public sector investment. Close working with the private sector will also feature.

- M4 Variable Speed Limit Project - Part of the M4 around Newport in South Wales produces significant congestion and a variable speed sector is planned to be implemented ready for the Ryder Cup Golf tournament to be held in Wales in 2010.

  Financial benefits for the scheme have been calculated based on cost savings in personal injury accidents, damage only accidents and traffic flow, approaching €1.5m per annum, with a pay back period of seven years. In addition there will be a range of qualitative benefits, such as reduced driver stress, improved driver behaviour, reliability of journey times, speed limit compliance and environmental.

- Expansion of ITS systems to non motorway routes. The trunk road arteries form a vital network allowing both movement of traffic across rural Wales, but also into urban areas. A number of the local authorities in Wales have invested heavily in ITS – notably CCTV and message signs. The ability for seamless interaction between the motorway, trunk road network with urban area network operators is seen as a key outcome to reduce congestion, especially on commuter routes.

However, the focus going forward must be outcome based, rather than output based. Whilst an ITS foundation has been put in place across Wales, now is the time to give additional focus to specific problem areas – both in terms of congestion and safety underpinned by provision of timely traffic and travel information. Specific benefits of ITS schemes based on strategic outcomes need to be established, quantified and measured. Measurement can be challenging, but benefits and the value of the ongoing investment into ITS by the Welsh Assembly must be continually demonstrated.

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