

To/
Councillor Peter Black
Chair
Scrutiny Programme Committee

BY EMAIL

Please ask Councillor Mark Thomas
for:
Direct Line:
E-Mail: Cllr.Mark.Thomas@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: 210323CLLRTHOMAS
Your Ref: SPC/2020-21/5
Date: 26th March 2021

Dear Councillor Black,

RE: SCRUTINY OF ACTIVE TRAVEL CONSULTATION PROCESS | RESPONSE

I am writing in response to your letter dated 8th March 2021 regarding the Committee Views and to address the areas that you have highlighted for formal response, following the Scrutiny Programme Committee meeting held on 16th February 2021.

I would firstly like to thank you for the opportunity to provide further information on the process that has been followed to enable Swansea Council to improve and increase active travel provision in recent years.

Swansea Council is fully committed to providing an expansive and well-connected active travel network, evidenced by the continued increase in the total length of the off-road network serving residents and visitors to the City and County.

As a Council, we have received the highest levels of funding in Wales for active travel schemes in recent years. £12.7million has been invested in the past three years resulting in a 25% increase in the length of the network, providing 60% of the 72,000 households in Swansea with access to a dedicated off-road active travel route within 500m of their home. Further ambitious schemes are proposed for the future, continuing to link communities into this important network.

A robust and reliable network of active travel routes is required to facilitate everyday journeys by pedestrians and cyclists. Swansea Council is committed to providing the necessary supporting infrastructure to enable people to choose to travel actively, ensuring that active travel becomes a prominent and first-choice of transport for daily journeys in Swansea. This approach is intended to meet the needs of the present, whilst protecting the needs of future generations.

In your letter, you have invited my response to the content of your letter, and specifically noted a number of areas for formal response. I shall outline my response to each area individually.

Continued.

Key Findings | Response

Your letter describes the purpose of the Existing Route Map (ERM) and Integrated Network Map (INM), and continues to outline that 'the INM sets out the plans for the next 15 years, mainly a tool to enhance forward planning of active travel'. It is important to note that the INM produces a comprehensive plan setting out the short, medium and long-term capital infrastructure walking and cycling routes that the local authority will seek to deliver, for the improvement of active travel across the City and County of Swansea over the next 15 years. The map is however refreshed every three years, and is subject to a statutory public consultation prior to being adopted.

During the meeting on the 16th February, I outlined that engagement on active travel schemes has continued throughout the design and development of schemes, and this has resulted in minor changes or alterations being made to the design, but not the intended alignment. This engagement cannot however override the previous public consultation which outlined the routes that we have consulted upon and clearly indicated an intention to deliver. Amendments to construction materials, surface dressing systems and the inclusion of speed restriction measures have all been incorporated in to schemes as a direct result of ongoing engagement with local residents and community groups. It is my intention to maintain this dialogue on all future schemes, and I continue to welcome the input and contributions from local residents and community groups on all schemes.

You have included a link in your letter to the Council's website where details of the current active travel schemes being delivered can be found. It should be noted that this webpage contains specific information on the individual routes, including where available, design drawings of the route to be constructed and answers to frequently asked questions.

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/activetravelschemes>

This webpage is complementary to the Council 'Active Travel Act' webpage which provides the ERM and INM maps, route lists, and is accompanied by the consultation report from the development of the INM in 2017.

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/activetravelact>

Committee Views

In relation to your comments regarding the report presented to Cabinet on 30th July 2020, you have suggested that additional detail be provided in similar reports in the future. To that end, I have taken immediate action to include a summary map of the routes proposed to be constructed in 2021/22 in a report shortly due to be taken to Cabinet. Any routes taken forward however will also be contained on the INM and their alignment available to view under the Council's 'Active Travel Act' webpage.

As outlined in the meeting of the 16th February, the challenging timescales for the submission of Active Travel Fund schemes, does not give opportunity to consult widely on the schemes prior to their submission to Welsh Government.

Continued.

It should however be noted, that many of the schemes being developed will have benefitted from engagement with local ward members, where this development has been funded by Welsh Government. The Council is not in a position to engage upon schemes for which it does not have any funding or resource secured against.

In response to your statement 'you told us that after Cabinet has approved expenditure, based on Welsh Government funding approval, it is effectively too late to consult', I would like to clarify and reiterate that all of the active travel schemes taken to Cabinet have been consulted upon as part of the statutory public consultation for the INM, and the route alignment funded by Welsh Government will be in-line with the route consulted upon in 2017. This does not mean that the Council is unwilling to engage with local residents and community groups on the detail of the scheme, and make minor changes to enhance the route, rather that the route alignment forms the basis of the funding allocation which underpins the active travel scheme proposed.

I will ensure that communications and press releases continue to be released to inform and raise awareness of the active travel schemes being developed, and opportunities for engagement communicated. I will also continue to write directly to local ward members regarding active travel schemes in their area, continuing to provide the opportunity for input and ongoing dialogue.

Letters

You have asked that I specifically address the extent of letters being delivered to adjacent properties along routes. I can confirm that as standard, letters would be delivered to those properties directly adjacent to a route to being delivered. However, as I have previously confirmed and due to the scheme being progressed at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic, a virtual public meeting was held in conjunction with the Blackpill, Derwen Fawr and Mayals Residents Association, to engage with the wider community.

Mayals Road Engagement Session

You have requested to receive a copy of the report compiled as a result of a virtual public meeting held with members of the local community to discuss the Mayals Road scheme. I have attached the report for your perusal.

I trust that this provides you with the necessary information that is required in a formal written response. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Yours Sincerely,

Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement and Infrastructure Management

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg.
Byddwn yn ymdrin â gohebiaeth Gymraeg a Saesneg i'r un safonau ac amserlenni.