

Councillor Jeff Jones  
Convener, Development and Regeneration  
Performance Panel

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*Our Ref:* RFD/JW  
*Your Ref:*  
*Date:* 23 February 2021

Dear Councillor Jones

### **Development and Regeneration - Scrutiny Performance Panel**

Thank you for your letter dated 2nd February 2021 seeking further information in relation to the Rural Development Programme project Gower Off Road Cycle Routes on extending the cycle routes and associated bike hire.

In response, I can confirm further discussions have been held with the applicant of Gower Off Road Cycle Routes (GORCR) since the panel meeting.

The original application submitted to RDP was for the project to encourage more informal cycling on Gower using the existing network of bridleways as a way of enjoying the countryside, whilst keeping any interaction with cars and motorised vehicles to a minimum. Riders would be able to choose shorter rides and circuits or long distance rides (the entire network is 65km long). In addition, the project would improve the network generally for the benefit of horse riders and walkers.

The promoted cycling routes would be thoroughly waymarked with a marker specific to these routes. In addition a small amount of works would be required on the ground to clear vegetation, etc.

The routes will be promoted by:

- Downloadable pdf maps
- Information panels at strategic points (mainly official car parks)
- Signage along the routes
- Launch event

The largest element of this project involves altering the network of bridleways to allow legitimate use of routes.

Shortly after the RDP funding award had been made, GORCR was met by some late objections in regards to the bridleways being altered resulting in permission for access over private land being withdrawn, this has forced the planned routes and associated costs being scaled back (see attached map). Although the scheme is in a more limited, it will still be an extensive network and enable the public to explore large areas of Gower as an alternative to walking. No permission or consent from landowners is required to promote a route for walking or cycling, so long as the promoted routes follow existing public rights of way.

The project has begun to explore the promotional activities required to enhance the project; and physical work will pick up pace later on in spring, when restrictions have eased and it is safe for staff and the public to visit the area.

The question of extending the cycle route at a later stage with the applicant was posed but not confirmed; this is partly due to Welsh Government working on new countryside access legislation and two major changes are being proposed:

1. Giving horse riders and cyclists the right to use all access land (i.e. all the common land in Swansea) and, also
2. Giving horse riders and cyclists rights to use footpaths.

The latter is likely to mean just certain footpaths, rather than all footpaths, based on suitability criteria still to be worked out. Should the proposals become law, which is likely to be one or two years after this scheme is completed, this would enable the original scheme to expand, albeit at a later date, because changes to the bridleway network would no longer be required before promoting the off-road routes.

Regarding the query of offering bike hire as an addition to the GORCR, the applicant is unable to explore this option due to limited expertise and resources available to facilitate this provision, but hoped the project would encourage local bike enthusiasts or businesses to set up a social enterprise that may offer this service.

I do hope this response is helpful to you and the Members on the Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel.

Yours sincerely



**Y CYNGHORYDD/COUNCILLOR ROBERT FRANCIS-DAVIES  
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