



Councillor Heledd Fychan

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9th March 2022

Dear Councillor Fychan,

Thank you for forwarding petitions covering a range of issues. This response deals with the majority of issues and involves input from a number of service areas covering;

Various Issues Graigwen Roads & Pavements and Air Pollution Berw Road

A further response will follow covering the outstanding issues related to traffic management, road safety, parking, etc.

Bus Stops & Bus Services Graigwen

With reference to the issues raised re bus services and bus stops in the Graigwen area, RCTCBC with the assistance of Pontypridd Town Council have erected a new shelter at the location with partial sides, it is not fully enclosed because it would limit user ability to see an approaching bus. The Council are also in the process of undertaking footway works to the grass verge to ensure a safe and non-slip pathway is in place before the summer to improve access to the bus shelter.

Graigwen, in common with a number of areas, lost its evening services on 2 November 2014, following a significant reduction in funding received by the Council, a product of the high-level austerity initiative. The Council has since been able to maintain funding for its remaining supported local bus network, but there is no funding available at this time to support the reintroduction or extension of bus services to Graigwen, without cutting other services.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the commercial viability of all bus services, with substantial Welsh Government Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) funding being needed to support bus operators in making up the revenue lost through the fare box due to the reduced patronage as a consequence of the pandemic. It is unclear at this time whether the BES2 agreement will be extended and whether growth in patronage as Covid recedes will enhance viability and potential expansion of services.

Our immediate aim remains to ensure that all scheduled journeys operate reliably and to reinstate the February 2020 Reference Network. However, with the recovery slower than expected and the BES 2 agreement expiring on 31 July 2022, the more pressing task is to secure a future funding mechanism and agreement that simply maintains and secures the provision of the core network.

Supporting bus services through the Pandemic remains a complex task and the future remains very uncertain. Nevertheless, I trust that this explains the background to the problems that are being experienced and how the Council has limited options available to it to support such enhancements at this time.

The request to extend the bus service on the current service is not considered viable due to the size of the vehicle operating on a purely commercial route and the restrictions to where it can serve due to the increase in on street car parking and the opposition of residents in these areas to a bus accessing these side streets.

A new bus service with smaller vehicles is being introduced on a commercial basis to Graigwen Parc in the near future, which will provide residents access to a service at the top of Graigwen hill.

Air Quality Concerns Berw Road

The Local Authority conducts regular monitoring of ambient outdoor air quality in RCT and results of this monitoring are compared against health based Air Quality Objectives. The monitoring network is regularly reviewed to determine the most relevant locations to monitor, with regards to statutory guidance, previous assessments and local knowledge. The monitoring has demonstrated that the vast majority of RCT experiences good air quality, with the areas of poor air quality being highly localised.

Within RCT it has been acknowledged that Nitrogen Dioxide, an air pollutant often associated with road traffic emissions, can be elevated in some discrete locations. This is dictated by volume of traffic, proximity of receptors and the surrounding built environment. With regard to the latest Nitrogen Dioxide ambient air quality monitoring undertaken along Berw Rd (provisional data available via the Air Quality in Wales website near its junction of Taff St/Bridge St, it is currently considered unlikely that air quality along Berw Rd (where a relevant population is present) will exceed the relevant Air Quality Objective (as set by Welsh Government). However the Council intends to continue to monitor the situation, as the recovery continues from COVID-19 related disruption and the affect this may have on local air quality trend will need to be assessed. It will look to provide additional consideration within its periodic 2022 RCTCBC Air Quality Progress Report (publication expected September 2022), as even though an area may be complaint with the Air Quality Objectives, the Council still recognises that the continued improvement of air quality may be desirable to bring about public health and local amenity benefit.

In relation to the reopening of White Bridge, given the relatively low traffic volumes previously associated with this route it would be likely that any affect (by displacing road users away from parts of Berw Rd) on improving air quality along Berw Rd, at its most at risk location, would be minor at most. However, current programmes aiming to deliver broader community active travel, sustainable public transport and fleet electrification (including RCT and Public Transport related fleets) are expected to further progress improvements to local air quality generally throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf. It is also the case that local communities themselves can help bring about positive change; the Clean Air Hub website provides a large amount of advice on what actions people and their local communities can take to improve local air quality.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, following the damaging effects of Storm Dennis which resulted in the initial closure of the bridge, works have been undertaken to stabilise the bridge and it has re-opened to traffic. Further works will be undertaken this summer, which will require a closure, which will involve major repairs to the structure of the bridge which will ensure its long-term availability for public use.

Regarding the condition of footways; the Council has invested of the order of £84M in maintaining its highways infrastructure over the last 9 years – one of the highest levels of investment by any council in Wales. This has included significant and sustained investment in footways and this is undertaken on a prioritised basis across RCT. Consequently, there is no specific plan to improve the footways in the Graigwen area, it is part of a Council-wide approach. All footways across the county borough are inspected at regular intervals and any defects considered to represent a significant hazard to users are repaired. During these scheduled inspections an assessment is made of the overall condition of each section of footway. These condition assessments are used to inform the Council's capital footway programme. The vast majority of the footpaths in Graigwen are in the condition bands which indicate that the footways, while they are old and often tired in appearance and not necessarily free from small or aesthetic defects, are not structurally or functionally deficient. Any sections which are identified as structurally or functionally deficient are considered for inclusion in the capital works programme. Across the county borough, there are more schemes identified than can be carried out with the resources available and as such schemes have to be prioritised. Individual defects or areas of footway in poor condition can be reported to the council at any time and will be inspected to determine whether reactive works are required to keep the area in a safe condition.

I trust the foregoing is of assistance and confirm that a further response will shortly be issued covering the traffic matters raised by petitioners.

Yours sincerely



Y Cynghorydd Andrew Morgan
Arweinydd Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Rhondda Cynon Taf
Councillor Andrew Morgan
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