

Gower Access Path: why it's needed

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the revised planning application for the construction of a shared-use pedestrian and cyclist path along the B4436, linking the settlements of Bishopston and Murton to the newly installed active travel facility on Mayals Road. This development represents a vital step in promoting active travel, enhancing public safety, and aligning with Welsh Government priorities on sustainable transportation, healthy living, and safe routes to school.

Alignment with Welsh Government Priorities

1. Active Travel

- This proposal directly supports the Welsh Government's Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, which aims to make walking and cycling the preferred choices for shorter journeys. The new path will enable safe and convenient non-motorised travel, addressing the current lack of infrastructure and the associated risks of using a 40mph road with no pavement or cycle lane.
- The path will also integrate seamlessly with the active travel network, extending safe cycling and walking access from Swansea to Gower villages and vice versa. This enhanced connectivity will encourage commuting and leisure trips by foot or bike, reducing car dependency.

2. Healthy Living

- By providing a safe and accessible route for walking and cycling, the path will promote physical activity for people of all ages, contributing to improved public health outcomes.
- Schoolchildren from West Cross and Mayals areas will benefit significantly. They will have the option to walk or cycle safely to Bishopston Comprehensive School, reducing reliance on cars and fostering healthier lifestyles from an early age.

3. Safe Routes to School

- Currently, there is no viable walking or cycling route for pupils travelling to Bishopston Comprehensive School from the West Cross and Mayals areas. This development will address that gap, ensuring children can travel safely and sustainably.
- Safer routes to school are proven to increase active travel among students, reducing traffic congestion during school runs and contributing to cleaner air in local communities.

Broader Benefits of the Path

1. Environmental Impact

- By encouraging active travel, the path will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with car journeys. This aligns with Wales's commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2050.
- Fewer cars on the road will also decrease noise pollution and improve air quality, enhancing the well-being of residents and wildlife in the area.

2. Economic and Social Impact

- Improved access to Gower's popular beaches and trails will support local tourism and businesses. Swansea residents will find it easier to cycle to the Gower, while Gower residents can commute safely to Swansea for work or leisure. On a personal level, I currently rarely visit a number of hospitality venues in Bishopston and Kittle for meals with family and friends, even though I very much like the venues themselves – There just isn't a safe way to get there via cycling or walking.
- Encouraging walking and cycling fosters social inclusion, enabling individuals without access to cars to travel independently and safely.

3. Path Design and Considerations

- Ensuring the path's durability for use by pedestrians, cyclists, and livestock is important. The design will need to take into account that livestock will stray onto the path. Provisions such as robust materials and mud-resistant surfaces should be used, to enhance the path's longevity and usability.

Recommendations for Future Improvements

While I strongly support this application, I urge the Council to consider extending the path all the way to Murton and Bishopston Comprehensive School in the future. Completing this connection would maximise the path's utility, fully addressing the safety and accessibility concerns along the B4436. Additionally, measures to ensure the path's accessibility for people with disabilities should be prioritized, aligning with inclusive transport principles.

Conclusion

The construction of this shared-use path is a long-awaited and much-needed development. It will transform travel options across Clyne Common, making walking and cycling safer and more appealing. This proposal aligns perfectly with Welsh Government objectives, benefiting local communities, the environment, and the economy.

I commend Swansea Council for their commitment to active travel and urge the planning authorities to approve this application. By doing so, we will take a significant step toward a healthier, more sustainable, and connected future for Swansea and Gower.

John Britton
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