

“Missing Link” Consultancy Workshop

by Teams on 13 November 2023

The meeting was chaired by Luke Tizzard of the Mott MacDonald Group.

The following are the collective thoughts of the NGAP (North Gower Access Path) group.

Contributors: Joe Muldoon, Andrew Spowart, Bruce Philip, Mark Divers, David Judd and Stuart Harper.

Having fed the process and outcomes of the Workshop back to the group members our overall impression of where we are is that:

1. We (as communities of Penclawdd, Gowerton and the wider Swansea area) are officially no further on from where this scheme had been left by the Local Authority (LA) back in 2006, namely that: Demand for the completion of the path remains strong, as the constantly increasing list of Change.org signatories confirms. A study via questionnaire and public meeting was completed by *Hyder* (prior to *Dwr Cymru*) in the early 2000s, the contents of which officially identified a community requirement for a safe means of ‘pedestrian’ passage between the two communities (available to you in a .jpg format if you require).

We understand that we have to go back to go forward, especially in order to align the project with the current Active Travel standard. However, it was our impression that the thinking of the LA was to pick up from where it was left and adapt the proposals to current legislation/standards.

2. We refer you to the LA’s identification of safe travel plans in 1999 for 2000 onwards that clearly identifies the need for a safe passageway between the two named villages and again in their published ‘Cycle Action Plan’ Report to The Cabinet Advisory Committee (a comprehensive daughter document to The Regional Transport Plan (2010 - 2015)).

The latter document refers to a ‘change in behaviour’ and on page 21 clearly states: “North Gower Trail (our NGAP campaign target route) ... will provide a DIRECT cycle link from Gowerton to Penclawdd...will significantly enhance connectivity...this scheme WILL provide the ‘missing link’. .Target year for completion 2012 -2014”.

Nearly all of the plans included in the 2010 - 2015 proposals have been completed (except for our North Gower Link, Tawe Riverside, Gowerton to Fforestfach and Middle Road to High St Station) and most with target completion dates AFTER our required safe passage route. Has it been a lack of will on behalf of the LA to complete this necessary project?

Very little has changed with the geography/topography/community needs and wants since the completion of phase 1 of the path and the need for its completion to link Gowerton and Penclawdd for the safety of pedestrians and non-motorised vehicles (inclusive of motability carriages). Nearly 20 years on and there is still a great need for this provision.

3. As it stands, current practice of the current landowners is still to actively graze livestock over the required areas to be procured by the LA. We understand that the land in question remains with the same family/owners as in 2006. We also understand that the discussions with all ‘interested parties’ have excluded these persons to date, and the local communities know that they are aware that the completion of the ‘missing link’ is back on the agenda. I suggest that, as a matter of courtesy, the landowners be officially informed.
4. Our contact with local schools has highlighted that both senior staff and students/pupils/parents wholeheartedly support the completion of the link which will support their health and wellbeing initiatives.
5. In our interactions with local residents, we have identified that a significant number of persons would make regular use of the link for commuting, business, recreation and leisure/mindfulness purposes, which could provide the dual benefit of alleviating traffic congestion on the B4295 of vehicles trailing behind slower human-powered vehicles.
6. The completion of a safer passage will provide a reliable link from North Gower to Gowerton Railway Station, thus adding to the National Active Travel connectivity programme.

7. It is our understanding that the outcomes of Mott MacDonald's work will result in a document to be used by the LA to apply for FY 24/25 funding in order to further the realisation of the project. As contributors to the working group, we would be interest in viewing said report.
8. Could you please highlight in your report that the LA already have suggested plans for safe passage through and to the west of Penclawdd; that they must understand the need for this SUP extension and recognise that such a route needs to be constructed in the near future following completion of the missing link. Provision of this necessary extension for safe active travel is outstanding.
9. After the TEAMS meeting concluded, we were not able to verify where, as stated in your original invitation agenda, the "long list of proposed schemes to improve Active Travel connectivity between Gowerton and Penclawdd along the B4295" was covered. Did we miss this item?

In conclusion, individually we had thought that this working group event was going to tell us that the project was further on than it apparently is.

Collectively, we are a little disappointed that, despite the groundswell of support both at a political and community level, there is still a very long way to go before we are able to enjoy a safer passage between our two communities.

Our next steps:

- We are committed to maintaining our pressure on the LA to provide a safer passage to all non-motorists alongside of the B4295.
- Our next event will be on Saturday 25 November 2023: There is a derby Rugby match fixture to be held in Penclawdd (KO 14:30). Supporters on foot and by bicycle will be travelling west to Penclawdd from Gowerton to further highlight the current lack of safe passage. All are welcome.
- We will continue to promote our Change.org petition through community and a wider public awareness and make use of Social Media platforms in support of our needs.
- Please include our pressure group in any future communications in connection with the proposed B4295 Active Travel improvement scheme.

Yours respectfully

Mark Divers on behalf of the NGAP support group.