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To: The Chair and Members
of the Cabinet

County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QD

Date: 29 April 2024

Contact: Karen Strahan, 01392 382264

Email: karen.strahan@devon.gov.uk

CABINET

Wednesday, 8th May, 2024

A meeting of the Cabinet is to be held on the above date at 10.30 am in the Committee Suite (DAW) - County Hall to consider the following matters.

Donna Manson
Chief Executive

A G E N D A

13 Question(s) from Members of the Public (Pages 1 - 4)



QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC Wednesday 8 May 2024

- 1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR OLLY DAVEY – CHAIR OF EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL (ATTENDANCE TBC)**
Re: Exmouth Gateway proposals- Ambition for Integrated Transport Hub

Exmouth Town Council have considered the recommendation to the Council's Cabinet in relation to the Exmouth Gateway proposals and would like to ask the following.

Would Cabinet consider retaining the less controversial aspects of the Exmouth Gateway scheme, such as the bus shelter relocation and road crossing upgrades, which would improve road safety and be welcomed by pedestrians, cyclists and motorists? Exmouth Town Council still retains an ambition for an integrated transport hub.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

An option of keeping the subway open but delivering other elements of the Exmouth Gateway scheme was investigated. However, many of these would not be feasible without the space unlocked by the subway closure. Those that are feasible, such as signage improvements, bus shelter relocation and wider crossing upgrades, would not deliver meaningful active travel benefits without the wider improvements for pedestrians and cyclists to meet the Levelling Up objectives. For instance, introducing a signal controlled crossing outside the station would worsen the accessibility to the town centre compared to the existing situation. There is potential to revisit proposals in the future, however, this is subject to the availability of appropriate future funding.

- 2. QUESTION FROM JOHN PETTY (IN ATTENDANCE)**
Re: Transport Interchange and Area behind Station

An improved transport interchange is one of the key ambitions. Why have the planners deliberately ignored the area behind the station? This is the area which contains all interchange activity between road and rail.. It offers the greatest scope for achieving the LUF objectives and suggestions from the public have been completely ignored.

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REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

The Exmouth Gateway scheme was funded as part of the Destination Exmouth Levelling Up Fund package. The fund stipulates that the grant must be spent by March 2025, and this extremely tight timescale therefore constrained the scope of proposals to existing highway land. The area of interest for the proposals which secured funding focused on the key transport interchange between the Exe Estuary Trail, Exmouth Rail Station, Stagecoach buses and the town centre. Some of the land behind the station is within Devon County Council ownership but subject to lease to other organisations and it would not be possible to terminate this within the Levelling Up Fund programme.

3. QUESTION FROM BARBARA LODGE (IN ATTENDANCE)

Re: Proposal to Retain the Subway

It was demonstrated to the Consultants that the subway could be retained and the main parts of the plan still be achieved. Why did they and DCC show no interest in this proposal?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

What can be achieved whilst still maintaining the subway and ramps was explored. However, if the subway remains, the pump for it must also be retained. This is located in the fenced off area at the northern end of the ramps on the western side. This means the pinchpoint here cannot be addressed. As a result, sufficient active travel benefits cannot be realised in this location to satisfy the fund requirements. The crossing could also not be relocated without removing the subway ramps.

4. QUESTION FROM WILLIAM LODGE (IN ATTENDANCE)

Re: Proposed Changes and Dependency on Subway Closure

Why were the proposed changes dependant on the closure of the subway? Who advised Cabinet that closure of the subway was unlikely to prove controversial despite overwhelming opposition to this proposal when M&S was built and a zebra crossing installed?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Closure of the subway was included in both Levelling Up Fund bids and this was supported by Devon County Council, East Devon District Council and Exmouth Town Council. It was only as part of the public engagement sessions that the public perception of the subway was fully realised. Recent surveys showed that over 80% of people chose to use the zebra crossing as opposed to the subway.

5. QUESTION FROM ELAINE LEWIS (IN ATTENDANCE)

Re: Proposal to Forfeit LUF Grant

Why is it proposed to forfeit the LUF grant just because there is opposition to closing the subway and narrowing the roads? The Active Travel part of the bid has never been developed. Exmouth needs an integrated transport Interchange at the Station (taxi rank, drop off point, bike recharging).

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

As explained in questions 1 and 3, it is not possible to provide the wider benefits of the Exmouth Gateway scheme without closing the subway. There is insufficient space to provide meaningful improvements to the active travel provisions on the area. It should be noted that the scheme that was presented at public consultation included a range of transport interventions to improve the interchange of the area, including a drop off point and electric bike charging. It was also made clear in the consultation materials that the scheme was dependent on the subway closure to provide the required land.

6. QUESTION FROM MARION DREW (IN ATTENDANCE)

Re: Residents Alternative Ideas

Many residents have spent a great deal of time contributing alternative ideas to DCC so why is there so little reference made in the consultation results? Plenty of suggestions have gone into the mix but seem to have been ignored in favour of pursuing a largely predetermined path.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

This decision has not been predetermined; significant work has been undertaken to explore how the Exmouth Gateway improvements can be delivered to enable the town to benefit from much needed levelling up. Unfortunately, without the benefit of the space gained from closing the subway, many elements of the original scheme and subsequent proposals are not possible within the timescale of the fund and do not achieve the benefits required.

The Cabinet report is supplemented by a Consultation Report which is available online: [Exmouth Active Travel Improvements - Have Your Say \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/active-travel-improvements). Table 6-1 of this report includes a response to issues raised, including a range of suggestions received. All suggestions have been considered by the project team.

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7. QUESTION FROM JANE ASHTON (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)

Re: Approach to EDDC

Was EDDC formally approached, in good time, to contribute to the available land bank for the Gateway project?

Was EDDC asked if strategically important land between LED sports centre and M&S could be used to widen the footpath to the required width for cyclist and pedestrian shared use?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Devon County Council have engaged with East Devon District Council about the possibility of obtaining additional land owned by them. Importantly, if the subway is kept open, there remains a pinchpoint on the western side where the pumping equipment is housed. Additional land would not have addressed this.

8. QUESTION FROM MR SKINNER - EXMOUTH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (NOT IN ATTENDANCE) – MR DEASY IS ALSO A MEMBER

Re: Consideration of other Gateway Options and Consultation

In order to mitigate the substantial 'development costs' and as custodians of public funds, did DCC consider putting out to Consultation, more potentially palatable 'Gateway' options/plans, which incorporated new beneficial features e.g. signalised crossings, the upgrading of the Subway and providing integrated transport facilities, whilst retaining current road layout?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Please see the answer to question 1. Sufficient active travel benefits must be realised to accord with the Levelling Up Fund. Those elements that can be delivered without the closure of the subway would not achieve this.

9. QUESTION FROM GRAHAM DEASY (IN ATTENDANCE)

Re: Gateway Proposal and Devon Highways Owned Land

Was the Gateway proposal restricted to only utilising Devon Highways owned land and as a result, was the opportunity to engage with stakeholders, in order to acquire land for pathway widening by the subway or upgrading the area west of the station, not realised?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Please see the answer to question 7.