
STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

AGENDA ITEM: 10

Metro Central

I recently updated Members with regard to the in-principle decision made last week by the Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet to support the re-development of Cardiff Central Station. This represented the first ever major transport investment decision made collectively by the ten Local Authorities of the Regional Cabinet and was passed with unanimous approval.

The decision earmarks £40m, subject to necessary final approvals, to deliver significant station improvements that will make Cardiff Central ready for the next decade and beyond. The decision will also help to lever in more than £120m of UK Government, Welsh Government and private sector funding to take the project forward.

The project is one of huge significance for Cardiff and the wider city-region. It will unlock the development potential south of the railway station, supporting up to £2bn of further private investment. Critically, it will complement our bus station development and, as part of a wider 'Metro Central' concept, deliver a truly integrated transport hub for Cardiff, the region and Wales.

City Deal

The decision to invest in the re-development of Cardiff Central Station represents a major step forward in delivering the City Deal. Members will be aware that before the remaining £445m of the City Deal investment fund can be spent, all ten Councils of the Cardiff Capital Region need to sign off the reserved matter – the Joint Working Agreement Business Plan.

You will also be aware that I have sought further clarity on the types of investment that will be included in the Joint Working Agreement Business Plan prior to presenting it to Council. In approving the Metro Central proposal we have taken a significant step towards providing some of that clarity. The current proposal is that the Joint Working Agreement Business Plan will be considered by the Regional Cabinet in February 2018 ahead of consideration by Council on 22 March 2018.

Hinkley Point C – Marine Licence for disposal of dredged material

Earlier this month, I met both with the Welsh Government Minister for Environment and with senior representative of Natural Resource Wales (NRW), to discuss the latest position in relation to the marine licence, granted by NRW in 2014, to dispose of dredged material arising from within the construction site of

the Hinkley Point C power station in the Bristol Channel. The licence authorises disposal of dredged material into the Cardiff Grounds Disposal Site.

In support of their licence application, the applicant was required to provide chemical and radiological analyses of the dredge sites, to ensure the material was suitable for disposal at Cardiff Grounds. NRW utilise the expertise within the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), who concluded that the material tested did not have unacceptable levels of chemicals or radiological materials and was suitable for disposal at sea. NRW further consulted with the Environment Agency as the lead regulator for Hinkley Point, and both the Environment Agency and NRW agreed that the assessment of the radiological impact was undertaken in accordance with International Atomic Energy Agency standards, and was robust. Both organisations agreed with CEFAS' conclusion.

Samples of dredged material are tested every three years to meet international guidelines. The licence therefore required further sampling and analysis to be undertaken to allow sediment deposit after March 2016, though no deposit had been made prior to this date. NRW received further sample results, including chemical and radiological analyses in December 2017. They are currently assessing these results with input from technical consultees, CEFAS, Environment Agency and Public Health Wales. The licence holder does not currently have written permission to deposit material after March 2016 and this will be reviewed once the assessment of the recent sample results has been concluded.

NRW and CEFAS are satisfied that there is no scientific basis for further sampling. Although deeper sediment samples taken in 2009 were not subject to a radiological dose assessment, they indicate that there is no evidence of higher levels of radiological concentrations in deeper sediments at Hinkley Point as a result of historical discharges.

Staff Engagement

In November last year I launched a programme of staff engagement by holding the first event in County Hall with over 300 members of staff. It provided an important opportunity for my Cabinet Colleagues and I to begin a conversation about our priorities, the challenges facing the city and, crucially, how we as a Council need to respond.

On 18 December 2017 I was pleased to attend the second in the series of staff engagement events, this time at Willcox House, alongside Councillors Merry and Weaver. This was an opportunity to relate the work of those Council services based at Willcox House – including the housing, preventative services, digital transformation and customer services teams – to our Capital Ambition agenda. For a number of years staff at Willcox House have been at the forefront of delivering change within the organisation, having embraced new technology and new ways of working. I am greatly looking forward to continuing this dialogue with staff at our other venues across the city.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
24 January 2018