

COUNCIL: 20 JUNE 2019

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

M4 Relief Road Decision

The First Minister provided an oral statement in the Senedd on 4 June 2019, which confirmed that plans for the proposed M4 Relief Road 'black route' will not be progressed by the Welsh Government.

Whilst respecting the Welsh Government's deliberations and conclusions on this matter, urgent investment is still desperately needed in the transport infrastructure of the Cardiff Capital Region. I therefore welcome subsequent moves by the Welsh Government to appoint an expert Commission, to be chaired by Lord Terry Burns, which will make recommendations on next steps for the transport network in South East Wales. The Welsh Government will also be bringing forward a suite of measures designed to provide modest but immediate benefits to M4 traffic flows, including additional traffic officers to reduce incidents and lane closures as employed during major events; dedicated on call recovery vehicles to support traffic officers by quickly removing obstructions when they occur as we would in roadworks, as well as exploring the operation of junctions to reduce the load on the Brynglas tunnels.

The Welsh Government's decision not to proceed with the M4 Relief Road proposal must also be seen in the wider economic context of Wales. The Cardiff Capital Region is the country's economic engine, with Cardiff alone delivering 20,000 new jobs last year into the Welsh economy. Cardiff has a transport network that was built a generation ago to serve a population of around 200,000 people, but soon the capital city will have a population of over double that, with Cardiff projected to be the fastest growing big British city outside London. With around 100,000 people travelling in and out of the city each day from across South Wales, mainly for work, it is plain to see that the city's transport network is straining under the pressure. The Council therefore believes that the capital sums previously earmarked for the new M4 must now be invested in South East Wales.

Cardiff Council has argued consistently that the city's future prosperity relies on an effective transport infrastructure, with seamless access to the UK's motorway network and free-flowing routes into and around the city. We will be bringing forward our own transport vision for the city in the next few months, with a series of transformation infrastructure projects – in rail, road, public transport and cycling infrastructure – representing a £1bn investment over the next 10 years. That, alongside the delivery of the Metro, could fundamentally reshape the transport infrastructure in the city. The Council looks forward to continuing to work with the Welsh Government to make this game-changing investment in the city region's transport network a reality.

Cardiff Capital Region – Strategic Development Plan

The Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet considered a report on 10 June 2019 on the proposed Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for the region.

The Welsh Government has invited all Local Planning Authorities to submit proposals for SDPs in accordance with the provisions of the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, which sets out the process for establishing and preparing a SDP. The Welsh Government believes that SDPs are necessary to provide a robust framework for the delivery of the land use implications of existing City Deal proposals and to allow larger than local issues, such as housing, employment and infrastructure, which cut across Local Planning Authority (LPA) boundaries, to be considered in an integrated and comprehensive way.

The preparation of a SDP is not a matter delegated to the Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet as part of the approved Joint Working Agreement in relation to the delivery of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. A commitment to undertake an SDP must therefore be made by each of the 10 constituent councils prior to a proposal being submitted to the relevant Minister.

As a result, a draft report has been prepared that will need to be reported to each constituent Council for consideration and approval in order to proceed with the proposed development of a SDP for the Cardiff Capital Region and the establishment of a Strategic Planning Panel (SPP) to govern the development and implementation of the SDP. The draft report recognises clearly that the consideration and decision on the proposals for a SDP is a matter for each individual authority. A report on the proposed development of a SDP will be brought forward for consideration by Cabinet and Council in due course.

Music Cities Convention

I was pleased to be invited to attend and speak at the Chengdu Music Cities Convention in China from 9-14 April 2019, which was attended by around 300 delegates from around the world. Following the Council's work with Sound Diplomacy to develop a new music strategy for Cardiff, I participated in a panel discussion at the convention on the topic of 'Music as a Tool for Economic Development', alongside representatives from Melbourne and Sydney (Australia), Denver (USA) and China. The Council's representation at the convention, fully funded by the event organisers who met the flight and accommodation costs, helped to further promote Cardiff's profile as an international music city. It also provided an opportunity to speak to a number of potential partners who could support the development of the city's music strategy and promote Cardiff as an inward investment location.

2019 Urdd National Eisteddfod

The 2019 Urdd National Eisteddfod was held in Cardiff Bay from 27 May to 1 June 2019 and followed the previous model of providing free entry to the Maes that was so successful when staging last year's National Eisteddfod at the same location. The event was another great success for the city and provided a further celebration of Welsh language and culture here in the capital city of Wales.

I have always enjoyed attending the Urdd Eisteddfod and it was great to see so many children and young people involved in the event, particularly those from schools in Cardiff. I want to congratulate all those who took part, with a special mention to those who were successful in their respective competitions. I have no doubt that hosting the Eisteddfod will have, once again, supported local retailers whilst at the same time promoting the Welsh Language in the city. This also demonstrates how the City's expertise in hosting events, and its unique offer, can support our Bilingual Cardiff strategy and the Welsh Government's target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
14 June 2019