

COUNCIL MEETING – 5 January 2021

Public Question from Ben Smith

Will BCP Council urgently put pressure on DfT and local MPs to ensure funding for accessibility to Pokesdown to station is not lost in the next few months. The decade long campaign has become aware than DfT has delayed a decision (yet again) which means ring fenced funding could be lost after years of inaction and breach of franchise agreement on behalf of SWR, Network Rail and DfT. Can BCP Council assure disabled residents and visitors, Pokesdown Community Forum, as well as all residents and rail users they will take action urgently?

Reply from Councillor Mike Greene, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Sustainability

Following a long campaign led by Cllr Andy Jones and the Pokesdown Community Forum, I was delighted to have been part of ensuring a commitment to introduce lifts at Pokesdown Station was included within the franchise agreement which SWR won.

Both in my time as the responsible portfolio holder at Bournemouth Borough Council and in my short time holding that role within BCP Council, I have urged SWR to honour the commitment they made. It was their responsibility to provide the lifts by 2019 and, in my opinion, it is quite disgraceful that they won the franchise on that basis but have tried repeatedly to walk away from it.

It was at a meeting on November 19th that I first heard SWR's suggestion that £1.6 million which they had allocated to the project might be "lost" if not spent before the Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA) comes to an end. For SWR to believe the Council would be able to find an equal or greater amount to top-up SWR's funds could at best be considered naïve. A more cynical observer might even see it as a diversionary tactic to push the problem back to a time when SWR are no longer the Train Operating Company. At that same meeting SWR confirmed too that the EMA means any diversion of the allocated £1.6m to another project would be subject to consent by DfT, which would have only limited likelihood of success. The consensus emerging from that meeting was that SWR should look to provide at least one of the two lifts in the hope that the second could be provided at a later date.

I will continue to press SWR to honour their commitment to provide two lifts at Pokesdown Station and believe that obligation should be carried over to whichever Department or business takes on the Train Operating Company role after the EMA comes to an end.

At the same time, discussions are continuing with DfT, aided particularly by the Member of Parliament for Bournemouth East.

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Public Question from Chris Henderson

Dorset Pension Fund (DPF) has £141m indirectly invested in fossil fuels – clear contribution to climate crisis and council CO2 emissions. As worldwide climate action mounts, fossil fuel assets increasingly risk becoming ‘stranded’, failing to deliver investment returns. Globally, 12% of pension funds have made divestment commitments.

Climate actions receiving cross-party commitment included: “Investigate divestment of fossil fuels from the Council Pension Fund”.

Will you:

- fully investigate climate impacts of DPF’s fossil fuel investments?
- commit to a divestment motion?
- use committee seats to influence DPF to divest?

And if/where not:

- divulge full findings for scrutiny by the public and scheme members?

Reply from Councillor Drew Mellor, Leader of the Council

This topic is regularly considered by the Dorset County Pension Fund Committee and was last discussed in some detail at their quarterly meeting on 10 September 2020. The reports, minutes and a recording of this meeting are available for scrutiny by members of the public, including pension scheme members.

<http://do-modgov.wdwp.local/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=434&MId=4777&Ver=4>

At the meeting the Committee considered a report from investment consultants, Mercer, who had been engaged to review the Pension Fund’s investment strategy including options to move towards a low carbon future. Mercer summarised two potential approaches to enable the pension fund to move towards this objective:

- Divestment, meaning completely divesting from companies involved in the sourcing and refining of fossil fuels, and
- Decarbonisation, meaning a reduction in allocations of investment to companies which are high carbon emitters and looking to influence the demand for fossil fuels and their financing, not just their supply.

Mercer’s report included evidence that decarbonisation can deliver significantly greater reductions in the ‘carbon footprint’ of investments than can be achieved by divestment. Divestment also removes the beneficial global advantages of materially influencing companies by working with them to transition to a lower carbon future. However, targeted divestment from individual companies who will not positively engage remains an option.

The Committee agreed to take action to reduce the Pension Fund's carbon footprint without sacrificing investment returns. Whilst sympathetic with the desire to divest from fossil fuel companies, the Committee resolved that decarbonisation was the better approach. Given the current transition programme of the Dorset Pension Fund assets to the Brunel Pension Pool, decarbonisation will be largely achieved by moving 10% of the Pension Fund's £3.0bn of assets into a newly launched sustainable equities fund. Other assets will follow through increased holdings in other Brunel funds, each committed to a 7% year on year reduction in their carbon footprint. This strategy has been underway for some time and the Brunel Pension Pool is becoming recognised as being a leader in the areas of Responsible Investment and ESG issues across the LGPS.

The £141m quoted by Mr Henderson is not a figure recognised by the Pension Fund Managers. As at 31 March 2020 the Pension Fund's indirect ownership of fossil fuel companies through holdings in pooled funds was estimated to be approximately £90m (3% of total assets) and this is expected to continue to decline as the changes to the investment strategy are implemented.

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Public Question from Patrick Canavan

Freeport Bid

"Based on what independent evidence does the Council make the assertion in the paper prepared for the Cabinet meeting on 13 January 2021 that Freeports boost the local economy and create an opportunity to bring investment and jobs into the area? Also, will the bid identify the types of businesses it is expected will operate in the Freeport and the number of additional jobs expected?"

Furthermore, will the Council commit to full public consultation, including with trade unions, over the terms of reference for the bid and the economic impact on BCP and the surrounding area?"

Reply from Councillor Philip Broadhead, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Economy and Strategic Planning and Deputy Leader of the Council

The current Cabinet paper proposes entering an Expression of Interest in the BCP Council area being considered for Freeport status. This expression of interest bid is being submitted with a number of partners.

The Council does not require independent evidence to decide whether to submit a proposal or not, particularly a stage one expression of interest. The fiscal/planning incentives on offer will assist to promote inward and investment and economic growth. Cushman and Wakefield will be describing the key target sectors and estimating the employment impacts (accepting that net additionality is based on assumptions).

Due to timescales involved for the Expression of Interest, there will not be a full consultation ahead of this submission, and as has been previously stated, this is only the first stage with limited detail required. However, should our proposal be successful in moving to the next stage, there will be the opportunity for consultation with the public.

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Public Question from Pete Roberts

Noting the potential benefit of the Transforming Travel (TT) project - what plans does the council have to address existing route obstructions and existing risks to life issues such as potholes & ruts?

(1.1) Does the council have any plans to fix/maintain the Castlemain quagmire (especially towards Upton).

(1.2) What plans does the council have to improve the ease of pothole reporting, improve public visibility of rework priorities & schedules?

(1.3) Does the council have plans to; make clear to the public which service company holds responsibility for road works, monitor repair by same & enforce rework should subsidence occur?

Reply from Councillor Mark Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Cleansing and Waste

Noting the potential benefit of the Transforming Travel (TT) project - what plans does the council have to address existing route obstructions and existing risks to life issues such as potholes & ruts?

(1.1) Does the council have any plans to fix/maintain the Castlemain quagmire (especially towards Upton).

BCP Council is responsible for the Castleman Trailway between Upton and the River Stour (near Merley)

Work has been undertaken in December to remove leaf litter and scrape back accumulated mud/organic matter to clear the surface of the path between Pine Springs and Broadstone. It is not possible to run road sweepers along this route due to the nature of the surface material, clearance can be very labour intensive. Some sections are worse as the surrounding land is higher than the laid surface and water/mud/organic matter build up quickly on the path surface. One section of the trailway north of Upton (which follows the Roman Road) can get flooded during prolonged periods of wet weather as water runs off Upton Heath. Work to improve drainage significantly will require more detailed ground investigation over the coming year.

(1.2) What plans does the council have to improve the ease of pot hole reporting, improve public visibility of rework priorities & schedules?

Members of the public are able to report pot holes through the Council's website <https://online.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/services/pothole/> Yotta Alloy software for highway inspection and maintenance purposes was rolled out across BCP Council in June 2020. This uses Ordnance Survey data as the base, which has been matched with Council ownership records and allocated inspection

frequencies. These inspections are now automatically generate and inspectors work remotely in the field raising jobs. They use tablet devices and work is automatically pushed to maintenance teams who also pick this work up remotely. We are zero paper and as a direct result of using the system, defect information, including end to end times is now available across BCP for the first time.

BCP Council is responsible for the repair and maintenance of potholes to keep roads and pavements safe. Our inspectors investigate all reported potholes and assess them. How quickly the repairs are carried out depends on how much of a danger the pothole causes for road or pavement users. The most dangerous potholes will be made safe and temporarily repaired within 24 hours of being assessed by our inspector. Others will be added to our programme of road repairs.

Planned inspections are scheduled based on the road, or pavement category. These occur either monthly, quarterly and annually. Inspections are either walked or driven on a cyclical basis. Inspections are focused on safety related defects (identifying condition, defects and signs of deterioration). Safety Inspections are designed to identify all defects likely to create danger or serious inconvenience to users of the network or the wider community. Such defects include those that are considered to require urgent attention as well as those where the location and sizes are such that longer periods of response would be acceptable.

Defects are identified using a risk-based approach based on PROBABILITY / LIKELIHOOD OF INTERACTION WITH HIGHWAY USER and the possible CONSEQUENCES.

There are no 'intervention' levels, only 'investigatory' levels and a risk assessment

The assessment will determine the planned action:

RISK CATEGORY	ACTION(S) Depending on defect type
Category 4 (Low Risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fix (and/or interim repair) onsite as part of inspection; or b. no response required
Category 3 (Medium Risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fix (and/or interim repair) onsite as part of inspection; or b. repair within 28 days; or c. liaise with adjoining property owner/business; or d. monitor (review at next inspection); or e. record for consideration in future planned

	maintenance programme
Category 2 (High Risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fix (and/or interim repair) onsite as part of inspection; or b. repair within 7 days; or c. liaise with adjoining property owner/business
Category 1 (Very High Risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fix (and/or interim repair) onsite as part of inspection; or b. repair by end of next working day; or c. Make safe by end of next working day to lower/eliminate risk and repair within 28 days.

In addition to highway inspections, our roads are subject to a programme of machine based structural condition surveys undertaken on an annual basis, the results from which are analysed and used as a basis for assessing the condition of individual roads in order to determine a priority listing in for the Council's Structural Maintenance Programme. This data is supplemented by data from the safety inspections on where reactive repairs are being carried out, as described above, and from officers local knowledge of particular sites.

As you might imagine there are far more roads that require maintenance than we have resources available to treat so every site has to be assessed and prioritised appropriately with our focus on preventing pot holes and holding our highway network together. Unfortunately our resources are finite and as such we have to target them where they will be most effective.

(1.3) *Does the council have plans to; make clear to the public which service company holds responsibility for road works, monitor repair by same & enforce rework should subsidence occur?*

Statutory Undertakers have a right to be able to access and maintain their equipment in the highway. The Council has certain powers to be able to coordinate these works and is responsible for monitoring road works on the network. Last year we introduced a permitting scheme for the BCP area which gives the Council further powers to be able to do so. All road works on the highway network carried out by any Promotor, whether that is a statutory undertaker or the Council, has to be authorised through the permitting scheme. The objectives and benefits of the Permit Scheme are:

- Reduced disruption on the road network
- Improvements to overall network management
- A reduction in delays to the travelling public
- A reduction in costs to businesses caused by delays
- Promotion of a safer environment

The Permit Scheme objectives are facilitated by improving performance in relation to enhanced coordination and cooperation, encouragement of partnership and collaborative working between the Council, all Promoters and key stakeholders and the provision of more accurate and timely information to be communicated between all stakeholders including members of the public. Further information is contained on our website.

The permit scheme has improved timing and duration of activities particularly in relation to the busiest streets within the network and enhanced programming of activities leading to better forward planning by all Promoters. The permit scheme has also provided additional resources to be able to inspect road works and reinstatements by Promoters, to ensure they comply with appropriate standards and prevent subsidence in the future.

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Public Question from Chrissie Morris Brady

Many of us should like to know why you allow sewage and nitrates to flow into the harbour.

Poole Harbour is unique, home to many wild birds, some rare. Why are you polluting it? The harbour is designated several times over as unique. BCP is polluting it.

We want you to stop this.

Reply from Councillor Mark Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Cleansing and Waste

I thank Chrissie Morris Brady for raising the issue of pollution entering into Poole Harbour. I can advise that the Council is not the regulatory authority for nitrates from agriculture or sewage from storm overflows that enter into Poole Harbour waters, and hence is not in a position to prohibit such incidents. The legislative framework is determined by Central Government and the Environment Agency is the regulatory authority. Nevertheless, the Council remains committed to reducing pollution in the Harbour and has established a stakeholder group, which includes the Environment Agency, Wessex Water and other organisations with an interest in Harbour water quality. The aim is to share understanding of the issues and current programmes of research and investment, and to ascertain any influence that the group can exert on legislative and investment programmes. The Council has subsequently written to the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs to request engagement with their newly created taskforce aimed at reducing the frequency of sewage discharges into inland waters from storm overflows. In addition, the Council has recently written to local MPs requesting their support for the Sewage (Inland Waters) Bill 2019-21, which is a Private Members' Bill introduced by the Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP that aims to place a duty on water companies to ensure that untreated sewage is not discharged into inland waters. The Council will continue to work with and influence relevant organisations and Government to take the necessary measures to minimise or eliminate pollution into the Harbour.