

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	20th May 2009
Issue Date:	1st June 2009
Scheme Location:	Newport Gateway
Scheme Description:	Public realm
Planning Status:	n/a

## Part1: Presentation

This proposal was initiated in 2007, led by Newport Unlimited with funding from Welsh Assembly Government, project managed by Newport City Council. The aim of the project was 'to analyse the landscape needs and opportunities for the Gateways into Newport with the aim of producing a strategy for their improvement'. An Action Plan hierarchy has been developed following on from the environmental and landscape study completed last year. Priority areas are to be improved with new planting, lighting schemes, cleaning and resurfacing, and public artwork. The mechanism for implementation and long term maintenance is still undecided, as is the temporary or permanent nature of the artwork.

The Local Authority recognise that the Ryder Cup in 2010 is one of the drivers for this scheme but also emphasise the need for longevity and community ownership of any interventions. They are content with the proposals for the Coldra roundabout, and state that improvement works to all gateways should yield long term benefits for Newport. Their Tourism and Marketing department think that the current proposals for the Abernant roundabout are too low-key, and that Grove Park needs to reflect the city branding.

## **Summary of key points arising from discussion, to be read in conjunction with Part 2 of this report.**

We regret the absence of Newport Unlimited at this review and that the original project brief was missing from the pre-review material. However, from what we have been told, the task appears to be impossible in terms of its scope and timescale. We fear that this is essentially a short term exercise designed to maximise cosmetic improvements for next year's Ryder Cup, rather than a sustainable long term strategy for improvement and maintenance. We think this is unacceptable and misses opportunities for real environmental improvements in and around the city of Newport. In summary:

- The starting point should be the identification of an overall vision for the city and its environs, rather than a 'fire-fighting' approach adopted for pre-selected sites which may not be the most appropriate ones.
- Investment in the experience of approaching the city by car should not be allowed to predominate over the approach by public transport, cycle, or on foot.
- The priority should be to develop a long term strategy for environmental improvements, supported by an adequately resourced management and maintenance programme.
- The Malpas junction should be included in this strategy and the future use of the Abernant intersection should be clarified.
- Planting schemes should allow time for plants to mature to provide the necessary landscape framework, and not rely exclusively on swathes of bulb and flower planting.
- Public artworks are unspecified and appear likely to be commissioned in isolation rather than as part of an overall strategy.
- A wider public consultation exercise should have been conducted, and included in the brief and the commission.
- All signs should be bilingual and shown as such in the documentation

## **Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full**

This strategy has been developed to enhance the arrival experience for those travelling to Newport by car, although we were also made aware of planned improvements for Newport's railway and bus stations, and for better cycle links. Nevertheless, the proposed 'gateways' are in fact road junctions and motorway roundabouts, and we think more effort should be spent on the city centre approaches where the sense of arrival is often very poor.

It was confirmed that the brief given to the designers had already identified the gateways to be considered and did not include any requirement for community consultation. Even given the brief, there is a need for a broader, more ambitious vision

and a more fundamental approach to environmental improvement and improving the image of the city. The focus here should be on sustainable long term investment, rather than quick imported colour or hiding undesirable features with planting. The timescale of the Ryder Cup is not conducive to the scale of some of the proposed planting – for example semi-mature trees will have minimal short-term impact.

We would not support superficial cosmetic enhancements at the expense of a longer term design strategy which examines the relationship between the city and its landscape setting, and includes radial routes rather than the motorway links.

Securing the long term management and maintenance of any landscape improvements will be absolutely necessary to maintain the desired level of environmental improvement. However, this has not been properly resolved and the lack of available resources is compounded by the confusion over land ownership, management responsibility, and capacity to intervene.

The lighting design will be an important part of the overall treatment, and requires specialist input. We were informed that designers from Thorn were involved and that energy efficient light fittings would be used.

The Panel questioned why junction 25A was considered a priority gateway, given that it can only be accessed from the east, but the presenting team could not answer this point. The Panel accepted that it is an important point for gaining direct access to the city centre, and that its significance will be increased by the proposed developments at Crindau including the new Sainsbury's store. It is unfortunate that the Malpas junction has not been addressed in this context, and that the Abernant interchange may not now be utilised for coach access.

With regard to the public artwork, Safle have been asked to prepare artists' briefs for three identified locations, with community involvement. However, the funding is unresolved, as is the temporary or permanent nature of the installations. We understand that the Highways department has reservations about such installations, but has not raised any fundamental objections.

Improvements to the Southern Distributor should be considered separately from the desire to make improvements to the motorway junctions for Summer 2010. The Panel felt that a more ambitious landscape strategy could be evolved to improve the quality of experience travelling this road, especially the exits and approaches to the city centre

It is important that all signs are bilingual and this should be made clear in the documentation.

**The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel and staff welcome further consultation and will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Thank you for consulting the Commission and please keep in touch with us about the progress of your project.**

***A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.***

### **Appendix 1: Attendees**

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr: Agent/Client/Developer	WAG, Newport Unlimited, Newport CC [Eluned Jones]
Pensaer/Architect:	n/a
Consultants:	LTC Landscape Architecture [Michele Hawksworth, Ben Young]
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Newport CC [Ian Carter]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: John Punter [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Simon Carne Michael Griffiths	Kedrick Davies Ashley Bateson Roger Ayton
Lead Panellist:	Kedrick Davies