

# Manifesto for Swansea City Centre

## Sustrans submission to Swansea City Council consultation into the future of Swansea City Centre

December 2014

**Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We're a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day.**

Our high streets and town centres have changed a lot over recent decades – in particular a shift to permitting the development of out-of-town shopping has had a significant impact on our town centres.

Traditionally, our response to this has regularly to assume that helping people drive into town centres and park cheaply (or even for free) is the only way to attract people back into town. However, this assertion is not backed by evidence.

Instead, we know that customers arriving by foot or on bike spend more money in their local high street every month; and that people put a pleasant pedestrian environment as one of their top priorities. A recent Transport for London study asked people for their top improvement for their town centre. Reducing traffic came third, at 21%, behind cleanliness and a variety of shops.

A London Council's report has highlighted that more and cheaper parking does not link to greater commercial success.<sup>i</sup> Parklets, developed in San Francisco, have attracted people and economic spend, while reducing car dependence.<sup>ii</sup>

It is with this in mind that we propose that Swansea city centre should be developed with people in mind, creating a pleasant pedestrian environment and promoting walking, cycling and public transport use in town; and understanding that in some cases that will mean restricting car use further.

### **Why do we think travel by foot, bike and public transport is important for Swansea city centre?**

Development of active travel (walking and cycling) routes:

Increasing levels of walking and cycling is critical to reducing congestion in our towns and cities and creating a pleasant environment where people want to spend time. Major roads through Swansea city centre form a physical barrier to people travelling on foot or by bike. Congestion creates an unpleasant and polluted environment that is difficult to for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate and has an adverse effect on the liveability and economic vitality of the city.

In New York, protected bike lanes introduced on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues led to an increase in retail of 49%, compared to just 3% across the Borough.<sup>iii</sup>

Living Streets' "Pedestrian Pound" report has highlighted that improving a town centre for pedestrians could boost trade by as much as 40%.<sup>iv</sup>

Improving public health:

In 2011 the Welsh Government's own statistics highlighted that obesity was costing the Welsh NHS £73million a year.<sup>v</sup> Inactivity is a major contributor to obesity and a range of other conditions from cardiovascular disease to perceptions of physical and mental wellbeing. Treating Type 2 Diabetes could cost the NHS in Wales £1billion a year by 2025.<sup>vi</sup> In a time of significant public health challenges, and with increasing pressure on finances, the evidence and advice is clear – developing infrastructure and services that makes walking and cycling the normal and obvious choice for everyday shorter journeys can help improve the nation's health and well-being.

Low carbon travel:

In the UK 55% of total transport emissions is from personal car use. Swansea experiences some of the largest commuting inflows in Wales and 82% of Swansea working residents work in their

home authority (12% higher than the Wales average)<sup>vii</sup>. It is these local journeys that are a major contributor to congestion but the potential to change is large. Over two thirds of all journeys are less than five miles, and yet 78% of Swansea workers travel to work by car or van with over half of these journeys being only up to 15 minutes long.<sup>viii</sup> Congestion costs for these local journeys amount to over £20m<sup>ix</sup> for Swansea.

## **Help build Swansea as a vibrant, modern and sustainable place to live and invest in**

Maximising accessibility and connectivity is essential when creating an attractive and successful city for residents, shoppers, visitors and employers. City centres are mobilisers of wider economic development and Swansea's Vibrant and Viable Places programme recognises this at its core. Reduction in congestion through increased mobility and connectivity will sustain a competitive economy and inclusive society where people want to live, work and visit.

Key economic assets for Swansea include its role as a regional centre for shopping, leisure, commerce, sport, culture and education; its thriving evening economy; the cultural and artistic heritage of the city; and the strong sense of the Swansea community identity and local pride.

## **Delivering the best City Centre for Swansea**

Development of streets and public spaces that prioritise active travel over vehicle movement. Swansea is a destination for culture, heritage, leisure and commerce. A clear message is needed that the city centre is a destination for people, a place to visit and spend time, not a corridor to drive through in a vehicle.

A connected and continuous network of pedestrian and cycle friendly streets that enable people to make their own choice about what to do and which route to take. Streets in the city centre need to offer easy, safe and attractive routes for everyday journeys on foot or by bike.

Located in Swansea Bay, with the River Tawe at hand, Swansea city centre already has a strategic network of walking and cycling routes (National Cycle Network) used for everyday journeys. This network should be enhanced, providing new active travel links between city neighbourhoods, National Cycle Network and the city centre so people can travel on foot or by bike for everyday journeys.

Connected and integrated facilities for walking, cycling and public transport based on journeys not modes. Key destination points within the city centre, such as the train station and the Quadrant, should underpin the development of a network of active travel routes.

City centre developments that are designed and located to maximise the opportunity for people to travel by foot, bike or public transport. This includes ensuring new buildings are linked to active travel networks and have appropriate facilities. E.g. undercover, secure bike storage and changing/drying facilities.

The city centre should be developed to enable pedestrians to spend time outside at leisure; for example by encouraging outside seated areas for shops, cafes and other business. But rather than taking this space from the pavement (which causes significant issues for those with disabilities), this should come by removing space from motor vehicles.

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<sup>i</sup><http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/transport/parkinginlondon/parkingurban.htm>

<sup>ii</sup><http://pavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/parklets.html>

<sup>iii</sup>[http://www.americabikes.org/nyc\\_study\\_finds\\_protected\\_bicycle\\_lanes\\_boost\\_local\\_business](http://www.americabikes.org/nyc_study_finds_protected_bicycle_lanes_boost_local_business)

<sup>iv</sup><http://www.sustrans.org.uk/blog/free-parking-not-good-high-streets>

<sup>v</sup><http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/assessing-costs-nhs-associated-alcohol-obesity/?lang=en>

<sup>vi</sup>[http://www.assemblywales.org/NAFW%20Documents/final\\_report-e-4.pdf%20-%2024062013/final\\_report-e-4-English.pdf](http://www.assemblywales.org/NAFW%20Documents/final_report-e-4.pdf%20-%2024062013/final_report-e-4-English.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> Statistics on Commuting in Wales, 2011 (Dec 2012)

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid.,