



**Wendy Fitzgerald**

# ***Keeping you Informed***

## **News from your Independent Councillor for Penllergaer**

**December 2018**

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I can hardly believe that we're almost into December and that Christmas is just around the corner. I don't seem to have made any preparations as yet so it will be a last minute rush as usual. I have various lunches and dinners in my diary to attend so I expect by Christmas day itself I won't be very enthusiastic about yet another hefty meal especially when I have to cook it myself! I expect, though, it will be much the same for most of us and that, in the end, we'll all have a lovely family time and will manage to eat much more than we should. Do spare a thought, though, for anyone you might know of who is alone or unwell – it's always good to remember them and to give a little word of cheer or help during the festive season. I hope you all have a very happy Christmas and my best wishes for a wonderful 2019.

### **Local Development Plan Latest Situation**

The LDP process has been suspended for the third time. This is for technical reasons as the examination or Inquiry before the Planning Inspectors is supposed to take place over a restricted period of time. In Swansea, this period would have been well exceeded so the only way to avoid a 'failure' was to suspend the whole process as the time lost during the suspension does not count towards the total. It's quite a bizarre situation and we're now in the third period of suspension.

Meanwhile, there is an ongoing consultation on something called Matters Arising or MACS which doesn't really affect us at all except that what was being proposed as a new Green Belt designation between Penllergaer and Kingsbridge – Garngoch Common area – has reverted to what it was previously which is a less permanent Green Wedge. This was because representatives from the Welsh Government objected at the Hearings to the Council's Green Belt proposals. A final decision about the LDP proposals should be made in January.

#### **SIAN'S CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS WORKSHOP**

Old Inn 2nd December 3.00-4.00 pm.

Ages 3 to 11 £5.00 per head

Some places still left.

Booking essential.

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### **DESTRUCTION OF 150 YEAR OLD PROTECTED TREE**



**The Well Loved Tree in its Prime**



**Almost Gone - 26 November**

See page 3 inside for the full story of the felling of this landmark tree which was protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

# Pre Application Consultation – Parc Mawr Farm

Many of you will recall that Bellway issued a pre planning application consultation back in September and that I then held a public meeting on the 14th to update residents on the main issues. It was a packed meeting and there were very big concerns about the Bellway proposal to build the first phases of the Parc Mawr site (186 houses) via Brynrhos Crescent which is at the top of Swansea Road. This was despite the entire focus previously being on the 'Gateway' entrance to the development from Gorseinon Road. There was no reference to this change in the Deposit Plans which are the ones discussed at the Inquiry and on which there was a public consultation and, throughout the Inquiry, there was never any reference to this new proposal even though it is clear it was known to both the developer and Swansea Council.

As a consequence, the Community Council has lodged a formal complaint, submitted initially to Swansea Council and then to the Welsh Government. We believe that matters which were seemingly known to both developer and the Council were not disclosed at the Inquiry. We also believe that infrastructure which was identified as required as part of the initial phases is not now going to be delivered until much later in the development. In other words, what is now being proposed in the pre-planning consultation is substantially different to what was contained in the **Infrastructure Delivery Plan** that Swansea Council was required to produce and which was submitted in December 2017 for discussion at the Public Inquiry in February/March 2018.

First and foremost is the building of a **new primary school**. As many parents will know, Penllergaer Primary is well over its physical capacity in terms of pupil numbers and this means there is inadequate space in the school for all the children who attend. Some classes also have several more children above what is called the Admissions Number which is set by Swansea Council. There are now children who live in Penllergaer but can't get a place in their local school and so have to travel to Pontlliw and further afield. A new school should therefore be one of the first pieces of infrastructure to be delivered but, looking at the phasing proposals, at least 500 houses will have to be built before this happens. So, where are the children from the Parc Mawr development going to go to school?

This is a question raised in our complaint about non-disclosure and a matter I have written about in a letter to Swansea Council's Education Department. No reply as yet.

Then the issue of the road link to the **A484 – the Llanelli Expressway**. All of the assessments carried out by Swansea Council state that there should be no more housing in Penllergaer until there is some means of relieving congestion on J 47. Thus, the

Parc Mawr development was predicated on a *strategic relief road*. However, this link has been downgraded and is now a *spine street* which will not be delivered in its total length until almost all 850 houses have been built. A link through to the A483 as well is still on the cards but that also won't be constructed until large numbers of houses have been completed.

Finally too, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan suggests that the Old Inn roundabout will become a traffic light junction in coordination with access to the Parc Mawr site *prior to the occupation of the 50th dwelling*. This is not now going to be the case as the link from Gorseinon Road will not be commenced until at least 186 houses have been completed with the only access being from Brynrhos Crescent.

So, even though the formal Inquiry is over we are still actively arguing our case and raising matters that are of grave concern. I am still waiting a reply from Highways – I asked 8 questions in regard to what the proposals are to improve J47 and deal with the ever increasing congestion. What we cannot accept is any incursion of the carriageways towards residential properties.

I hope you can understand just how time consuming the LDP process has been and once again I have to thank Dave Harris for his dogged persistence and his great capacity for unearthing and exposing technical inconsistencies. Together we have continued to expose what we believe is a flawed process that is most unlikely to deliver anything like the infrastructure and community benefits contained in the original Bellway 'Vision' for Parc Mawr.

## War Memorial Improvements

I'm pleased to say that these were completed before the service on 11th November. The War Memorial itself has been cleaned, the hard standing area in front of it extended and the path to it re-laid as it was very uneven due to tree roots. Funding for all this work came from various sources including the Community Council and my Community Budget. We thought the most appropriate way of marking the centenary of the end of WWI was to ensure the durability of the Memorial erected in the memory of those from Penllergaer who lost their lives in both World Wars.

## Local Area Coordinators (LAC's)

These help with low level individual problems and try to put people in touch with community groups. The LAC for Penllergaer covered Gowerton and Loughor as well so was not here that often. She was funded partly by the Council but mostly by the Fire Service and unfortunately the Fire Service have terminated their funding a year earlier than expected. This is very disappointing and I am seeking answers as to what is going to be done to find the money needed.

## Pelican Crossing on Gorseinon Road

I mentioned in a previous newsletter that I was going to write to Lidl's Head Office to see if there was any financial help to be had to achieve a pelican crossing in the area of their shop on Gorseinon Road. I've now done just this and I'm afraid the answer is, not unexpectedly, no!

The new development in Garden Village – 750 houses – is bound to impact considerably on the traffic on Gorseinon Road but there is nothing in the plans to help mitigate against the increased traffic, noise or air pollution that this will create in Penllergaer. It's all very frustrating and I'm going to have to think again as to how to find some funding.

## Abnormal Loads

Many of you will have seen the abnormal loads travelling through Penllergaer from the docks to Mynydd y Gwair. Fortunately there have been no problems to date and the traffic delays haven't been bad. The abnormal loads will continue into December and then should be at an end.

The two traffic islands at the Old Inn roundabout which had to be removed will be reinstated and Pontardulais Road re-inspected to see if there has been any damage to the surface. Any damage will be paid for by the wind farm company.

## Pavement Resurfacing

There has been some resurfacing in the part of Mount Crescent that is located off Llewellyn Road. The pavement here was in a dreadful state so this work was very welcome. Unfortunately, the defunct green mail bag box has still not been removed by Royal Mail although they did tell me it would take 3 months to do so and that deadline isn't up until the 3rd December. I will be chasing if it is still there by this date – as I expect it will be!

Although small areas of pavement do get resurfaced by the Council as part of an annual maintenance programme (and the above was one such example) the surface has to be in an extremely poor state indeed to get onto the 'maintenance' list. Otherwise, funding has to come out of Councillors' Community Budgets, and given the cost of resurfacing, it is very difficult to find the necessary money in single member wards such as Penllergaer.

I've had complaints about **moss** making pavements slippery when wet. I've reported this to Swansea Council asking for some action to be taken. I'm afraid there has been nothing so far but we can but hope and I will be chasing.

## Dropped Kerbs

Whilst these are always included in any new built areas, in older parts of Penllergaer they are sadly lacking. I have therefore had several requests for dropped kerbs from residents with mobility problems. Many of you will have noticed that there are new dropped kerbs at the junction of Heol Dewi Sant and Llewellyn Road which means that it is now possible to get from the bottom of this road to the top on a pavement. However, I'm afraid there is still a location not far from the corner shop where there is still a problem and this will have to be looked at in the future.

As I write, another dropped kerb is being installed at the junction of Druidstone Way and Swansea Road. Again, the Home Farm area is another one where there are no dropped kerbs so is difficult for wheelchair users to negotiate.

Please let me know if there is a need for a dropped kerb near you. I can't promise that all requests can be met as I have to pay for these out of my Community Budget which, unfortunately, is not as elastic as I would like!

## Enzo Housing Site

On the 26<sup>th</sup> November I arrived home from a meeting to many messages and e-mails about the catastrophe that had taken place that day when contractors felled the tallest landmark tree in the area – a 150 ft Wellingtonia. What made this disaster even worse was that this tree was **outside the boundary of the site and covered by a Tree Preservation Order**.

I'd already had many calls previously from people distressed by the amount of destruction being wreaked by the housing development. Volunteers in the Penllergaer Trust Coffee Shop have also reported that some customers have been in tears to see so much tree loss and devastation. Now a tree that could well have been planted by John Dillwyn Llewellyn himself has been wantonly destroyed. I have reported the matter to both the Leader of Swansea Council and the Head of Planning as well as the Council's Tree Officer and action will be taken. However, although Court Action can be instigated, often the fines imposed are derisory in terms of the amount so don't give a real financial hit to a developer.

You will all recall that I have consistently opposed housing on this site and had 'called in' the application to the Welsh Government requesting that they make the decision rather than the Council, given the historical importance of the Observatory and the landscape. However, with the political balance of Swansea's Planning Committee and the support given to the application by the Council's Cabinet it was always going to get planning approval, which it did in May this year, after which the Welsh Government confirmed they would not uphold the 'call in'. Preserving our industrial history, such as the old copper works in Hafod, is apparently more important than retaining the legacy of one of Swansea's great historical figures.

It's ironic, too, that all this is taking place at a time when Swansea Council is signing up to a sixth Corporate Priority which is part of its response to the new Welsh Government Environment Act. This will supposedly give greater protection and enhancement to biodiversity. But as I pointed out to the Panel which has been looking into biodiversity in Swansea, I'm afraid protecting the environment will always come a poor second if it jeopardises any house building opportunities or other so called economic benefits. Here we have just such an example. What an absolute tragedy!

# Parc Penllergaer

## Knotweed

I've had complaints recently about knotweed growing on the A483 verge to the rear of some properties in Elm Crescent. Swansea Council officers have now inspected and have confirmed that the knotweed is on Council owned land so it will be treated next year. It's too late to do anything at this time of year as spraying has to be carried out when the plant is growing. This will also need to be repeated. There is understandably great concern when knotweed is in the vicinity but it can be stamped out with persistent treatment so please be reassured that it will not get into gardens.

I also learnt that there is a 2 metre strip of land immediately to the rear of back gardens in Elm Crescent and adjacent to the A483 that is not in Council ownership. I assume this land would be the responsibility of Bellway but before I chase on this, does any resident have any relevant information?

## Flooding

There has recently been a problem with the ditch on the central green area in that it could not handle the flow of water which then streamed across the road in Home Farm Way and into the garden opposite. Fortunately it did not get into the house. I immediately contacted Swansea Council officers to get the ditch cleaned. Interestingly, however, I've recently had a letter from Welsh Water which suggests that the **surface water sewer network** in Parc Penllergaer has still not been adopted. Welsh Water states in this letter that there is *currently discharge to drainage ditches which are neither properly maintained nor readily accessible and this places the perform-*

*ance of the surface water network at significant risk if ditches/outfalls become blocked.* I have to confess that I was not aware that surface water had not been adopted and it seems both I and Welsh Water had understood that maintenance was to be carried out by the Council. Apparently this is not the case. I will now be meeting with Welsh Water in the near future as surface water adoption and maintenance of ditches, etc., must be resolved with urgency.

## Planters – Mini roundabout.

These have now been removed but it has been suggested that it might be good to have at least one planted up with some winter/spring bulbs and foliage. What do other residents think? Let me know and this could be possible next year.

## Traffic Lights – A483

I recently had a complaint about the fact that when there are traffic queues on the A483 the junction itself is generally blocked and those trying to get out of Parc Penllergaer to join the road to J47 aren't able to do so. I'm trying again to get yellow hatchings put on to the west carriageway junction but I'm still waiting a response from Highways.

## Leaning Tree – central green area

I am sorry to say that this tree is still leaning. I did try to push it upright myself but couldn't do so. The reason is explained in a very recent message from the Council's Tree officer *The tree is extremely heavy and will need to be winched upright before trying to re-stake. The team that carry out this work are stuck on other jobs at the moment but they do have a plan to sort this tree out and should be on this quite soon.*

# Parc Penderi

It seems to have been a quiet period in here with no significant issues coming to my attention.

The process of **adopting the roads** continues but as yet Welsh Water have still not adopted the sewer system. **Parking issues** at school times in and around Holly Oak Road still occur. There have been no refuse collecting problems reported to me recently so let's hope this continues to be the case.

## Snow Warden

A few residents around Penllergaer have been acting as Snow Wardens which is really to do with making sure that grit bins in the area have grit in them and that roads are accessible. We have a large bin in the Village Hall car park filled with one and a half tons of grit and some of this can be shifted by Land Rover to any part of Penllergaer in an emergency. However, the former Snow Warden for Parc Penderi, Tyrone Peach, has moved elsewhere so there is a vacancy. Would anyone be willing to take over this role? Given our mild winters, it is not a very onerous task!