



## **SPECIAL CABINET – 25TH MARCH 2015**

**SUBJECT: VELOTHON WALES 2015**

**REPORT BY: MARKETING & EVENTS MANAGER**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Members on the Welsh Government's initiative to attract a major new cycling sportive event on closed roads in the summer of 2015 and to ask Members to agree to consult on the road closures necessary for the event to take place.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Major Events Unit (MEU) of Welsh Government is supporting the Event Organiser, Lagardère Unlimited UK to establish a new cycling event called 'Velothon Wales' in June 2015 as part of a planned global roll out of the UCI Velothon Majors Series. The event will involve establishing three routes: a 50km and a 140km route for up to 15,000 cyclists to take place as a sportive (mass participation) event followed by a 194km UCI classed race for up to 200 elite (Professional) cyclists.
- 2.2 In order to cater for the event, roads along the proposed routes will need to be fully closed for up to 8 or more hours to allow the installation of essential Traffic Management arrangements and to permit the safe passage of the participating cyclists. This will rely heavily on the support of the local authorities directly affected by the proposals (Cardiff City Council, Newport City Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Torfaen County Borough Council and Caerphilly County Borough Council) to instigate the necessary road closures under its traffic powers in order to allow the Event Organisers to safely deliver the event. The UCI have granted the proposed elite race 1:1 classification, the third highest status they can award.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 This is a major event which will bring many visitors into the area and which will be a showcase for Wales as a tourism destination.
- 3.2 The event supports the Single Integrated Plan 'Prosperous Caerphilly' priority measure 1 'Improve local employment opportunities including access to opportunities across a wider geographic area' and Healthier Caerphilly priority measure 2, 'Improve lifestyles of the population in the county borough so that people recognise and take responsibility for their own health and well-being, and make use of the opportunities and support available to them'
- 3.3 The Council has agreed to a five-year regeneration programme entitled "People, Businesses and Places". The staging of the event supports a number of Activity aims within the strategy including 'Increasing economic activity' and 'Protecting and developing the economy' and Service Improvement Objectives EDKO5, 'Increase the range of employment opportunities for local residents' and EDKO6 'Increase the number of tourists visiting Caerphilly County Borough'.

## 4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Initially suggested in 2011, the Head of Regeneration & Planning and the Group Manager for Business Enterprise Support were invited to attend a meeting organised by Welsh Government's Major Events Unit (MEU) in November 2013 to preview a revised proposal for the staging of the Velothon Wales concept. A working group of Local Authority Event / Highways Officers subsequently met with the event organisers and the MEU to discuss the proposed event in more detail. Concerns were raised through this working group in relation to the costs and implementation of the Traffic Management Plan to Welsh Government highlighting the difficult financial position that Local Authorities across Wales were facing and the potential disruption of the proposals.
- 4.2 A communication from the MEU in early April 2014 confirmed that the MEU would be submitting a business case to support the hosting of the event, including financial support for the implementation of the required road closures and that they would be seeking the following in-kind support from the Local Authorities involved:
- Traffic Orders (which the Authority is empowered to make pursuant to the Act specified in the Statutory Powers paragraph )
  - Policing costs
  - Parking Suspension
  - Bus Stop suspensions
  - Removal of any illegally parked vehicles
  - Street Cleansing
  - Pothole Repairs
  - Permission for the erection of publicity banners in prominent locations along the route up to 3 weeks prior to event
  - Active business and resident communication including notification of all churches, hospitals, taxis, bus companies, emergency services
  - Provision of suitable spaces/venues along the course for drink stations / aid stations
- 4.3 The Leader of the Council, Cllr Andrews, was formally asked for the Council's support for the staging of the event on closed roads by the Minister (EST) on 7th April 2014. Cllr Andrews responded on behalf the Council on 9th April 2014 that Caerphilly County Borough Council supported the event. At this stage there were no details available as to the exact route and the nature and duration of the road closures.
- 4.4 At a meeting organised by the MEU on 20th May 2014, it was confirmed that the Welsh Government Minister for Economy, Science and Transport had 'received unanimous support from the Leaders of all 5 authorities and that the Minister was content in principle that a significant element of the costs (and especially the unavoidable cash cost implications) should be borne by the Welsh Government in the first year'. Confirmation was also received that the organisers wanted to look at a 120km and 200km route (previously a 60km and 120km route) that would involve a greater transit through Monmouthshire County.
- 4.5 The Event Organiser set up a series of route meetings with members of the five local authorities, Emergency Services and the South Wales Trunk Road Agency from July 2014 to look at the specifics of the Traffic Management plan requirements for the proposed routes.
- 4.6 At a Velothon planning meeting held on 24th July 2014, Lagardère Unlimited UK confirmed that following a review of participation potential a third route, at 50km (similar to the earlier 60km proposal) would be added to the choice of rides, with the shortest route starting between 07:00 and 08:00 hours and finishing by 09:30 hours, running from Newport to Cardiff via Lower Machen and Caerphilly.
- 4.7 In August 2014, Lagardère Unlimited UK launched the event to the public with a capacity set at 15,000 cyclists.

- 4.8 A Traffic Management contractor was appointed in October 2014 and Officers from the authority continued to meet with the Event Organiser and their appointed representatives to look at the proposed routes and to feed back Cabinet concerns to the Event Organiser.
- 4.9 Over the subsequent period Council Officers from various departments including Traffic Management, Highways, Public Transport, Communications, Legal and Insurance have met with the Event Organiser and their representatives to discuss the central issues and to look at minimising the potential impact of residents, where practical, during the main mass participation route. A number of mitigation measures have been proposed to the Event Organiser in respect of Crumlin Road, Panside, Mornington Meadows and Maes-y-cwmmer.
- 4.10 A detailed Traffic Management Plan based on the proposed routes was received by Officers on 27th January 2015. The Event Organiser, Lagardère Unlimited UK was invited to meet informally with Cabinet Members on the 18th February 2015. At this meeting Members' concerns regarding the impact of the proposed road closures were again outlined to the Event Organiser. Agreement was reached that the Event Organiser would review its plans for Maes-y-cwmmer in particular as this was an area that was potentially significantly affected by the proposed route and that the Council would continue to offer its support for the staging of the event because of its significant impact to the region and country.
- 4.11 The Event Organiser is due to present their Event Safety Plans to a Gwent Safety Advisory Group for scrutiny on 20th April 2015.
- 4.12 The proposed 50km circuit will mean roads along the route could be closed through Draethen, Nant y cwm and Van Road from possibly 07:00 to 09:30 hours with vehicle movements restricted to local access requirements from 05:30 to 07:00 hours.
- 4.13 The proposed 140km (mass participation) route will mean roads closed along the route from Hafodrynys and through Caerphilly via the A472 and A469 between 07:00 and potentially 18:00 hours, restricting vehicle access across and along these roads and effectively isolating local communities, businesses, churches and other stakeholders. There is potential for restricted trading for businesses affected by this route and normal Sunday bus timetables will be impossible to maintain.
- 4.14 The proposed 140km (mass participation) and Elite (Professional) race will require road closures as per a proposed road closure timetable attached at Appendix 1. The Elite race will follow the Mass Participation event and will involve a rolling road closure, allowing vehicles to cross at designated Emergency and Local Access Points (ELAP) for a period of time in between the last mass participation cyclist crossing through the county borough and the arrival of the first Elite cyclists. However, the Elite route involves the cyclists covering three laps of Caerphilly Mountain and will therefore affect a larger number of residents in the Caerphilly basin as part of the rolling road closure operation than for the mass participation event from potentially 15:45 to 17:30 hours.
- 4.15. As a result of the planned road closure programme for the event there is the potential to cause significant disruption. The Event Organisers have proposed mitigation to reduce disruption in some areas but officers remain concerned about the numbers of stakeholders that may be directly affected by the proposed routes passing their place of residence. Businesses, local churches, taxi companies, public transport providers, carers, health workers and other workers and stakeholders will be impacted by the extensive road closures that are required for the safe staging of the event.
- 4.16 The Event Organiser has engaged consultants to implement a Stakeholder Communications and Engagement Plan with those directly affected by the proposed routes. A helpline is being set up by the Event Organiser so that the public can engage directly with the Event Organiser. The Council will continue to work with the Event Organiser to identify any further changes to the proposed Traffic Management Plan to reduce the number of people directly affected by the proposed routes and to identify potential parking locations outside these routes to reduce the number of stakeholders becoming isolated during the event.

- 4.17 Officers are concerned that some businesses may be effectively prevented from trading for the day or longer as a result of the proposed road closures. Officers have made it clear to the Event Organiser that the Council is not prepared to accept any liability for any claims arising out of the event and will be seeking to obtain a suitable indemnity. The Event Organiser has agreed this in principle but the final terms are yet to be agreed. The Council has written to the First Minister seeking some direction as to whether the Welsh Government wishes local authorities to progress the Road Closures in spite of the concerns around disruption and safety. A response from the Minister Mrs Edwina Hart has reaffirmed the strong support of the Welsh Government for the event. A copy of this letter is attached to this report.
- 4.18 In addition there is also a need for regard to safety in respect of:
- (a) The physical condition of the highway.
  - (b) Road user conflict where vehicle / road users do not comply with the Traffic Management measures that will need to be implemented to secure the proposed road closures required or where the proposed Traffic Management measures are not robustly implemented or devised.
- 4.19 In order to mitigate and minimise the risk the following actions have been agreed with the Event organiser :-
- (a) In respect of the road condition, the organisers have undertaken a winter inspection of the road surface along the proposed routes and are due to undertake a further pre-event inspection. In order that the Council satisfies itself that it is also performing its statutory obligations a representative of the Highways Inspection team may accompany the Event Organiser on their pre-event inspection of the proposed routes in order to identify areas that need remedial work. Temporary measures identified on the day of the event would be undertaken by the Event Organiser and its contractors.
  - (b) The Event Organiser has engaged a Traffic Management company to devise and implement a Traffic Management Plan that the Council's Traffic Management and Highway's departments can scrutinise before any Road Closure Notices are considered under Local Authority traffic powers.
    - (a) The Event Organiser is presenting their Event Safety Plan to a Gwent Safety Advisory Group on 20 April 2015 at which the Council will have representation.
    - (b) A pre-event Scenario Planning exercise is being planned prior to the event at which Council Officers will be able to participate.
    - (c) Highways Officers have asked to take part in the advance route inspection on the day of the event to assess whether the Traffic Management Plans are being implemented as proposed.
    - (d) Home Office guidance document 'The Good Practice Safety Guide for small and sporting events taking place on the highway, roads and public places responsibility for public safety with the organiser. The Responsibility of devising and operationally implementing a Traffic Management Plan for the event rests with the event organiser, Lagardère Unlimited UK.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Two of the Council's Strategic Equality Objectives (numbers 3 and 4) are relevant to this report in that they cover matters relating to Physical Access and Communication Access for various individuals and groups covered by Equalities and Welsh Language legislation.
- 5.2 Economic regeneration and tourism issues are strongly influenced by these and due consideration of the Strategic Equality Objectives and related actions can contribute to the success of tourism projects and events for example by attracting wider audiences.

- 5.3 There is potential for the impact of the road closures, and interruptions to public transport, to affect certain groups more than others, and this will be subject to further evaluation should Members agree to proceed to consultation.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Lagardère's Unlimited UK's Event Director reaffirmed on 16th October 2014 that there was no financial obligation on the authority in relation to the staging of the event but that they were looking for an agreement that Caerphilly County Borough Council will commit to helping make the event a success through participating in planning meetings and by helping to promote the event through the channels it has at its disposal.
- 6.2 Funding has been allocated from within the Event Organiser's event budget to undertake stakeholder engagement, including establishing a contact phone line for 'further information' enquiries, holding public meetings where appropriate and undertaking letter drops to stakeholders directly affected along the proposed routes.
- 6.3 The Traffic Management Unit have estimated that they would need to provide approximately 124 staff hours in order to scrutinise the Traffic Management Plans and attend appropriate meetings.
- 6.3 There could be a relatively low financial cost to the authority of Officers attending the event on the day in order to protect local stakeholder interests although a request could be passed to the Event Organiser to pay for these additional costs.
- 6.4 Minor repairs required to the Highway identified as a result of the Event Organiser's pre-race route inspection road will be paid for by the Event Organiser.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None the additional work will be met within existing staffing resources.
- 7.2 In order to protect the authority's interests and to support the staging of the event nominated Officers have been invited to participate in the running of the Command, Communication and Control centre on the day of the event. Officers have also requested that they are present on the day of the event in the Advance Route Inspection vehicle to ensure that the Traffic Management Plans are being implemented as proposed.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The proposed road closures, if Cabinet agrees, will be subject to extensive formal consultations.
- 8.2 An information session for Members has been arranged for the afternoon of Monday, 23rd March where the organisers will be available to outline the traffic management arrangements.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Following the recent receipt of the proposed routes and associated Traffic Management Plans that Members consider whether to agree to consult on the proposals in co-ordination with the Event Organisers engagement plans.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The proposed event is a new event that requires a strong multi agency partnership approach across the region in order to deliver a successful event for the region and for Wales.
- 10.2 There are potentially significant health, well-being and economic benefits to be derived from the staging of the event. For example, 35% of adults across the UK are considered as cyclists whereas in Wales the percentage of adults considered as cyclists is 30%, significantly below the UK average. The direct economic impact of the event is estimated at in excess of £3m to the Welsh economy.
- 10.3 The promotion of cycling fits the Council's sustainability objectives and endorses the recent investment in its green infrastructure.

## **11 STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000. The Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 as amended by Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events ) Act 1994.

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Appendix 1 - Proposed Road Closure Timetable

Appendix 2 - Proposed Route

Appendix 3 - Letter received from Mrs Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Economy, Science and Transport dated 10th March 2015