

Official Press Statement Maindy Flyers Cycling Club
Maindy Flyers Cycling Club and its membership opposes the destruction of Maindy Cycling Track

Maindy Flyers Youth Cycling Club was formed in 1995 as a community youth cycling club and took its name from the much-loved Empire Games track in Maindy Park where we are based. Since its creation cyclists who started their cycling careers in Maindy Flyers have gone on to win 3 Commonwealth Games Gold medals, 4 Olympic Golds, over 20 World Championships and, of course, the Tour de France.

Cardiff Council now want Maindy Park, and the track, as part of their expansion plans for Cathays High School and are proposing building a new cycling facility in Cardiff Bay. Over a year ago, through the application for planning permission, the Council informed the club of their plans to relocate the track in Cardiff Bay, and the design they had determined. At this point the club wrote to the Council to raise its concerns but, apart from reductions in the accompanying buildings and fencing, no material changes have been made and a final presentation of the design was given before Christmas.

The club committee, using the information provided by the Council, informed the membership of the Council's plans, and asked them to vote to support these plans or to oppose the move to the new track and campaign to remain at Maindy track. Over 80% of the membership voted and the result overwhelmingly voted to oppose a move to the Bay and to campaign to save and stay at the Maindy track.

To start this process the club have written the attached open letter to the council setting out its position.

Dear Cllr Huw Thomas, Cllr Russell Goodway and Cllr Jennifer Burke-Davies,

Re: Open letter regarding the Club position following club vote based on information provided by Cardiff council to date on the proposed International Sports Village and the proposed demolition of Maindy Cycling Track

Maindy Flyers Cycling Club is a community Youth Cycling Club set up in 1995, in the heart of Cardiff, located at Maindy stadium. It is a club steeped in enormous history, pride, and success. A recent book about Maindy Flyers called it 'the most successful cycling club in the world'. Four Olympic Gold Medals, from three different riders. Three Commonwealth Golds. Over twenty world championships. Over 100-national and international titles. Home of the only Welsh winner of the Tour de France, Geraint Thomas. The legacy of Maindy Flyers is an unbelievable attraction for new riders to considering entering into the sport and is a profound inspiration for current members.

Maindy cycle track itself, built for the 1958 Empire Games, has been home to Nicole Cooke, Geraint Thomas, Owain Doull, Luke Rowe, Elinor Barker, Megan Barker, Elynor Bäckstedt and Zoe Bäckstedt are only a few of the names who have benefitted from the facility and gone on to perform at the very top echelons of the sport. Not only that, many club members and volunteers over the years have gone on to contribute within the sport at the top level- whether it be through coaching at an elite level or working within the sport's

governing body. Many other members have gone on to give back time and energy to the club and the wider local community with their own volunteering commitment to the sport.

The club is proudly run by a dedicated group of volunteers from many different walks of life and professions. Over the 28 years of its existence there have been many different children, coaches, management structures, committees, and facility managers. The only one thing has remained constant- Maindy Track.

The discussion around the International Sports Village (ISV) Development and the potential destruction of the historic Maindy Cycling Track has been a topic of discussion over several years. Maindy YCC has listened carefully to the proposals from the council, has tried to engage constructively in dialogue over this period, and objectively considered the options to enhance the sport for the better. The club has attempted to constructively share our experience in the building the strong and stable grassroots foundations in delivering world class athletes into the sport.

The club has been told on multiple occasions that the destruction of Maindy Cycling track is a certain and an inevitable outcome. Either we support and move to a new proposed site or be left with nothing. The prospect of being left with nothing for future generations of cyclists, and potential future athletes, having the opportunity to contribute to the next chapter of the sports history is an unacceptable outcome. This loss to the sport in South Wales, is something the club has taken very seriously in a considered and measured approach.

Whilst the club has had this specific threat of loss of all cycling facilities looming over us, we have initially tried to set about working constructively to make a new cycling facility work. It has now reached a point where the club have been saddened with the level of constructive engagement with us, as a whole, during this process. The clubs experience, thoughts, and concerns throughout this period of time have been given no regard by the council.

Club Vote

As a body of volunteers, the committee and coaches reached a point where we have now presented to our membership all the current information we have been given by the Council, together with the input we have had into the proposed new cycling facility. We summarised all the information we know and don't know. The risks, and benefits to either supporting a new site or supporting staying at our home at Maindy have been considered and discussed.

We provided the opportunity for our membership to finally have their say and provide a mandate to decide where the club wanted to see its future, in terms of location and facility. We made very clear the decision was to consider how best the membership saw its place to ensure the positive and successful development to youth cycling in the city and region. All members over the age of 16 were eligible to vote and all those under 16 years were eligible for a vote by parent proxy, in line with Welsh Senedd voting rules. It was agreed that a majority decision would be the clubs mandate to move forwards.



The club voted with an 81% turnout. There was an overwhelmingly clear support from 65% of members voting to oppose the move to the proposed ISV site and campaign to save Maindy Cycle track. There were no vote abstentions.

The club membership does not feel that the proposed offerings of a new site will benefit youth cycling, the wider cycling community, or the success of the sport within the city of Cardiff. The club do not see that the proposed new site, particularly in the current economic climate, will provide a venue of either equal or higher quality to that afforded by Maindy, which has allowed the club to the ability contribute to the successes of the sport.

The various factors surrounding the future of a cycling facility in Cardiff is highly complex and the numerous variables to consider in order to attempt to make some sense of possible outcomes has been challenging and extremely lengthy to be able to fully articulate in this statement. However, themes to try to encapsulate the concerns for cyclists and non-cyclists alike are:

1. Location

Maindy Flyers are at heart a community club based at a community facility. A move to the bay removes this link and, we believe, will make attending the new track less attractive and more expensive for riders, which will make attracting new members significantly more difficult.

2. Facility Quality:

The proposals by the council for new facility and it's technical specifications will, we believe, stifle progression of cycling quality both within the club and wider cycling community in several ways:

- A reduction in the size of the track facility from 460metres to 333metres will reduce maximum sizes able to train together.
- The likely reduced numbers will restrict the ability for members to learn and be inspired by their older peers (which is regarded as part of the reason why the club has been able to be so successful over the many years)
- The likely reduction in our ability to train to the same high standard in adverse weather conditions.
- A reduction in the ability for younger members to get started riding on gentle banking on their first cycle track, before the natural progression to the Geraint Thomas National Velodrome with its steep indoor banking.

3. Cost and Value:

The proposals by the council to use a site in the Bay will add to significant expense to both users and non-users in several ways:

- The community cost for a new facility is considerably more expensive than the renovation and upgrades needed to Maindy cycle track.

- Individuals participating in the sport will have to pay more for track hire, travel to the new venue and car parking, and likely pricing many families and communities in the area out of the sport.
- Budget constraints have already seen significant design modifications from what was originally proposed, reducing the quality of the new site even before any building has started – It is likely to get worse.

Summary

When considering the ultimate question, ‘Does the change of moving to Cardiff Bay enhance or hamper the ability of Maindy Flyers Cycling Club to remain the most successful cycling club in the world?’ ...the overwhelming answer from the clubs’ members is, it hampers.

Cycling has raised the profile of Cardiff over the years and is a city that carries a highly successful history with the sport. A rousing and self-effacing quote from the former Welsh First Minister, on Geraint Thomas’ return to the city after winning the 2018 Tour de France, “Geraint has done more to raise the profile of Cardiff and Wales in Twenty-one days than I have achieved in Twenty-one years of politics”. *Carwyn Jones, 29th July 2018.*

The club seeks to have genuine constructive engagement, support, and dialogue from the council towards protecting this historic cycling facility and the legacy of our youth cycling club, which has contributed and continues to not only contribute enormously to the development of youth cycling in the region - but also contribute vastly to the positive image and pride of the city of Cardiff and Wales as a whole.

The home of Maindy Flyers Cycling Club is Maindy Cycling Track.

Yours Faithfully

Maindy Flyers Cycling Club, on behalf of the club membership.

Committee@maindyflyers.com

**MAINDY
FLYERS**

Maindy Flyers Cycling Club