

FULL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY, 15 JUNE 2016

Written question from Carl Feeney of PRO-LINK to Councillor Shirley Smart, Executive Member for Public Transport, Tourism, Recreation and Heritage

PRO-LINK is an Independent, committee based group, campaigning for an IOW Fixed Link to connect the mainland to the Isle of Wight. PRO-LINK believes this will ensure a successful socio-economic future for the island, through the provision of a fast, affordable and reliable transport link.

PRO-LINK has promoted discussions with the DfT to the extent where we believe they are now in a position to look seriously at the cross Solent Transport problem, with regard to assessing whether a new Fixed Link Study can be commissioned. The last Study was commissioned in 1998 by "Wight Training and Enterprise". That study had been under Copyright restrictions for 17 years until PRO-LINK had the copyright removed last year in 2015.

On the 26th May 2016, an email was sent to each of the IOW Councillors containing a web link to the 1998 study. Also further information was provided, concerning the socio-economic impacts of continuing to use solely an antiquated 19th century form of ferry transport to cross the Solent.

Each of the Councillors had an opportunity to reply to the email to explain whether they would follow the Leader of the Council - Jonathan Bacon's personal support for an independent study. Some have replied indicating support, some have not replied.

The question:

If the IOW Council was asked in an official capacity to support the requirement for an up to date and independent IOW Fixed Link Study, that would supply the information required to make logical and informed Fixed Link choice conclusions.....would the IOW Council support this?

Please be clear:

The question is NOT asking whether the IOW Council supports having a Fixed Link.

The question IS however;

Will the IOW Council formally agree to support a Study that will provide expert information on how to proceed?

It is expected that the IOW Council will not be required to put financial input in to the study.

Response

This is a hypothetical question which cannot be answered definitively today.

It is a matter for each member of the council to offer their support or otherwise on an individual basis, but the Council's corporate view can only be determined through its decision making process, set out in its constitution. This requires that the council takes all relevant matters into account in coming to a decision. These matters would normally be set out in a written report for the consideration of Members which would also evaluate the costs, benefits and risks associated with the proposed decision.

For the avoidance of doubt, the council's corporate plan sets out that the council is committed to, "an integrated transport system that is secure, affordable and accessible for individuals and businesses". I might add this could only be meaningfully considered once the full scope of any study was set out, and as far as communications to the council from the Department for Transport, I have no knowledge of any such request.