

P-06-1373

Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private development Kilvey Hill, Swansea, Correspondence - Petitioner to Committee, 08.110.23

Subject: Submission of Petition Report and Survey Findings on the Skyline Development at Kilvey Hill

REF: P-06-1373

For the attention of Members of the Petitions Committee

I, Neil Jones, submitted the petition referred to above on behalf of [Swansea Friends of the Earth](#)(1). Thank you for offering the extension for this to be read by the committee. There has been extensive community consultation and involvement by volunteers in the absence of Council engagement.

[Swansea Skyline](#) (2) is primarily a complicated large, prominent outdoor and weather-dependent development on Kilvey Hill involving two miles of concrete go-kart track, illuminated until 11 p.m, with sound systems, 24-hour lighting and a licenced bar on the summit. Committee members must not be confused by the name and publicity into thinking it is primarily a zip wire project. It will also include gondolas, a sky swing, service areas, car parks, food truck stands, and luge/skylifts.

Reference: [Figure 1 Korea Luge \(Go Kart track\) Skyline pic](#) and [Figure 2 Vista view of the proposed skyline project site](#)

Recognised designations of Kilvey Hill:

[Site of Importance for Nature Conservation](#)(3) whilst being Wales's largest urban forest with a [Nationally Designated Quiet Area](#)(4), [WOM21 Open Access Area](#)(5). [The Open Spaces Society](#)(6) has condemned the development.

In light of the letter in response to the petition, [231026 Deputy Minister for A,S & T to Chair.pdf](#) We submit our petition report and survey findings regarding the Skyline development at Kilvey Hill. These documents reflect substantial community concerns, supported by data collected by Swansea Friends of the Earth and [Kilvey Community Woodland Volunteers](#)(7). Extensive information on Kilvey Hill and the Skyline project is available here: <https://www.facebook.com/savekilveyhill>(8).

Community Involvement and Concerns:

A rigorous survey of 245 residents conducted by [Kilvey Community Woodland Volunteers](#) revealed deep-seated concerns and anger about the proposed use of public funds for the Skyline project: 90% of participants expressed unease about potential environmental degradation, increased noise, traffic, and loss of green space, all of which could adversely affect personal well-being. In particular, additional comments by 185 participants revealed anger at the lack of community consultation. Results here:

[qual-survey-231107.pdf](#) [quant-survey-231107.pdf](#)

Petition Support and Significance:

The petition, "Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4 million on 'Skyline' private development Kilvey Hill, Swansea," gathered 3,051 signatures, confirming the community's strong connection to Kilvey Hill. A significant portion of support originates from Swansea East and West, communities directly impacted by the development.

[Figure 3 Bar chart of Swansea petition numbers](#). See the [Full petition breakdown report of raw data](#).


Economic Sustainability:

The Skyline Swansea project's claim of creating [100 permanent jobs](#)(9) is challenged by the reality that these are likely to be job hours, not FTEs, and are dependent on achieving a projected visitor count of

450,000 per year. This figure is a massive decrease from an initial over-estimate of 750,000 visitors, which did not meet the company's own benefit-cost ratio (BCR) targets to finance the creation of these jobs, with an individual cost of £125,000 per long-term full-time job hours, Skyline Swansea is now dependent on £12.4 million of public funds and loans. Additional financial backing is presumed to be procured through loans guaranteed by a 125-year lease agreement, which includes public land, with the only security being the limited guarantee of [SKYLINE SWANSEA LIMITED \(Company No. 14320214\)](#)(10), directed by [Geoffrey McDonald](#)(11) and [Nigel Vernon Short](#)(12), who also have ties to adjacent businesses [1](#)(13) [2](#)(14) and the [Swansea City Deal](#).

This financial approach raises concerns about safeguarding of public money and land, especially when considering the opaque nature of the project's financial details and the [Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board's](#)(15) reliance on non-public [KADA reports](#)(16). These concerns are magnified by recent Welsh tourism data, confirming a decline in business across various sectors, inconsistent with the optimistic projections of the Skyline project.

Welsh Government's "[Tourism Barometer: Summer Wave 2023](#)(17)" indicates a tourism downturn, with only 46% of attractions reporting an uptick in visitors – a figure that conflicts with Skyline's projections. Moreover, top attractions like [Zip World Forest](#)(18), with 223,500 visitors in 2019, and Cardiff Castle, despite its advantageous location in the capital near an international airport, currently do not achieve such high visitor numbers [Cardiff Castle](#)(19) 2021 (372,606). Coupled with Swansea's current hotel capacity constraints, this paints a bleak picture of the project's hoped-for influx of visitors,

Please also see this email  From Ben houghton on On 07_09_2023 11_45 Re_ Subject_ Concerns an... sent to Mike Hedges and Senned members containing evidence that The Skyline project's financial viability is in question due to concerns about [escalating costs](#)(21), significant [gambling involvement and bypassing government rules](#)(22), problems [paying back subsidies](#)(23) and doubts about meeting visitor projections, raising doubts about its longer-term financial sustainability.

Further, a cause for concern was raised by an article about a recent environmental and community disaster with a Skyline Queenstown development that should raise alarms about care and due diligence within the company. See image [Figure 4: Landslide at Queenstown site](#) and full ([article](#)(24))

The economic viability of the Skyline project is uncertain, demanding a reassessment of its sustainability and a commitment to transparent public investment, especially in the context of recent tourism statistics.

Environment, Well-being and Educational Value:

Kilvey Hill is a special and unusual natural space for mental and physical health, a role supported by Welsh government-funded research. The potential loss or fragmentation of this space could have negative impacts on community health and well-being. Over 60 community groups, mainly volunteer groups, regularly use the hill.

In 2018, the [welfare value](#)(25) for Kilvey was £599,497 on the basis of 147,810 visits. In comparison, Singleton Park is worth £785,666 on the basis of 337,429 visits per year. It shows that the Council risks losing a considerable well-being asset.

The well-being of future generations is a cornerstone of Welsh policy, mandating the preservation of green spaces and the promotion of nature-based well-being practices. Major research over 10 years with 2.3 million adults in Wales ([Geary et al., 2023](#))(26) documents the mental health benefits associated with proximity to green spaces, with these effects amplified in socio-economically deprived areas. The Swansea region, particularly the less-affluent East, shows a correlation between green space availability and health outcomes ([Dobbs, 2003](#))(27).

Kilvey Hill, as a natural sanctuary, plays a vital role in community health and well-being, offering a place for social interaction and nature-connected activities. Welsh government-funded research ([Simons, 2023](#)) (28) supports this, revealing the positive impact of time spent on Kilvey Hill in reducing stress and enhancing mental well-being. This space is integral not only for therapeutic and educational purposes but also as a green refuge that sustains the community's social fabric.

With the current user mix of the hill, this project runs the risk of reducing multiple access overall. Swansea's definitive paths map indicates the east side is the most deprived and has few paths and bridleways as defined by [Swansea council](#)(29). Recent cuts to bus services in the area due to the withdrawal of funding from the Welsh government compounds this deprivation, [29th October 2023 Service Changes | First Bus](#)(30) Lack of public transport will increase the need of the Hill for recreation and health-related activities.

Furthermore, the areas on Kilvey Hill, outside of the proposed lease area, will not be maintained by Skyline, i.e. paths and bike tracks, as stated by Swansea Council in the FIO request, if the Skyline project is awarded a 125-year lease.

The potential loss of space and degradation of Kilvey Hill due to disruptive development will undermine the well-being benefits currently provided. This is in direct contradiction to Welsh government policies that prioritise nature-connectedness and sustainable community health frameworks.

PWW Policy Concerns & Call for Review – Skyline Swansea Project

There are significant policy concerns regarding the Skyline Swansea project, as outlined in the detailed analysis attached [[Attachment Link](#)]. [The Planning Policy Wales \(PPW\)](#)(document emphasises the conservation of quiet areas. As the Kilvey Hill area is designated as a national quiet area or is similarly protected due to its tranquillity, the policies outlined in PPW 11 regarding the management of noise and the conservation of quiet spaces are relevant. Page 133 suggests that the policy document provides guidelines to protect such areas from developments that could significantly increase noise levels and disrupt the tranquillity of the area.

The project's projections for visitor numbers and job creation are too ambitious. They don't align with sustainable development duties or the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015), particularly in terms of economic viability, public investment transparency, and community engagement (PPW, Edition 11, sections 1.11, 1.15, 2.12, 2.28, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 1.3, and 1.16). There are also serious issues with the environmental impact, public access, and the project's compatibility with climate change objectives and financial risk assessments.

Request for Re-evaluation:

We request a re-evaluation of the [Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board's](#)(31) report on the proposed Skyline Development.

We want a better, more collaborative approach to find a sustainable path for Kilvey Hill that respects both community desires, environmental imperatives and the well-being of the community in this area of high deprivation.

We await your response and are ready to provide further information or engage in dialogue as needed.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Jones
Biodiversity Campaigner
Swansea Friends of the Earth

Documents:

- 231026 Deputy Minister for A,S & T to Chair.pdf
- qual-survey-231107.pdf
- quant-survey-231107.pdf
- Petition results Summary_ P-06-1373 Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private dev...
- From ben@zenic on On 07_09_2023 11_45 Re_ Subject_ Concerns and Queries Regarding the Skyline ...
- Comprehensive Assessment of Potential PWW Failures_ Skyline Swansea Project.pdf
- Figure Images Document.pdf
- planning-policy-wales-edition-11_0.pdf
- A numbered list of references Skyline petition.pdf