

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Enterprise and Business Committee

# Active Travel: The Start of the Journey

February 2016

Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



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# Enterprise and Business Committee

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising its expenditure, administration and policy, encompassing economic development; transport and infrastructure; employment; higher education and skills; and research and development, including technology and science.

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## Current Committee membership:



**William Graham (Chair)**  
Welsh Conservatives  
South Wales East



**Mick Antoniw**  
Welsh Labour  
Pontypridd



**Mohammad Asghar**  
Welsh Conservatives  
South Wales East



**Jeff Cuthbert**  
Welsh Labour  
Caerphilly



**Keith Davies**  
Welsh Labour  
Llanelli



**Dafydd Elis-Thomas**  
Plaid Cymru  
Dwyfor Meirionnydd



**Rhun ap Iorwerth**  
Plaid Cymru  
Ynys Môn



**Eluned Parrott**  
Welsh Liberal Democrats  
South Wales Central



**Gwenda Thomas**  
Welsh Labour  
Neath



**Joyce Watson**  
Welsh Labour  
Mid and West Wales

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## Recommendations

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**Recommendation 1.** The Welsh Government should have a specific budget line dedicated to supporting active travel. The budget for active travel should be used for both supporting active travel infrastructure projects and promoting active travel.

**Recommendation 2.** In line with the recommendations in Professor Stuart Cole's report 'Active Travel Independent Ministerial Report', the level of funding for active travel should be reviewed.

**Recommendation 3.** The Welsh Government should ensure that there is sufficient expertise and capacity within the transport team to effectively assess the Existing Route Maps and Integrated Network Maps prepared by local authorities.

**Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government should make sufficient resources available to local authorities for developing their Integrated Network Maps.

**Recommendation 5.** The Welsh Government should make the information held within its central data capture system accessible to the public, in particular for use in map apps.

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should initiate a national population level campaign to promote the benefits of active travel. The campaign should include approaches aimed at reaching all sections of Welsh society, including hard-to-reach groups.

**Recommendation 7.** The Minister should consider how best to engage with the Board and ensure it is effective in implementing the Act.

**Recommendation 8.** The Active Travel Plan should contain a statement of ambition which sets targets for an increase in the number of walking and cycling journeys in Wales. It should also set out how each Welsh Government Department will promote and support active travel.



## Chair's foreword

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The Enterprise and Business Committee originally scrutinised the Active Travel (Wales) Bill in the Spring of 2013. Now that the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 has been in force for just over a year it is an ideal opportunity to carry out some early post-legislative scrutiny on the progress of its implementation.



It is an ambitious Act. It aims to achieve a healthier, more prosperous, more equal and greener Wales by increasing walking and cycling for those of all ages and abilities. This requires changing behaviours as well as investment in infrastructure.

We invited people responsible for making the changes on the ground, and those interested in seeing them succeed, to tell us what they thought of the progress so far. While they told us very clearly that there have been early successes, they also expressed considerable frustration that the full potential of the Act is not being delivered.

This Act has given Wales a tremendous opportunity to lead the way in growing active travel in the UK. Active travel underpins so many of the cross-cutting agendas we want to improve – such as improving health and wellbeing; tackling poverty; protecting the environment and increasing economic prosperity. We need to set the right foundations in the early years of implementing this Act or we will miss out on those benefits for another generation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Graham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

William Graham AM,  
Chair, Enterprise & Business Committee

## Background

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 came into force on 25 September 2014. The Enterprise and Business Committee, which scrutinised the bill during its passage through the Assembly, wanted to look at how it is being implemented. This report assesses the progress of the Welsh Government and local authorities in delivering their duties.

### The Act

The Act requires local authorities to continuously improve routes for walking and cycling, and to prepare maps identifying current and future routes. It also specifies that new roads should be designed with the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in mind. It requires local authorities to publish maps of their routes and to report on the amount of active travel people are undertaking.

The Act also requires the Welsh Government to produce an annual report on active travel, and for both the Welsh Government and local authorities to promote active travel.

More information can be found in the [Explanatory Notes to the Act](#). Further information about the Committee's work on the Act can be accessed here:

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=5750>

### Progress so far

The Welsh Government has published:

- [Direction on Designated Localities](#),
- [Design Guidance](#),
- [Delivery Guidance](#) and
- [The first Active Travel Annual Report](#)

The Active Travel Board was established by the former Minister for Culture and Sport, John Griffiths, to coordinate activity to help implement the Act. It currently has an independent Chair, Emeritus Professor Stuart Cole. The Board's membership is made up of Welsh Government departments (Health, Education, Natural Resources, and Economy and Transport), local authorities, the third sector, Public Health Wales and Natural Resources Wales. The Board meets three times a year.

# 1. Funding and resourcing

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## Recommendations:

**The Welsh Government should have a specific budget line dedicated to supporting active travel. The budget for active travel should be used for both supporting active travel infrastructure projects and promoting active travel.**

**In line with the recommendations in Professor Stuart Cole's report 'Active Travel Independent Ministerial Report', the level of funding for active travel should be reviewed.**

## Key issues raised by stakeholders:

- Stakeholders welcomed the Act. However they say the ability of local authorities to implement it is severely restricted by a lack of funding. Apart from £300,000 for mapping across all local authorities, no new money has been made available.
- The Committee expressed concerns over funding for implementation of the Act in its [Stage 1 Report on the Bill](#) in 2013 (paragraphs 325-329).
- Local authorities have to bid for small pots of Welsh Government money in competition with other transport projects. The annual nature of the funding for transport schemes means that local authorities cannot plan strategically for active travel.
- Stakeholders told us that Wales spends only £3 per head per annum on active travel. They say this needs to increase to £10 per head to have a real impact. Professor Stuart Cole, in his recent [Active Travel Independent Ministerial Report](#), puts current spending at £5 per head per annum, saying that other parts of the UK are spending £10 per head, and that 'catch up expenditure' of £20 per head would be required to reach the levels of active travel in the Netherlands.
- The Committee heard calls for funding to be diverted to active travel from other modes of transport. If funding is transferred from motorised transport to walking and cycling, the Welsh

Government will be sending a signal that it is shifting spending in line with its priorities.

- However, stakeholders understand that budgets are under pressure and they would like to see a dedicated pot of money for active travel, even if additional funding is not possible.
- All large spending projects planned for Wales should contain an active travel component. For instance, the Metro transport project, the City Regions developments and large-scale house building should all allow for active travel. Trains and buses on the Metro project should have dedicated space for bikes.
- Stakeholders say there needs to be a will within local authorities to prioritise active travel, both at political and senior management levels. Stakeholders contrasted the attitudes of local authorities with passionate officials, with those where staff viewed active travel as an add-on to existing workloads. This leads to inconsistency across Wales.

### **Welsh Government response**

- During the Committee meeting on 20 January, Committee Members welcomed the Minister's confirmation that the funding for active travel infrastructure will move from an annual cycle to an indicative three year cycle in order to assist local authorities.
- The Committee also welcomed the Minister's undertaking to explore whether or not it is possible to collate the amount spent on active travel across all Welsh Government Departments, local authorities and Health Boards.
- The Committee welcomed the Minister's commitment to provide the Committee with a breakdown of the £24 million capital funding she said had been allocated to active travel schemes in the Budget for 2016/17.

## 2. The Mapping Process

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### Recommendations

**The Welsh Government should ensure that there is sufficient expertise and capacity within the transport team to effectively assess the Existing Route Maps and Integrated Network Maps prepared by local authorities.**

**The Welsh Government should make sufficient resources available to local authorities for developing their Integrated Network Maps.**

**The Welsh Government should make the information held within its central data capture system accessible to the public, in particular for use in map apps.**

### Key issues raised by stakeholders:

#### *Auditing of existing route maps*

- Stakeholders welcomed the maps as a means of standardising information across Wales. They acknowledged the potential of this resource to promote active travel in Wales.
- A lack of training has contributed to inconsistency amongst local authorities in the audit of existing routes. This could mean we do not have a complete picture of existing routes.
- The deadline for producing Existing Route Maps was extended from September 2015 to January 2016 'to enable local authorities to consult properly, in particular with children and young people.' Stakeholders suggested that not all local authorities had made the best use of this extra time for consultation.
- Stakeholders said that the Welsh Government was slow in issuing statutory guidance. Stakeholders also expressed frustration that training on the Design Guidance did not start until November 2015. We heard comments that another reason for the Welsh Government extending the mapping deadline was that it 'had not got its house in order'.

- Some disability groups comment that they are not happy with the shared space aspect of the design guidance. This is an aspect that most stakeholders agreed needed to be improved.
- Stakeholders called for a dedicated resource for the mapping process amongst local authorities. There were comments that the process had become a tick box exercise.
- Stakeholders would like to have a better understanding of how Existing Route Maps and Integrated Network Maps are going to be assessed. There is also concern about whether the Welsh Government transport team has sufficient resources and expertise to do this.
- More active travel expertise is needed. Stakeholders questioned whether or not the Welsh Government had sufficient expertise to assess the Existing Route Maps and really drive this agenda forwards.
- Some stakeholders called for an audit of the routes people already use for active travel, and that future improvements should build on the routes that people prefer to use now.
- The sanctions for non-compliance need to be clearer and heavier. At the moment, the worst that can happen is that a local authority's map will not be signed off.

### ***Central data capture system***

The Welsh Government developed a central data capture system to assist local authorities in meeting their duties under the Act.

- Stakeholders mentioned that while the Welsh Government had the correct approach of establishing a single, nationally consistent dataset across local authority boundaries, there had been teething problems with the central data capture system which has been difficult to use technically.
- There was an expectation at the beginning of the process that the data held within the Welsh Government's central data capture system would be freely available to app and map developers (such as Google Maps). However, stakeholders say that the data is not yet freely available.
- Stakeholders called for greater efforts to be made to work with Google to show the safest and most convenient route to use,

adding that if this is not happening then funding should be allocated to make this happen.

- There were calls for clarity over the ownership and maintenance of the data. It is important to maintain the data otherwise improvements cannot be assessed over the years. There were calls for a review of the mapping exercise before the next one takes place.

### **Welsh Government response**

The Minister's written evidence stated:

- Following appraisal of the Existing Routes Maps officials will invite local authorities to regional workshops to capture the experience and learning from the first year of implementing the Act, in particular the experience of preparing the Existing Routes Maps and consulting on them and using the Design Guidance to assess and plan active travel routes.
- We recognised that the work involved in the initial survey phase was likely to cause many local authorities problems due to staff constraints and we mitigated this by commissioning a survey covering all designated localities centrally. We added further value by creating an all Wales data capture system that is available to all local authorities to map and plan their active travel routes and which will be used to create the required maps in a consistent format.
- When the survey work took longer than planned, the deadline was extended for the submission of the Existing Routes Maps to give local authorities sufficient time to consult. We are continuing to provide on demand training on this system to address any skills and knowledge barriers. We have also provided training on the Design Guidance and will capture experience and learning in the regional workshops planned following appraisal of the Existing Routes Maps.

At the Enterprise and Business Committee meeting on 20 January the Welsh Government said it was their intention to allow access to the public to the data it had in order for apps such as Google Maps to make them more accessible.

### **3. Promotion**

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#### **Recommendation:**

**The Welsh Government should initiate a national population level campaign to promote the benefits of active travel. The campaign should include approaches aimed at reaching all sections of Welsh society, including hard-to-reach groups.**

#### **Key issues raised by stakeholders:**

- The Act is about behaviour change, therefore promoting active travel effectively is fundamental to its success. Stakeholders would like to see coordinated action, rather than the current 'scattergun' approach.
- Increased walking and cycling provides benefits across a wide range of policy areas, not least public health (e.g. tackling obesity). There needs to be greater coordination across Welsh Government and local authority departments in supporting and promoting active travel.
- Stakeholders believe that local authority consultation skills could be improved, and that the public has 'consultation fatigue'. They say there is a need for good practice guidance on consultation from the Welsh Government.
- They also say that work needs to be done to tackle the barriers that prevent people from walking and cycling, e.g. poor signage on existing routes and the perceived low status of walking and cycling. There are also specific barriers that affect elderly and disabled people, such as a lack of seats on routes, and availability and awareness of toilets.
- Ensuring that the infrastructure in Wales promotes active travel has to come at the design stage, for instance, walkers should not have to cross a road three times at a junction.
- Perceived barriers to walking and cycling include road safety. Wales should have more 20 mph zones and car-free days. Parents fear letting their children walk to school when so many cars are parked just outside and on the surrounding pavements.

- Active travel needs to be integrated with public transport. For instance, the ability to take a bike on a train and bus should be built into the specifications for the Metro.
- There is scope for promotion through other initiatives such as Healthy School schemes, Corporate Health Standards.
- There needs to be a clear signal to planners, through Planning Policy Wales, that they have to take road space away from cars, e.g. fewer parking spaces in new developments, and the Government needs to have the confidence that developers will still build with these restrictions in place.
- There needs to be a large-scale publicity drive to show how people's lives can be transformed. It should focus on hard to reach groups as well as the general population.
- The promotion of active travel in schools had seen a reduction in funding. It has also seen an increase in scope from cycling only, to include both walking and cycling. Whereas the promotion was previously focused on certain geographical areas it is now focused across all of Wales. Stakeholders are concerned that the approach has been 'watered down'.
- Active Travel should be promoted across all Government Departments e.g. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and initiatives to encourage people in to work. The health benefits of active travel are not promoted enough.
- It was noted that highly motivated individuals in local authorities can make a big difference.
- Stakeholders recognised that we are at an early stage and that promotion would be easier once there was a coherent network of routes to promote.

### **Welsh Government response**

The Minister's written evidence stated:

In order to achieve the necessary culture change to allow this to happen, the Act and its supporting guidance emphasise the need for engagement and consultation at every stage. This should not be limited to current walkers and cyclists, but include potential users, with a view to help identify barriers to uptake of walking and cycling and address them through the

prioritisation of improvements....The Act set out that these infrastructure improvements need to be accompanied by promotion of active travel, both by local authorities and by Welsh Ministers. I have put in place a new three year contract, which will deliver Active Travel Promotion in Schools. The contract will achieve more intensive engagement with many primary and secondary schools that have been selected through an appraisal process and also make resources and support available to all schools across Wales.

The Minister's paper stresses the 'need for public engagement and consultation at every stage' and notes that the [Annual Active Travel Conference](#), held in November, focused on culture change by widening the appeal of walking and cycling.

The [Active Travel Annual Report](#) notes that the Welsh Government funds Travel Plan Co-ordinators who work across Wales. Their aim is to support public and private employers to develop travel plans, to increase levels of walking and cycling, and reduce reliance on private cars. The Report says that this is complemented by the 'National Active Travel Challenge' (led by the Welsh Government's Department for Health and Social Services).

## 4. Leadership

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### Recommendations:

**The Minister should consider how best to engage with the Board and ensure it is effective in implementing the Act.**

**The Active Travel Plan should contain a statement of ambition which sets targets for an increase in the number of walking and cycling journeys in Wales. It should also set out how each Welsh Government Department will promote and support active travel.**

### Key issues raised by stakeholders:

- Stakeholders are concerned that there is a lack of leadership from the Welsh Government in pushing the active travel agenda in Wales. Examples of this include: the lack of dedicated funding, the time taken to commence the Act and issue guidance and the lack of a coordinated approach to promotion.
- The clearest indication of priority is the amount of funding allocated. Stakeholders were highly critical of the funding allocated so far.
- Stakeholders told us that they were disappointed at the delay in publishing the next Active Travel Action Plan, and that the responses to the consultation on the action plan have yet to be published. They are also disappointed at what they say has been limited input from the Active Travel Board in developing the new action plan.
- The Action Plan needs to have ambitions and outcomes. For instance, a commitment to ensuring walking and cycling account for at least 10% of journeys in Wales. It should set out a baseline level of active travel and a clear target, with realistic steps to get there.
- Stakeholders said that active travel is not integrated with other legislation and policy. For example, active travel is not included as an indicator for The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, or included in the Public Health Bill.
- There was also a call for leadership at local and community levels. The new Public Service Boards, established under The Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015, were

identified as having a key leadership role in ensuring progress takes place.

- Stakeholders said that the Welsh Government does not make good use of the expertise on the Active Travel Board. They called for a clearer role for the Board and a firmer commitment from Welsh Government to supporting the Board to be ambitious. We were told that the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport does not attend the Active Travel Board, and that Government departments' attendance is sporadic. Board members feel this undermines the status of the Board and shows that the Minister does not take active travel seriously.
- Active travel should feature in all Welsh Government policies, for instance the Planning Bill and the Public Health Bill should include a duty to consider Active Travel.
- There should be an acknowledgement of the way Active Travel can promote economic benefits, it should be an integral part of the new City Regions and the Metro.
- Stakeholders would like to see the National Assembly for Wales take a more proactive approach to holding the Welsh Government to account in scrutinising the support for active travel. -.

## Welsh Government response

The Minister's written evidence stated that realising these benefits is not a task the Welsh Government can achieve alone: 'it requires the joined effort of the whole Welsh public sector, third sector partners, businesses and not least the Welsh public, including parents, teachers, commuters, shoppers.'

Elsewhere the paper stresses that the Act 'is in its first full year and therefore still in its infancy' and 'where commitment, resources or skills are not in place, implementation is likely to suffer'. The paper says that the Welsh Government has taken a number of steps to address barriers to implementation:

- Recognising local authority staff constraints:
- Commissioned a single central survey covering all designated localities in Wales;
- Created the all Wales data capture system;
- Extending the submission deadline for the Existing Routes Maps to give local authorities sufficient time to consult; and
- Providing training, including on the Design Guidance.

The Minister's paper says the benefits of active travel cover a very wide spectrum and can be measured against all seven of The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 Goals. It states that the Action Plan will now be 'finalised' in February:

We consulted on a draft Active Travel Action Plan last year. Feedback from the consultation and from the Active Travel Board ... suggested that the Action Plan would benefit from a different approach and structure. We also decided to align the Plan more closely to the goals of The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

In the Committee meeting of the 20 January 2015 the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport disagreed with the suggestion that her attendance at the Active Travel Board meetings would signal a greater commitment to the agenda, saying:

"I am content that I have the expertise within that panel, with an excellent chair, to advise me appropriately." (para 41)

## 5. Conclusions

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The Enterprise and Business Committee applauds the ambition of the Act which aims to make walking and cycling to school, work and for other activities routine. We know that the Act is still in its infancy, however, we want to ensure that sound building blocks are in place now in order to achieve the shift towards a healthier and greener way of travelling.

The Committee is concerned about whether sufficient funding and resources have been made available to support the Act. We are concerned at the lack of progress on this agenda, particularly the way that funding allocations may have mitigated against ambitious projects. The move to indicative three year allocations will make it easier to plan infrastructure projects – but without an increase in the share of the transport budget available to active travel, progress will remain slow.

The Committee felt that greater promotion of the active travel agenda was key to bringing about culture change. We are calling for a nationwide promotion campaign that show the benefits of active travel to those who find it hardest to get involved. This agenda needs to be promoted across the whole of government, by all Ministers. Every department needs to demonstrate what it is doing to increase levels of active travel in Wales.

Some of this will mean making choices which prioritise active travel over motoring and re-allocating space as well as resources to support this aim. This will only work if the Welsh Government has the confidence to see through what it has started with its own legislation. The Committee is concerned that, on the evidence of the first year and a half, the Government's commitment to this agenda has started to waver before it has properly begun.

## **6. Evidence gathering**

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The Enterprise and Business Committee invited a range of stakeholders for a one day inquiry on 20 January 2016 to find out how all of the relevant bodies are preparing for and carrying out their new obligations.

The Committee is grateful to the following stakeholders for contributing to our round table discussion:

Access Design Solutions  
CTC, the national cycling charity  
Chwarae Teg  
Disability Wales  
Exegesis  
Guide Dogs Cymru  
Institution of Civil Engineers  
Living Streets  
Bridgend County Borough Council  
Pedal Power  
Professor Colin G Pooley, Lancaster University  
Public Health Wales  
Ramblers Cymru  
Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru  
RNIB  
Sustrans  
Welsh Local Government Association