

SC(3) CR-Plan 8

Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Carbon Reduction in Wales: Carbon Reduction via Planning

Reponse from South-West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium

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National Assembly for Wales
Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Carbon Reduction in Wales: The Role of the Planning System
Carbon Reduction.

Response from SWWITCH

1. Background

1.1 The South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH) comprises the four local authorities in south west Wales, namely Carmarthenshire County Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Pembrokeshire County Council and the City and County of Swansea.

1.2 SWWITCH was formed in 1998 in recognition of the need to work collaboratively to improve access and transport and thus facilitate economic development and improved quality of life. SWWITCH has evolved over the years and is now headed by a formal Joint Committee. The Committee meets quarterly and includes elected Members from each of the authorities along with key stakeholders including:

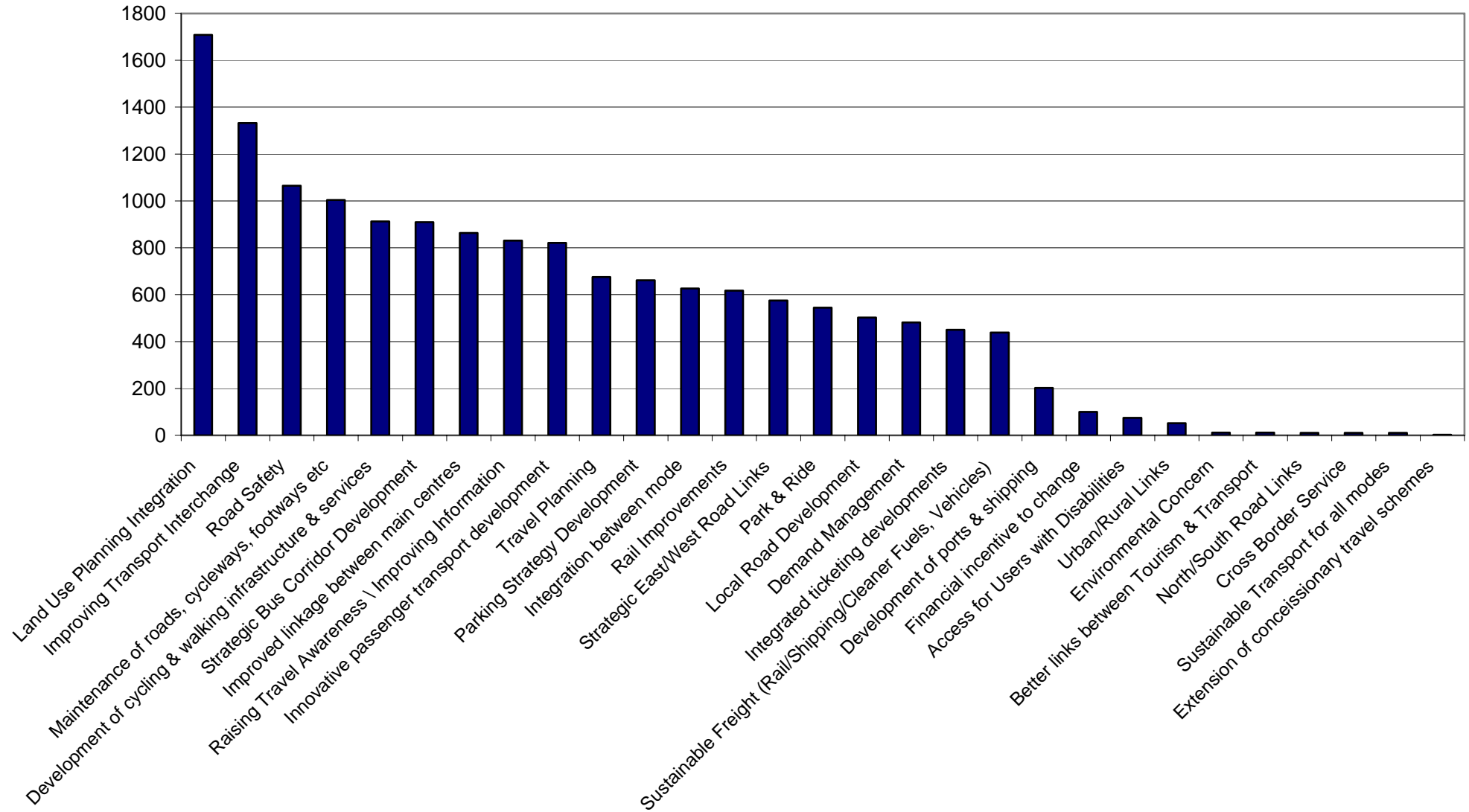
- Transport providers,
- Representatives for transport users,
- Economic/business representatives
- Environmental group representatives, and
- The Welsh Assembly Government

2 Regional Transport Plan preparation

2.1 SWWITCH has been preparing the Regional Transport Plan for south west Wales for the past two and a half years in a very interactive way. At the initial consultation on problems and opportunities, the need to improve land use transport integration was identified as a key issue. When consultees were asked to consider the most important elements of the Long Term strategy for the region, land use planning was given the highest overall priority (see Table 10 from Consultation draft RTP below).

Table 10

Long Term Strategy Element Ranking - Composite



2.2 The general view from a wide range of consultees and stakeholders was that land use changes over the past few decades, in particular the development of out of town and peripheral retail and office developments have significantly contributed to unsustainable transport trends, such as:

- Increased % of journeys by car use for all journey purposes
- Longer car journeys
- Increased congestion and air quality problems
- Social exclusion for those without access to a car
- Declining bus services
- Weaker local and town centre.

3 Responses

Q 1 What particular actions do you think the Welsh Assembly Government should be taking to ensure that the land use planning system in Wales encourages greater progress towards the achievement of carbon reduction targets?

Response: Planning Policy Wales was published in 2002, its references include Transport Wales Into the Future (1998) and the Transport Framework, 2001. Planning Policy Wales needs to be brought up to date to take account of the Stern and Eddington Reports, the Wales Transport Strategy and Wales Spatial Plan and the Climate Change Act 2008 and to recognise how land use transport integration can contribute to more sustainable transport patterns.

Q 2 What particular actions do you think the Local Planning Authorities in Wales should be taking to ensure that the land use planning system in Wales encourages greater progress towards the achievement of carbon reduction targets?

Response: A revised Planning Policy Wales and a strengthened TAN18 should give LPAs the tools to ensure that LDP allocations and the determination of planning applications explicitly assesses the climate change implications of planning decisions.

Q3 What are your views on the Assembly Government's revised proposals for planning for climate change? In particular, do they go far enough in implementing the previous recommendations of the Committee?

Response: SWWITCH considers that the July 2008 consultation proposals broadly takes account of the Committee's recommendations in terms of building standards and energy sources

Q What changes to the planning system are needed to ensure that low carbon technologies are introduced more extensively into residential properties in Wales?

Response: SWWITCH is not in a position to respond to this question.

Q What needs to be done to ensure better co-ordination between land-use planning and transport planning?

Response: the reasons for the historical lack of coordination between land use planning and transport planning and operations are complex. Contributory factors include the privatisation and deregulation of public transport and the lack of effective transport planning guidance before the introduction of TAN 18 in Wales and the 1998 Transport White Paper. It should be recognised that many land use developments permitted over the past few decades will never be able to be effectively served by public transport due their location and layout. It is also important to recognise that synergy between LDPs, RTPs and the Wales Spatial Plan is not easy to achieve due to the differences in preparation timescales and the areas covered.

A revised and strengthened TAN18 needs to provide an effective and practical approach to assessing fully the transport impact of land use proposals. In 2007 a revised version of TAN 18 was issued which provided a new approach to the preparation of Transport Assessments, including Transport Implementation Strategy. However this new approach was not accompanied by any best practice guidance, workshops for practitioners or promotional material. Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, most Transport Assessments submitted are still little more than traditional Traffic Impact Assessments with some token reference to bus services and walking and cycling facilities. While this approach probably reflects the concerns of most local councillors and members of the public, this is essentially a predict and provide approach rather than one which supports sustainable transport.

Q Does the Welsh Assembly Government's new transport strategy, One Wales: Connecting the Nation give sufficient emphasis to this issue?

Response: This strategy clearly sets out five strategic priorities, including: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts

What is unclear however is how these Strategy Priorities will be used in practice to evaluate schemes and projects and how environmental and economic implications are balanced or offset. For example, a new road scheme may improve connectivity or journey time reliability, thereby economic development but at the same time encourage unsustainable transport patterns such as long distance commuting.

Q What are your views on the current and proposed planning regimes for the consideration of large-scale energy projects in Wales?

Response: SWWITCH is not in a position to respond to this question.

Q What changes to Technical Advice Note 8 (Planning and Renewable Energy) would you wish to see?

Response: SWWITCH is not in a position to respond to this question.

