



Roads

Introduction

There are 33,100 kilometres of highway in Wales, of which 4,300 kilometres are principal and trunk roads and motorways. 75% of households in Wales have one or more cars/vans available, with a higher proportion in rural Wales. Some 70% of personal journeys in Wales are by car, slightly above the GB average.

The Assembly Government's Trunk Road Forward Programme lists major improvement and new road schemes. This includes the new M4 from Magor to Castleton and improvements to the A465 Heads of the Valleys road.

The Assembly Government pays Transport Grant to local authorities for a range of transport schemes, including building new roads and improvements to existing roads.

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

Under the *Government of Wales Act 2006*, the National Assembly for Wales can seek legislative competence through Acts of Parliament or Legislative Competence Orders (LCOs) to make a piece of law in the form of an 'Assembly Measure'. Measures can only be made in a specific policy area (or 'Matter') added to one of the 20 'Fields' (or broad subject areas) which are contained in Schedule 5 of the Act.

As "Highways and Transport" is Field 10 of Schedule 5 to the Act, the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers in this area. Currently there are no matters in this field, but the Local Transport Bill currently before Parliament would add a matter relating to Trunk Road user charging.

Responsibility for roads is devolved to Wales. Highway authorities are responsible for road maintenance and repairs, and building new roads. The Assembly is the highway authority for trunk roads (motorways and some A roads) and the 22 unitary authorities are the highway authorities for all other roads.

Other powers devolved to Welsh Ministers include:

- Powers to regulate traffic using highways (*Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984*)
- Power to promote road safety (*Road Traffic Act 1988*)
- Traffic management measures (*Traffic Management Act 2004*)

Matters reserved to the UK government include: policing; national speed limits; road signs; vehicle construction and use regulations; vehicle testing and licensing; driver testing and licensing; the Highway Code.

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

The Local Transport Bill currently before Parliament includes additional powers for the Assembly Government relating to road pricing. The Bill includes a new Framework Power under which the Assembly would be able to legislate for the making, operation and enforcement of pricing schemes in respect of trunk roads in Wales.

EU Policy

The EU adopted its transport policy White paper in 2001 and carried out a review of this policy in 2006. It has identified roads that form part of Trans-European Networks (TENs). In Wales the TENs are the M4/A48/A40/A477 corridor to the ports of Pembroke Dock and Fishguard in South Wales and the A55 to Holyhead in North Wales.

Key Welsh Government strategy documents and action plans:

The Assembly Government's *One Wales* document includes the following commitments:

"We will improve transport between communities across Wales by investing in many different modes of travel. We will develop and implement a programme for improved North-South links, including travel by road and rail.

We will press ahead with improvements to major road links between the North, the West and the South of Wales, investing over £50 million for this purpose over the four year Assembly term.¹"

*One Wales: Connecting the Nation*², the transport strategy for Wales was published in May 2008.

The strategy will be followed by a National Transport Plan in 2009 and four Regional Transport Plans to be prepared by the Regional Transport Consortia.

The Welsh Assembly Government set out their plans for the future maintenance and improvement of trunk roads in Wales, in the March 2002 report, *Trunk Road Forward Programme*³. Following a review of Transport Policy in 2004, the Assembly Government issued updated information on the programmes⁴

This updated information was integrated into four priority phases as follows:

- 'Phase 1' – programmes due to start by March 2007;
 - 'Phase 2' – programmes that could be ready to start by April 2010;
 - 'Phase 3' – programmes that are unlikely to start before April 2010, and;
- 'On hold' – recognised programmes that have no proposed start dates.

Useful Links

- Welsh Assembly Government website transport pages:
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/?lang=en>
- South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA):
<http://www.sewta.gov.uk/>
- South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH):
<http://www.swwitch.org.uk/default.asp?id=1>
- TraCC (Mid-Wales):
<http://www.tracc.gov.uk/>
- Taith (North Wales):
<http://www.taith.gov.uk/>

Further information

For further information about transport matters, please contact please contact Graham Winter, Members' Research Service (Graham.Winter@wales.gsi.gov.uk), 029 2089 8166

¹ [One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales](#), An agreement between the Labour and Plaid Cymru Groups in the National Assembly, June 2007

² Welsh Assembly Government, [One Wales: Connecting the Nation, The Wales Transport Strategy](#), May 2008

³ Welsh Assembly Government, [Trunk Road Forward Programme2002](#)

⁴ Welsh Assembly Government, [Trunk Road Forward Programme2004 Update](#)