

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd / Priorities for the Sixth Senedd
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
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Ymateb gan Sustrans / Evidence from Sustrans



Submission of evidence to the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee on Priorities for the Sixth Senedd Term

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About Sustrans

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle. We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Sustrans works in partnership, bringing people together to find the right solutions. We make the case for walking and cycling by using robust evidence and showing what can be done. We are grounded in communities and believe that grassroots support combined with political leadership drives real change, fast.

The focus of this evidence submission is the delivery of a sustainable and accessible transport network for Wales. This evidence is relevant to the following priorities identified by the Minister for Climate Change in her letter to the Committee Chair: Climate Change, Net Zero, Transport and Town Centre Regeneration.

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Introduction

The sixth Senedd term is critical for transport in Wales with a new transport strategy setting ambitious targets for modal shift and climate change becoming a pressing issue. Providing effective transport solutions which allow people to make sustainable journeys and reduce car travel must be the priority over the coming years.

In order to achieve climate change targets, there needs to be a significant increase in the number of people using public transport or travelling actively. The Welsh Government's

commitment for Wales to become an active travel nation requires investment into both infrastructure and behaviour change.

This paper makes recommendations for Ministerial and committee priorities in order to deliver an increase in the number of people travelling actively.

Key points

- **Transport is one of the highest carbon emitting sectors in Wales, accounting for 17% of Wales' greenhouse gas emissions. Increasing sustainable travel options and promoting behaviour change must be a priority for this Senedd term.**
- **Investment into infrastructure for sustainable transport and active travel is needed as well as support for behaviour change programmes to ensure individuals have the confidence and skills needed to travel differently.**
- **Those with protected characteristics tend to be under-represented in delivery and participation of active travel. Increasing inclusion must also be a key priority for this Government.**

Detailed response

Increase no. & diversity of people travelling actively

In order to achieve the Welsh Government's climate change targets, we know we need to increase the number of people travelling actively. Encouraging more people to make everyday journeys on foot or by bike would reduce the number of short-distance car journeys and tackle emissions.

Our Cardiff Bike Life report published in 2019 found that every day cycling in Cardiff takes up to 14,000 cars off the road and saves 6,500 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year¹. There are also benefits for health through the prevention of serious long-term health conditions and a reported £33.7m economic benefit for individuals in the city². An analysis of individuals from lower socio-economic groups tells us that 73% of residents in groups D & E never cycle and would like to. This amounts to 1,900 individuals in Cardiff alone³.

Currently, we know that it is predominantly white males who are cycling and we need to do more to tackle barriers for those with protected characteristics. Women, for example, are not a minority group but are less likely than men to travel by cycle (14% compared with 31%)⁴. Our research tell us that two-thirds of both men and women think cycle safety needs to be improved and 80% say that good quality infrastructure is key to helping us increase the number of people cycling⁵. Since this report was published, Cardiff has made great strides

¹ Sustrans (2019) Bike Life – Cardiff, Available at: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/bike-life/bike-life-cardiff>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

in the roll out of cycling infrastructure and this now needs to be mirrored by other towns and cities across Wales.

In Cardiff, 50% more non-disabled people than disabled people cycle (26% compared with 12%)⁶. One of the issues we hear about on a regular basis from people with disabilities wanting to access the National Cycle Network is that access barriers make it impossible. Fear of anti-social behaviour is preventing authorities from providing access to those who need it most. It is also preventing access for a range of different cycles as well as wheelchairs and pushchairs. The market is diversifying and cargo bikes, adapted cycles, tandems, trailers and more are becoming increasingly common. In order to achieve the Welsh Government's vision for Wales to become an 'active travel nation'⁷ the National Cycle Network needs to be barrier free so that it can be a space for everyone.

In order to achieve an increase in active travel, Wales needs clear targets which should include indicators for diversity. It will also be critical to invest in behaviour change programmes to increase skills and confidence to make active travel the number one choice for everyday journeys.

Recommendations:

- **Develop clear targets for active travel to monitor the number and diversity of people travelling actively.**
- **Require that Local Authorities remove access barriers on the National Cycle Network to ensure routes are provided for everyone.**
- **Invest in behaviour change programmes to increase confidence and skills so that individuals can make more active journeys.**

Budget & investment

Up until now, the transport system in Wales has heavily focused on the private car. While 62% of the transport capital budget was being spent on building new roads⁸, 23% of the population of Wales does not have access to a car⁹. By comparison, Wales has one of the lowest per capita spends on public transport in the UK¹⁰.

We must reduce motor vehicle use rapidly and fairly. For this to happen, our focus needs to shift away from investing in our trunk road network and towards prioritising the improvement and development of our rail, bus and active travel services. While there is not a single solution, it is clear that building new roads only encourages more people to drive through

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021. Available at: <https://gov.wales/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021>

⁸ Future Generations Report 2020, Commission for the Wellbeing of Future Generations. Available at: <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Chap-5-Transport.pdf>

⁹ Statistical Bulletin: Public Service Vehicles (buses and taxis), Welsh Government. Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-03/public-service-vehicles-buses-and-taxis-april-2017-to-march-2018_0.pdf

¹⁰ Investigation into devolved funding, HM Treasury. Available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Investigation-into-devolved-funding.pdf>

'induced demand'. Analysis of road schemes shows that road building increases traffic by up to 47%, over and above background traffic growth.¹¹

We commend Welsh Government for making the decision to review all road-building projects that do not yet have a spade in the ground. We now expect funding cycles and budget allocation for transport to reflect the same bold leadership which demonstrates commitment to change.

Following the decisions from the Scottish Government to bring Active Travel funding to at least £320m or 10% of the total transport budget by 2024-25¹², and in the light of the commitment set out in Llwybr Newydd to make Wales an Active Travel Nation by 2030, we expect similar levels of bold leadership from Welsh Government.

One issue that we are aware of is that Local Authorities face challenges in procuring the skills and expertise that they need to deliver effective active travel schemes. Currently, whilst commissioning frameworks do include transport, the weighing favours service providers that deliver conventional 'car-focused' transport networks which goes against what the Welsh Government is trying to achieve. In order to ensure a clear message about the importance of active travel, Wales needs to ensure the procurement framework supports Authorities to commission the expertise needed to deliver. There is a skills shortage in active travel and we believe an active travel framework would also drive skills development within delivery organisations, leading to an overall improvement in the quality of infrastructure.

Recommendations:

- **Dedicate at least 10% of the total transport budget to active travel to ensure Local Authorities are equipped to deliver the Active Travel Act.**
- **Create a separate capital fund of £20m each year for the development and improvement of the National Cycle Network to ensure it is well maintained and fully accessible for everyone.**
- **Develop an active travel framework for procurement to ensure Local Authorities can access the skills they need and drive standards in the sector.**

Place-making

Wales faces significant challenges when it comes to air quality. Public Health Wales estimates that there are the equivalent of around 2,700 deaths attributable to fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) exposure - each year in Wales¹³. Poor air quality will remain a problem without a reduction in overall car use, given that tyre and brake wear account for up to 45% of particulate emissions. The people most likely to suffer from the impact of poor air quality are those least likely to have contributed such as those in deprived

¹¹ Transport for Quality of Life and CPRE, 2017. The end of the road. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/TfQLZZTheZImpactZofZRoadZProjectsZinZEnglandZ2017.pdf>

¹² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-and-scottish-green-party-shared-policy-programme/pages/responding-to-the-climate-emergency/>

¹³ 'Estimating the mortality burden of air pollution in Wales'. Available at: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/opendoc/317890>

communities, older people, children and people with disabilities. Furthermore, cars represent a physical danger in our communities which again, impacts vulnerable people.

As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, there was an acceleration of active travel schemes across Local Authorities. As restrictions have eased, many of these schemes have been removed in Wales which means it has not been possible to gauge how effective these schemes would be now people are travelling again. We are also aware of pedestrianisation schemes being removed despite Welsh Government policy being clear that we should be encouraging people to walk and cycle. Schemes have been delivered at public expense and are being removed at great cost also. If Wales is going to achieve climate targets and improve public health, we must ensure decisions which deliver national policy and strategy.

There are some examples of good practice in Wales with some authorities taking forward school streets projects¹⁴ or offering free bus travel¹⁵. At the same time, we are also seeing 'free parking in the town centre' offers and the removal of green space to create more parking bays. We are all very aware that the Welsh Government and some Local Authorities have declared a climate emergency and during this Senedd term, we need to see evidence of this commitment through a change of approach at a local level.

Recommendations:

- **Increase the level of ambition at a local level to deliver walking and cycling initiatives and encourage sustainable travel.**

Reducing car dependency

Diesel and petrol cars are a major contributor to transport emissions. Solutions like electric vehicles can help with reducing tailpipe emissions, however, emissions from manufacturing and from electricity generation for EVs remain, as well as severe particulate matter pollution.

The Tyndall Centre for climate change research has found that even if all new cars were ULEVs by 2035 (80% battery electric, 20% plug-in hybrids), a 58% reduction in car mileage between 2016 and 2035 would be needed for car CO2 emissions to be in line with a 'well below 2°C' pathway¹⁶. Transport for Quality of Life also estimate that necessary mileage reduction could be as low as 20% or as high as 60% by 2030 (assuming a 2040 ban)¹⁷.

This is why, it needs to be understood that a switch to electric cars cannot be the whole solution. Instead, the focus should be on reducing the number of vehicles on the road.

Other practical considerations of electric vehicles are around charging facilities. We have already seen chargers installed on the pavement by some local authorities in Wales and we know that households in some areas are running a cable across the pavement to charge the vehicle. This clearly disadvantages pedestrians and vulnerable road users. The cost of

¹⁴ Nurse, R. (2021) Fairfield Primary School in Penarth Aims to Improve Air Quality for Children. Available at: <https://www.penarthtimes.co.uk/news/19480494.fairfield-primary-school-penarth-aims-improve-air-quality-children/>

¹⁵ Arlow, C. (2021) Bus Travel Will Be Free to All Four-Days-A-Week in Swansea This Summer. Available at: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/swansea-council-free-bus-travel-21099366>

¹⁶ Friends of the Earth (2019) More than electric cars, available at: <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/more-electric-cars>

¹⁷ Ibid.

electric cars is a barrier for many and the focus on switching to EV risks creating an even wider gap in those who have access to transport and those who do not.

There can be no doubt that Covid-19 has changed the way we move around and we welcome the Welsh Government's ambition to engender more homeworking and use of sustainable transport in the future. With our lives increasingly normalising again, we are now, however, facing the resurgence of private vehicles on our roads, with car usage creeping back to pre-pandemic levels or higher¹⁸.

Without concerted action from the Welsh Government and key delivery partners, there is a real risk that the recovery from Covid-19 will be heavily car dependent, with all the social, environmental and economic costs that comes with excessive reliance on private vehicles without a viable sustainable transport alternative.

Recommendation:

- **Conduct an urgent inquiry into options for reducing car dependency to avoid a car-led recovery and deliver change as quickly and effectively as possible.**

Conclusion

We know that to achieve climate goals, we need to reduce reliance on the private car and increase the number of people travelling actively. The Welsh Government has shown increasing support for active travel which is welcome. As Llwybr Newydd and the Programme for Government set out a vision for Wales to become an Active Travel Nation, we now need further action to make this a reality. Furthermore, we need focus and investment on sustainable travel options along with funding for behaviour change to reduce the number of car journeys and support the switch to sustainable travel.

¹⁸ Road Traffic Statistics, UK Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/road-traffic-statistics-tra>