

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith](#) | [Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee](#)

[Bil yr Amgylchedd \(Ansawdd Aer a Seinweddau\) \(Cymru\) | The Environment \(Air Quality and Soundscapes\) \(Wales\) Bill](#)

Ymateb gan Cycling UK | Evidence from Cycling UK

General principles

What are your views on the general principles of the Bill, and is there a need for legislation to deliver the stated policy intention?

Firstly, thank you for consulting on the Bill. Cycling UK appreciates the chance to respond.

Cycling UK is a membership charity (cyclinguk.org), whose mission is to see a cleaner, happier and healthier world, and to enable millions more people to cycle. As such, we are focusing our response on the role of active travel (cycling, walking and wheeling) in reducing emissions from transport.

As member of Healthy Air Cymru (HAC), we share serious concerns over the health impact of polluted air. We therefore support HAC's position on the Bill's principles, and strongly agree that legislation is needed. (Please refer to Healthy Air Cymru's separate response).

Please also refer to Cycling UK's briefing on cycling and air quality: cyclinguk.org/briefing/case-cycling-air-quality

What are your views on the Bill's provisions (set out according to sections below), in particular are they workable and will they deliver the stated policy intention?

National air quality targets (sections 1 to 7)

We agree with Healthy Air Cymru that the Bill should specify that new NO₂ targets must be set.

Road transport is the top source of NO₂, exceeding the shares of energy and of industrial combustion. This affects many people in the short and long term, including road users (both inside and outside vehicles), and pedestrians on the pavement. The problem is especially acute in urban areas where exhaust fumes are more likely to be contained by buildings lining the road.

Setting targets for NO₂ (and, of course, other tailpipe emissions and tyre/brake wear pollutants) would not simply help deliver the Bill's stated intention, but also complement other policy goals in Wales.

Importantly, these other goals include Net Zero ambitions "to reduce the number of car miles travelled per person by 10% by 2030 and to increase the proportion of trips by sustainable travel mode (public transport and active travel) to 35% by 2025 and 39% by 2030".

Not only that, but Wales's objectives for well-being and higher levels physical activity in the interests of public health would in turn enjoy a better chance of success too.

The Bill should also state unambiguously that Wales's targets must be consistent with the WHO's science-based guidelines and reflect all subsequent updates to them. If not, there is a risk that (as HAC says), a minister could set less stringent targets and compromise the crucial ambition for cleaner air.

We also stress, along with HAC, that the Bill should state that ministers 'must' set long-term targets (not merely 'may' set them), and require ministers to report on progress annually. Similarly, we feel the Bill must be clear about lines of legal redress, should the legal limits be exceeded.

Promoting awareness about air pollution (section 8)

In light of the heavy contribution of motor vehicles to levels of NO₂, it is vital for informational campaigns to include advice on switching from driving to active travel as a behavioural change solution, especially for short journeys or in combination with public transport.

We stress, however, that campaigns to persuade people to alter polluting travel habits must be accompanied by a strong, well-resourced commitment to provide properly for the alternatives.

This makes it all the more important to improve conditions for walking and cycling, and help people change their travel habits. We therefore believe that some of the revenue from charging CAZ schemes should go towards such measures (for more on this, please see our response to Q2.vii below).

National air quality strategy (sections 9 to 11)

Please see HAC's response to this question.

Air quality regulations (section 12)

No comment

Local air quality management (sections 13 to 15)

We agree with HAC that the current process for monitoring national and local air pollution is weak and confusing, so welcome the explanatory memorandum's acknowledgement of this and, especially, for local authorities to agree and commit to a compliance date.

It is clear that all too many local authorities are failing to strike off their AQMAs from the list, and fail to do so for years. NO₂, moreover, features in virtually all of them.

New targets based on increasingly stringent WHO limits will add to their challenge but, again, using some of the revenue from charging CAZs to help fund high-quality improvements for active travel would boost local authorities' chances of managing air quality (cost)effectively now and in the future, particularly as far as the main problem – exhaust fumes – are concerned.

Smoke control (sections 16 to 18)

No comment

Vehicle emissions (sections 19 to 21)

In answer to Q2i above, we noted road transport's alarming contribution to NO₂, but this is not to play down its share of PM emissions and how harmful these are too.

For instance, we found it highly disturbing to learn from a recent study that babies in low-level pushchairs are exposed to 44% higher fine particle concentrations by the roadside than adults, with brake/tyre wear emissions dominating at 'baby height'. (Sharma A, Prashant K, 2020).

Llwybr Newydd should, in theory, make a positive difference to levels of polluting traffic by boosting active travel and, in doing so, help deliver the Bill's policy intention.

Unfortunately, though, we are not as confident as we would like to be about the delivery of Llwybr Newydd's active travel objectives, which is why we believe that the new plan for active travel (as promised in the National Transport Delivery Plan (NTDP)) must be timely, detailed, robust and well-resourced.

It is clear too that realising the transformative change promised by the Active Travel Act 2013 has suffered from lack of resources and funding (please see the Cross Party Group on the Active Travel Act's review of the Act, July 2022). If this continues, Wales will also fall well short of maximising the potential of walking and cycling to tackle air pollution.

Making active travel more appealing means investing in high-quality infrastructure and behaviour change programmes, and we know that the returns are high: for every £1 invested, walking and cycling returns an average of around £5-6 (DfT, 2015).

Also, apart from enabling cycling, facilities such as segregated cycle paths take space from cars and move motor traffic away from building facades where long-term exposure to exhaust fumes is likely to occur.

This is why we believe that:

- CAZs should feature in properly funded local network improvements for active travel; - there should be a presumption in favour of charging CAZs; and
- some of revenue from CAZs should be used to fund active and sustainable travel measures.

We therefore query the Bill's intention to alter the arrangements over net proceeds raised from charging schemes, and strongly advise a rethink to ensure that active travel cannot possibly lose out.

We are aware that it is difficult for some people to accept the prospect of being charged for driving in certain areas because they don't feel they have any alternative, sustainable or otherwise. Knowing that the revenue is going towards making the alternatives more viable and appealing for them, however, might help.

On road charging more generally, we advocate the 'polluter pays' principle, but urge that, when the details of charging schemes are worked up, they are indeed both fair and equitable (which, we note, the NTDP also wants them to be).

For more detail on Cycling UK's thoughts on improving air quality through active travel, which includes a discussion on cycling in polluted environments, please see [cyclinguk.org/briefing/case-cycling-air-quality](https://www.cyclinguk.org/briefing/case-cycling-air-quality)

National soundscapes strategy (sections 22 and 23)

No comment

Strategic noise map and noise action plans (sections 24)

No comment

General provisions (sections 25 to 28);

No comment

What are the potential barriers to the implementation of the Bill's provisions and how does the Bill take account of them?

Given the contribution that active travel could make to achieving the Bill's intention, we suggest that inadequate funding for walking, cycling and wheeling (and local authorities' capacity/skills to develop and implement effective, high-quality schemes) could prove a significant barrier (please see our response to Q2.vii, Vehicle Emissions).

How appropriate are the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the Explanatory Memorandum)?

No comment

Are any unintended consequences likely to arise from the Bill?

No comment

What are your views on the Welsh Government's assessment of the financial implications of the Bill as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum?

Please see HAC's response.

Are there any other issues that you would like to raise about the Bill and the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum or any related matters?

No comment