

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Cyllid](#) ar [Cyllideb Ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru 2024-25](#).

This response was submitted to the [Finance Committee](#) consultation on the [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25](#).

WGDB_24-25 15 : Ymateb gan: Sustrans Cymru (Saesneg yn unig) | Response from: Sustrans Cymru (English only)



SENEDD CYMRU'S FINANCE COMMITTEE CALL FOR EVIDENCE

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2024-25

SUBMISSION FROM SUSTRANS CYMRU

Summary

Wales' funding for active travel has increased significantly since 2018, when the Active Travel Fund was established, and a funding target for active travel of up to £20 per person was set.

That funding target has not been adjusted to take into account inflation, the impact of previous funding, or the fact that in Scotland spending has significantly outpaced Wales, now at £58 per person for active travel.

There is a discrepancy between revenue funding and capital funding (£0.44 to £22.93), that is not common in other areas of the transport budget. There must be more revenue funding to supplement and enhance the impact of the capital expenditure, and to deliver more work that is not traditional capital spend, such as behaviour change projects.

This paper provides background into recent events relating to active travel, and other information to inform future funding decisions in Wales. Please note that we have restricted our response to our area of expertise, active travel, which is core to our mission as a charity and we are funded to deliver on behalf of the Welsh Government and other public bodies.

Background

Sustrans Cymru

1. Sustrans is a UK-wide charity, making it easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle. We involve communities in shaping our towns and cities. Together we campaign for and create spaces where everyone can move around safely and give people the tools and confidence to get out of their cars.
2. Sustrans Cymru is a delivery partner to the Welsh Government, Welsh local authorities and other organisations in the public and private sector in Wales. We deliver projects to improve active travel infrastructure, and projects that give individuals and organisations the tools and skills they need to participate in active travel. We founded and are custodians of the national cycle network, which in Wales is maintained by our staff and many volunteers. We advocate for active travel publicly and through formal bodies including the Active Travel Board and the Cross Party Group on the Active Travel Act.

Policies relating to active travel

3. Llwybr Newydd, the Wales transport strategy, sets the Welsh Government's target at 45% of journeys to be made sustainably by 2040. This includes public transport, as well as walking and cycling. In Wales, according to the 2021 census, 11% of people travelling to work did so by cycle or on foot.
4. Legislation includes the Active Travel Act, which imposed a duty on local authorities to develop active travel network maps. Active travel is not only confined to transport policies, but is firmly embedded in cross-cutting legislation and policies such as the Well-being of

Future Generations Act, Net Zero Wales 2050, and the forthcoming Environment Bill (Air Quality and Soundscapes).

Active travel progress in recent years

5. Active travel has undergone a sea-change over the last few years. Since the Active Travel Act was enacted in 2013, every local authority in Wales has a comprehensive and evolving map detailing current and future provision.

6. A Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act is also now well established in Senedd Cymru, as well as the Active Travel Board.

7. At the same time, the general public maintains a strong interest in active travel. In Sustrans' latest Walking and Cycling Index, 40% of residents in Cardiff said they cycle at least occasionally, and a further 28% said they do not but would like to. A large majority of residents agreed it would be useful to help residents cycle more if there were more physically separated cycle paths (72%), more traffic free cycle routes away from roads (75%) and more cycle routes along quiet streets (73%).

8. However, it is also clear that ten years on, although the Act has been followed with increased public funding, it is yet to have a significant impact on active travel rates and more work, and more funding, is required.

9. Active travel has also continued to rise in stature politically. All the main parties had strong active travel pledges and funding commitments in their 2021 Senedd election manifestos. The Welsh Government's [programme for government](#), updated as part of the co-operation agreement with Plaid Cymru, specifically commits to:

- Give Transport for Wales new powers to better integrate rail, bus and active travel.
- Work with Transport for Wales and local authorities to strengthen the promotion of walking and cycling.
- Develop new Active Travel Integrated Network Maps.
- Work with schools to promote Active Travel and Road Safety.
- Invest in travel options that encourage public transport and support walking and cycling.
- Support innovative new social enterprise schemes such as bike maintenance repair cafes and bike recycling schemes.

Funding for Active Travel

10. Since 2018 the Welsh Government has primarily supported local authorities through its Active Travel Fund. This includes a core allocation for each authority to make small-scale continuous improvements, with the remainder of the funding subject to a competitive bidding process for larger schemes. The Welsh Government also provides funding through other mechanisms, such as the Safe Routes in Communities grant.

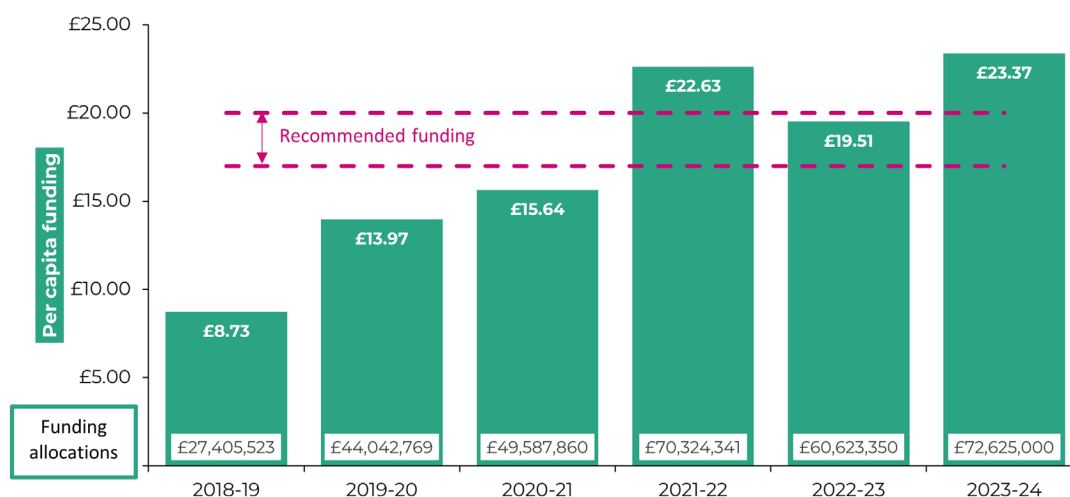
11. A large part of funding, the Active Travel Fund, was [established in 2018 with £10m of funding](#), and has grown almost every year since. [The Welsh Government announced £58m of new schemes funded through the Active Travel Fund in 2023-24](#).

12. However, due to the variety of sources of funding, there is no absolute method of calculating total investment in active travel in Wales. Other funding sources which may at

times be used on active travel include the Welsh Government’s Transforming Towns Fund, UK Government funding including the Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund, local authorities’ own funding, and private funding used to build new developments or raised through Section 106 contributions.

13. In previous evidence to the Finance Committee Welsh Government has stated the total active travel spend from its own resources in Wales for 2023-24 was £72,625,000, or £23.37 per person.

14. Chart 1: Welsh Government active travel funding per capita 2018-19 to 2023-4



Source: Senedd Research: [The Active Travel Act: 10 Years on](#)

Required Funding for Cycling and Active Travel

15. Although the increases to active travel funding are welcome, the funding targets are outdated and Wales risks falling behind other parts of the UK. In 2018, in Sustrans Cymru’s evidence to the [Post Legislative Scrutiny of the Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013](#), we said £20 per person was a target for 2020. The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee recommended a target of £7 - £20 per person, which was then met in 2021-22 and has been met or exceeded in the three years since.

16. £20 per person spending target was appropriate in 2018. Since 2018, and especially since mid-2021, the UK inflation rate has been notably high. The majority of active travel funding is capital expenditure on newly constructed schemes. Of particular note, the annual rate of construction output price growth for new work has outpaced the general rate of inflation, CPI, peaking at 12.1% in May 2022. Even within the sector itself [inflation for new work has been higher than for repair and maintenance](#). Using ONS data, from September 2018 to September 2023, taking into account this inflation for new work in the sector, £17 - £20 would now equate to £21.78 - £25.63.

17. Since the 2021 election in Scotland, [the Scottish Government is committed to spend 10% of its total transport budget on active travel by 2024-25](#), so that it becomes a green, safe and healthy alternative for many more people. The Scottish Government has stated this will be at least £320 million, which would set a lower limit of approximately £58 per person in its forthcoming 2024/25 budget, which the Scottish Government says [compares favourably to countries with notable active travel investment, such as the Netherlands and Denmark](#).

18. Some major political parties have also made similar commitments in recent elections. For example, in 2019, [the Labour Party pledged £50 a head active travel spend in England](#).

19. In Wales, looking at the Climate Change ministry's [2024-25 Indicative Final Budget](#), the total budget for transport-related budget lines is £1.167 billion. This would equate to £116.7 million earmarked for active travel, or around £38 per person.

20. Table 1: Transport-related budget lines from 2023-24 and 2024-25, £000s

BUDGET LINES	2023/24			2024/25		
	Resource	Capital	Subtotal	Resource	Capital	Subtotal
Motorway & Trunk Road Operations	£70,504.00	£185,000.00	£255,504.00	£70,504.00	£185,000.00	£255,504.00
Improve and Maintain Trunk Road Network (Domestic Routes) - Non Cash	£188,691.00		£188,691.00	£188,691.00		£188,691.00
Road, Rail, Air and Sea Services and Investment	£297,510.00	£217,000.00	£514,510.00	£295,010.00	£87,000.00	£382,010.00
Sustainable Travel	£125,417.00	£184,640.00	£310,057.00	£125,417.00	£206,628.00	£332,045.00
Improve Road Safety	£5,000.00	£4,000.00	£9,000.00	£5,000.00	£4,000.00	£9,000.00
TOTAL	£687,122.00	£590,640.00	£1,277,762.00	£684,622.00	£482,628.00	£1,167,250.00

Source: [Minister for Climate Change evidence to Finance Committee](#)

21. However, it must be noted that this represents a low estimate of identifiable transport spend in Wales. For example, one reason is that, unlike in Scotland, Rail infrastructure is not entirely devolved in Wales. Another reason is that, since the budget details above were published, in October 2023 the [Welsh Government updated its financial position](#) and committed an extra £125 million of in-year spending to Transport for Wales.

22. Taking the low estimate, from the 2024-25 Indicative Final Budget, and a high estimate from the Scottish Government's calculation, the Welsh Government should look to increase active travel spending from £38 - £58 per person.

23. There is a large discrepancy in capital and revenue spending in relation to active travel. In 2023-24, revenue spending was £1,375,000, or £0.44 per person. Capital spending was £71,250,000, or £22.93 per person.

24. There is an acknowledged difficulty in spending more capital funding, and the Deputy Minister for Climate Change has stated: "We're spending less than we had originally thought we would, and that's partly because...there are some real capacity and capability constraints across local government, and they simply haven't been able to spend all the money that we wanted them to spend."

25. There should be more funding on revenue spending, to increase capacity in the sector. This should be central funding for TfW, capacity for local authorities and third sector partners.

26. In addition to the capacity to deliver high-quality schemes using capital funding, primarily from the Active Travel Fund, revenue funding can be used for regular, repeated work to encourage, teach and enable citizens in Wales to walk and cycle. Sustrans Cymru works with schools, in workplaces, and in communities across Wales and has supported many people to walk and cycle. For example, our E-Move project has captured a lot of data exploring how [barriers that prevent people from cycling are overcome](#).