



Mr Adrian Crompton  
Auditor General for Wales  
1 Capital Quarter  
Tyndall Street  
Cardiff CF10 4BZ

7 November 2024

Dear Adrian

Thank you for your recent report on active travel in Wales. I am pleased to enclose our detailed response to the recommendations made to the Welsh Government.

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 is the expression of the commitment to make walking, wheeling and cycling the safe and easy choice for shorter everyday journeys, whether to school, to work or to access shops and services. Walking in particular is a key part of nearly every public transport journey as well, and improving conditions for these modes is an important step to helping us achieve our net zero target.

We began this journey from a standing start and the early years after the making of the Act were focused on creating the foundations for the improvements we need to see. Since 2018 Welsh Ministers have stepped up investment in infrastructure and your report highlights that we have invested £218million through the Active Travel Fund in local authority-led schemes across Wales. Whilst this is a significant level of funding that we are proud of, it means that the Welsh Government has so far invested just under £70 per person over the six-year period of the fund. Connecting the limited patchwork of existing infrastructure into a coherent network that serves people's travel needs takes time and it would be unrealistic to expect this level of funding to have already resulted in far-reaching transformation of travel choices.

Over recent years, we have undertaken significant steps to strengthen the approach to delivery of active travel schemes and interventions at the national and the local level. By building in-house expertise and capacity in Transport for Wales we have been able to start to support local authorities and the Corporate Joint Committees more effectively and practically. This ranges from detailed advice on schemes throughout their development stages, to the development of an evidence-based prioritisation tool, the roll-out of training programmes and the development of a promotional toolkit.

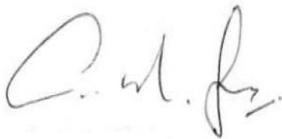
The Welsh Government and its partners have also made strides in improving the conditions that allow more children and young people in Wales to travel to school safely and actively. Infrastructure improvements around schools are combined with complementary programmes, and we start to see impressive results in some schools. We are committed to further

strengthen co-ordination and alignment of our work in this area, to enable more children to benefit from the opportunity to walk, wheel or cycle to school.

Your report highlights the relative scarcity of data and the first five of your recommendations relate to how we can improve this. We recognise that the lack of data affects not just our ability to measure the impact of our active travel policy, but of our transport policy and programmes generally. To address this, we have been working on the development of a National Travel Survey for a number of years, and are currently running the second pilot survey. Data from the new survey will be a key building block in our monitoring of active travel as well as other modes. Our National Monitoring Framework for active travel will draw on this and a wide range of other data sources, and be complemented by efforts to ensure monitoring at the local level becomes more consistent.

We will be taking your recommendations forward alongside the comprehensive set of actions we have already set out in our Active Travel Delivery Plan, which we published earlier this year and we are of the view that this puts us on a good footing to make further progress.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Slade', written in a cursive style.

**Andrew Slade**  
Director General  
Economy, Energy and Transport

# Management response form

**Report title:** Active travel

**Completion date:** October 2024

Ref	Recommendation	Management response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
R1	The Welsh Government should articulate a consolidated set of long-term active travel indicators and targets, with delivery milestones. These should include coverage of wider outcomes than just active travel rates in the context of its transport strategy ambitions, the wider well-being goals for Wales, and expected contributions from wider policy/programme areas.	Accept.  The commitment to set active travel targets is included in our Active Travel Delivery Plan. We will do this, and include delivery milestones, once we have the first set of data from the new National Travel Survey (NTS). We have a working draft National Monitoring Framework for Active Travel which sits below the Monitoring Framework for the Wales Transport Strategy. The Framework comprises a broad range of indicators from a range of sources linked to active travel. This will be further refined once the NTS is fully operational.	Autumn 2026, when NTS data available	Deputy Director Transport Strategy and Policy

Ref	Recommendation	<b>Management response</b> Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	<b>Completion date</b> Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	<b>Responsible officer (title)</b>
		<p>Whilst we are unlikely to be able to use wider indicators beyond transport and travel to establish causal links between active travel scheme delivery and wider well-being measures, we will include as much consideration of wider impacts as is possible.</p>		
R2	<p>To support monitoring against active travel related indicators and targets, the Welsh Government should ensure it collects consistent data over time that allows long-term trend analysis and, where practical, pan-UK comparison on key measures.</p>	<p>Accept.  The National Travel Survey will replace the current method of collecting active travel data through the National Survey for Wales (NSfW) for long-term monitoring and trend analysis. It will collect data on a broader range of measures and provide more information, and the active travel questions for adults will be slightly amended, whilst it will not gather school travel data for children. This will need to be collected from other sources, such as the Hands Up Survey for primary school children and School</p>	<p>Autumn 2026, when NTS data available</p>	<p>Deputy Director  Transport  Strategy and  Policy</p>

Ref	Recommendation	<b>Management response</b> Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	<b>Completion date</b> Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	<b>Responsible officer (title)</b>
		Health Research Network data for secondary school children. Whilst this means the new data will not be directly comparable to the historic NSfW data, this data itself is not entirely consistent over time, due to changes in sample size, survey method due to the pandemic, frequency, and amended question wording, as well as data gaps for years where the survey was not running. We will explore opportunities to develop pan-UK comparator measures, though it should be noted that data for active travel for all UK nations is not harmonised, with each nation having developed questions separately.		
R3	As it finalises plans for a new National Travel Survey, the Welsh Government should re-appraise the costs and benefits of collecting enough data to support meaningful analysis and scrutiny of active travel rates at local authority level.	Accept. We will re-appraise the costs and benefits. If budget pressures mean that early tranches of the National Travel Survey are unlikely to allow data analysis at the local level, we will nonetheless pursue opportunities to gain sub-	January 2025	Deputy Director Transport Strategy and Policy

Ref	Recommendation	<b>Management response</b> Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	<b>Completion date</b> Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	<b>Responsible officer (title)</b>
		national data, at local authority and/ or regional level, given the increasing role of the Corporate Joint Committees and their responsibility to develop and deliver Regional Transport Plans. A subnational breakdown may be possible by aggregating multiple years of data.		
R4	In developing a new monitoring and evaluation framework and providing fresh guidance to local authorities, the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales should clarify expectations around objective setting and a proportionate, but more consistent, framework for reporting benefits that extend beyond changes in active travel rates. This could include, for example, impacts on air pollution in the context of new reporting duties in that regard.	Accept. We are working on this with Transport for Wales, who have shared draft local monitoring guidance with local authorities to improve the consistency of local level data collection. This will be reviewed further once we have considered the information provided in the most recent set of scheme level Annual Performance Reports from September 2024 and the Annual Reports required under the Active Travel Act, which will be submitted in October 2024. This will include both clear expectations regarding objective setting as well as how wider	April 2025	Deputy Director Transport Strategy and Policy & TfW lead

Ref	Recommendation	Management response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
		benefits can be captured. The work undertaken for local active travel monitoring will inform work on the development of monitoring frameworks for the emerging Regional Transport Plans.		
R5	<p>Building on the new monitoring and evaluation framework and reporting by local authorities, the Welsh Government should revert to the publication of a fuller annual report on active travel. As a minimum, the report should include coverage of and/or signpost to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evidence relating to active travel behaviour at a national and local level;</li> <li>expenditure data compared with allocations for key areas of specific active travel spending, analysis of local authority match funding and, where practical, contributions from other</li> </ul>	<p>Accept.</p> <p>We will seek to trial the suggested format for the annual report using the available information from 2023-24. However, it should be noted that due to the gap in data collection for the National Survey for Wales in 23-24, there will be no updated data for active travel rates from this source, and there will be a further gap for 2025-26 because NSfW data collection will be paused post 2024-25. Data will be available for 2024-25.</p>	April 2025, to incorporate local authority reporting returns, submitted in Autumn 2024	Deputy Director Transport Strategy and Policy

Ref	Recommendation	Management response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
	<p>programme areas in transport and beyond;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progress with active travel delivery plan actions, including behaviour change initiatives;</li> <li>• progress with scheme delivery and network expansion; and</li> <li>• evidence about how active travel investment is contributing to wider strategic goals.</li> </ul>			
R6	<p>The Welsh Government should use its new assessment and funding framework to support periodic reviews of local authorities' capability, plans, and active travel delivery. It should then report transparently on the outcome of those reviews.</p>	<p>Accept.</p> <p>We have begun work on an assessment framework for local authorities, drawing on past delivery performance for active travel schemes and other factors.</p> <p>This will inform, and likely be subsumed within the development of a new funding framework for the Regional Transport Plans, as we plan to move away from individually administered sector</p>	Spring 2026	Deputy Director Transport Strategy and Policy

Ref	Recommendation	Management response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
		specific local transport grant schemes. We will report transparently on the outcomes.		
R7	<p>To manage potential risks around duplication of public funding and conflicts of interest around the administration of the Active Travel Fund:</p> <p>a) Transport for Wales should assess opportunities to further strengthen safeguards relating to the involvement of Sustrans officers, alongside its own officers, in the appraisal of Active Travel Fund bids.</p> <p>b) the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales should ensure they have a clear understanding of any work Sustrans may be involved with at a local authority level that relates back to the Active Travel Fund.</p>	<p>Accept.</p> <p>Transport for Wales will set out in their operating procedures for the Fund the strengthened safeguards to be put in place to exclude any possibility of bias in the appraisal of applications for active travel funding. Safeguards will also be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are sufficiently robust.</p> <p>We have agreed with Sustrans that they will regularly update us and Transport for Wales on any work that they are carrying out on behalf of local authorities.</p>	December 2024, in readiness for the next funding appraisal cycle	Deputy Director Transport Strategy and Policy & TfW lead

Ref	Recommendation	Management response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
R8	The Welsh Government should devise a longer-term, multi-year, funding strategy to provide local authorities with more certainty and stability on active travel funding. The strategy should reflect on the overall balance between capital funding for infrastructure, including the split between core and scheme specific funding for the Active Travel Fund, and revenue funding for other activities such as behaviour change initiatives. It should also include details of how active travel delivery plan actions will be resourced.	Accept. We are working with Corporate Joint Committees to develop their statutory Regional Transport Plans, with accompanying five-year Delivery Plans. Our funding strategy is to allocate capital and revenue funding to these plans from 2026-27, instead of through separate grant schemes such as the Active Travel Fund. We will set out how active travel investment at regional and national levels is resourced as part of this process. Funding allocations for future years will be indicative where this is necessary to comply with Welsh Government and Senedd budget procedures.	Spring 2026	Deputy Director Transport Strategy and Policy
R9	The Welsh Government should set out minimum requirements which, if not evidenced satisfactorily, will mean that	Accept	Complete	Deputy Director Transport

Ref	Recommendation	Management response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
	Active Travel Fund bids for main infrastructure schemes will not be approved regardless of their overall ranked score. These minimum requirements should include equality impact assessment.	This has been implemented for the 2025-26 application round and is included in the new guidance. It was already signalled in the Active Travel Fund Guidance for 2024-25, that advance completion of a range of steps, including EqIA, a Monitoring and Evaluation plan and scheme specific engagement will become a mandatory requirement from 2025-26 onwards. The new guidance sets out the requirement for an Integrated Well-being Appraisal, which includes the regulatory impact assessments, including EqIA.		Strategy and Policy & TfW Lead
R10	The Welsh Government should complete a comprehensive, post implementation review of the Act in line with the scope envisaged when the Act was passed. It should involve other delivery partners and include consideration of the overall impact of active travel network maps and the	Accept  We will complete a review of the Act by July 2025. We will undertake a further review within five years.	July 2025	Deputy Director Transport Strategy and Policy

Ref	Recommendation	<b>Management response</b> Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	<b>Completion date</b> Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	<b>Responsible officer (title)</b>
	extent to which they support public awareness of active travel routes.			