

Cross Party Group on the Active Travel Act
Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, December 11th, 2024
10.30am to 11.50am via Microsoft Teams

Present & Apologies: see attached lists.

Welcome and Introductions: John Griffiths MS (Chair) welcomed participants to the meeting.

Q&A with Ken Skates MS, Minister for Transport & North Wales: The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Secretary to the meeting. The Cabinet Secretary spoke of the strong impression made on him by the Transport for Wales (TfW) Access and Inclusion Panel and the need to ensure investment in active travel is targeted in the most inclusive manner. He recommended that a delegation of the CPG attend a meeting of the panel. He said there should be a focus on safe routes to bus stops and stations. There is a need to look at safety of pavements, lighting etc to drive an increase in public transport. He is impressed by the results of Living Streets' programme to increase walking and wheeling to school. Supporting young people to walk wheel and cycle to school is a vital component in driving modal shift. The Chair then invited questions from members.

Q. Will there be more support for organisations such as Pedal Power that are promoting and enabling inclusive cycling and active travel?

A. Pedal Power's work is very important, they should link in with the Access and Inclusion Panel

Q. Will the government implement the provision in the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) Act requiring the promotion of active travel?

A. Yes, we will provide the CPGATA with a note on timeframes.

Q. How do we ensure that funding is in place so that the good work on active travel is continued and enables people to make more short journeys by bike?

A. The 20mph speed limits will encourage more people to cycle shorter journeys, though we may need to wait a few quarters before the data shows this. On funding, the budget has been more generous than expected so we can sustain investment at this year's level into next year, so the amount set aside for active travel and regional transport is very substantial indeed. In the longer term we want local authorities to have a greater say over how funds for local authorities should be invested. The government are aware of concerns about this, but we have to trust those closest to the ground and have a clear focus on inclusive movement. If active travel is good for the access and inclusion panel members it will be good for everyone.

Q. Uncertainty around funding is causing Merthyr Tydfil council to curtail its investment in active travel, for example in providing secure cycle parking to encourage people to travel into the town centre by bike, will Welsh Government's focus on cycling as a future means of transport continue, given that it did not feature in the budget.

A. I'll be announcing more on active travel and regional funding in the weeks to come, the headlines from the budget focussed on health spending. Safe and secure routes have a vital role in driving modal shift.

Q. How will the devolution of funding to the Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) work, given that the duties to improve networks in the Active Travel Act are on local authorities rather than CJCs?

Q. What is the thinking behind prioritising infrastructure spend on walking and wheeling, and deprioritising cycling, given that road death figures for cyclists are only declining very slowly, making cyclists a very vulnerable group and that local authorities have a pipeline of cycle schemes, as required by the Welsh Government, awaiting funding.

A. The biggest safety innovation in 25 years has been implemented partly to reduce collisions with bikes, if 40% of people are going to be more willing to cycle and roads are safer, then we would expect collision data for cyclists to reduce.

Q. With devolution of active travel funding to CJCs how are we going to meet the national carbon budget targets on modal shift, which can only be achieved by getting more people to swap car journeys for travel by bike? What 'guideropes' will be in place for CJCs to ensure the targets are met and how will we avoid some local authorities just walking away from active travel?

A. If we're going to devolve to access and inclusion panel on a regional basis, we have to do so with full trust in them delivering against a Welsh Government policy but also on the ground against what their citizens wish for and there will be Regional Transport Plans which the money will be spent against. TfW will be assisting them. Whilst there is a concern that it might lead to less investment in active travel infrastructure it could actually lead to more. What it will probably lead to is the development in those areas where you have the greatest existing capacity for the development of active travel networks that could be used as exemplars.

Q. The Active Travel Act Guidance and oversight by TfW should already be achieving inclusive design. Annual funding is a problem, multi-year settlements would allow a greater focus on delivery by saving time on the application process. Could we have a closer alignment between capital and revenue funding, particularly for schools projects?

A. CJCs will be building capacity and be supported by TfW. According to the Access and Inclusion Panel current designs are not inclusive. We have an issue that needs to be resolved on e-bikes with illegal use putting people off walking, cycling and wheeling, the Active Travel Board is to do some work on this.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Secretary and expressed a hope that the CPGATA could continue a constructive dialogue with him and looked forward to further engagement. He also expressed a hope that the progress made with active travel since the Act was passed could be maintained.

Next steps in active travel delivery – Discussion: The Chair invited members to share their views on the issues raised in the discussion with the Cabinet Secretary. He said there had obviously been some concern that there would be a significant change in active travel policy, had what the Cabinet Secretary said allayed those fears? He informed members that he had published an article in Nation Cymru in September setting out the benefits of investment in walking and cycling. He had also tabled a Senedd statement of opinion calling for sustained investment, which had been signed by 28% of eligible Senedd Members. The officers of the CPGATA had also sought a meeting with the First Minister to get a sense of her position.

In the discussion that followed, the following key points were raised in the meeting and via chat:

20 mph and cycling: All the evidence shows that it is segregated infrastructure that gets people to cycle, especially to school, 20mph alone is not enough.

Speeds are creeping up, so work on 20mph isn't done, a combination of enforcement, communication and targeted speed management measures are needed. Is this likely to feature in the Road Safety Strategy?

Transport hierarchy: Concern that the government's priority had shifted from active travel back to roads.

Funding & Governance: Whilst the overall funding level seems to have been maintained, in fact local authorities could only make one funding bid, rather than three as previously and the core funding has been reduced by around a third. There is now no time for additional bids to be made by the deadline in the unlikely event that the limit was to be increased.

If funding is not taken up because of the reduced limit on applications, could it be reallocated as an increase in core funding?

Danger with devolution of active travel in that some local authorities are less likely to stand up to pro car pressure than Welsh Government had been. What will the support from TfW mean in practice?

It is difficult to argue against devolution but there is a need to monitor what happens in practice to ensure gains in active travel are not lost. Understanding the detail is vital. Local authorities have the same priorities as Welsh Government, guidance for the CJC follows the Wales Transport Strategy.

E-bikes E-bikes are very much part of the solution to increasing active travel, there is substantial encouraging international evidence of their effectiveness, particularly in hilly areas. The public love them once they try them.

E-bikes can very effectively replace a second car in middle class households.

Momentwm's e-bike loan scheme has produced significant behaviour change, however there are lots of illegal bikes in Newport being ridden at high speed putting people off using paths. Action is needed to restrict them.

There is a need for a campaign to explain to the public the types of e-cycles that are available, and which are illegal.

We need to encourage the Cabinet Secretary to differentiate between e-bikes and e-motor bikes.

E-assist has to be part of the future of cycling, many people would not be able to ride a bike without it, it is therefore an important element in inclusivity. E-bikes can help confidence when cycling in traffic as it is easier to maintain a constant speed.

Inclusivity: A ban on pavement parking is key to making pavements more accessible, especially for the disabled.

Women can feel safer on a bike than walking as the speed of a bike may allow them to escape potentially threatening situations.

There is a need for access to revenue support for promotion, training and support, especially for inclusive cycling. No specific funding is currently available for building user groups to take advantage of the infrastructure.

The Chair said that a letter would be sent to the Cabinet Secretary based on the comments made at the meeting. The officers would also use the comments to make their case in the meeting they hoped to have with Welsh Government.

The launch of our report ‘Bikes and Buses – a perfect partnership’ authored by Dr Richard Weston, an independent researcher with over 20-years’ experience in cycling research and funded by THINK of Aberystwyth University: The Chair introduced Richard and invited him to address the meeting. In his presentation, Richard gave a summary of the paper he had prepared which had been previously circulated.

The paper examined the three stages of a typical journey by bus, from home to the local bus stop, the bus journey and from the bus station/stop to the final destination. It considered options for the safe storage of bikes at local bus stops; examples, mainly from the continent, of bikes being carried on buses; and the use of hire bikes or second bikes for the final stage.

Richard made four recommendations for developing a bike bus project: understand your market, work with employers, start where it’s easy, and talk to communities/community transport organisations.

In the discussion that followed the following points were made in the meeting and via chat: In an experiment in Pembrokeshire, the driver had to turn off the bus’s engine to supervise the mounting of a bike on a rack, whereas on the continent the responsibility lies with the cyclists – are we too risk averse? It is important to address the behaviour change needed in travellers as well as the mechanics.

The Chair thanked Richard, for his presentation and the report. It was agreed that the CPGATA’s working group on bikes and buses be asked to consider the recommendations and prepare some concrete proposals. It was also agreed that we should circulate the report to all MSs.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting: The minutes were accepted as a true and correct record of the meeting.

Matters Arising: None

Any Other Business: None.

The meeting closed at 11.50am

Attendance List

First Name	Surname	Job Title	Organisation
Ken	Barker		Cycling UK
Ioan	Bellin	SCA	Rhys Ab Owen AS
Andrew	Bettridge	MSS	John Griffiths MS
Ruth	Billingham	Head of Campaigns & Public Affairs	Living Streets
Richard	Brunstrom		Cycling UK North Wales
Joseph	Carter	Head of Devolved Nations	British Lung Foundation
Dan	Coast	Secretary	Cycling Newport
Stephen	Cunnah	Policy and External Affairs Manager	Sustrans Cymru
Helen	Donnan	Access Field Officer, Wales	British Horse Society
Ryland	Doyle	Communications and Research Officer	Mike Hedges MS
Donna	Edwards-John	Active Travel Officer	Torfaen County Borough Council
Richard	Evans	Chair	Cardiff Cycle Workshop
Sam	Farnfield	Director	Pedal Power
Matthew	Gilbert	Active Travel Lead	Transport for Wales
John	Griffiths	Member of the Senedd	Senedd Cymru
Natalie	Grohmann	Transport - Policy, Planning and Partnerships Officer	Welsh Government
Sam	Hall	Pennaeth Cysylltiadau ac Ymgysylltu Cyhoeddus Head of Public R	Natasha Asghar MS
Amy	Henley	Transport Strategy & Policy	Welsh Government
Francesca	Howorth	Higher Research Officer	Senedd Cymru
Keith	Jones	Director	ICE Wales Cymru
Olivia	Jones	OFM	Welsh Government
Phil	Jones	Chairman	PJA
Hayley	Keohane	Active Travel	Welsh Government
Kate	Kerr	Road Safety Officer	Torfaen County Borough Council
Gwyn	Lewis	Senior Policy Implementation and Evidence Lead	Welsh Government
Phil	Lewis	Chair	Active Wheels
Hugh	Mackay		Cycling UK VofG
Kiera	Marshall	Researcher	Grŵp Senedd Plaid Cymru Senedd Group
John	Mather		Cycling UK (N Wales)
Hilary	May		ValeVeloWays
Andrew	Minnis	Research Team Leader	Senedd Cymru
David	Naylor		Wheelrights
Samuel	Newington	Engagement Officer	Momentwm Newport
Simon	Nicholls	Bus Coordinator	Newport City Council
Gwenda	Owen	Engagement Officer - Wales	Cycling UK
Peredur	Owen Griffiths	Member of the Senedd	Senedd Cymru
Louis	Preece	Active Travel Projects Officer	Newport City Council

Catherine	Purcell	Reader, School of Healthcare Sciences	Cardiff University
Dareyoush	Rassi	Secretary	Wheelrights
Chris	Roberts	Secretary	CPGATA
Kaarina	Ruta	Transport Assistant	WLGA
Phil	Snaith	Secretary	Carmarthenshire Cycle Forum
Paul	Sullivan	Youth, Sport and Active Travel Manager	MonLife, Monmouthshire County Council
Alan	Tapp	Professor of Social Marketing	UWE
Dafydd Rhys	Thomas	Portfolio Holder - Highways, Waste and Property	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Lee	Waters	Member of the Senedd	Senedd Cymru
Tom	Wells		Active Travel West Wales
Richard	Weston	Independent Researcher	
Steven	Williams	Momentwm - Swyddog Ymgysylltu / Programme manager	Momentwm Newport
Roisin	Willmott	One Planet Programme Manager	Cardiff Council

Apologies:

Llyr Gruffydd MS

Kirsty James, Campaign Officer, RNIB

Paul Pilkington, Consultant in Public Health, Public Health Wales

John Sayce, Chair, Wheelrights

Paul Streets, Cardiff Cycle City

Beth Ward, Director, Drosi Bikes

Christopher White, Lecturer in Health, Mental Health and Well-Being, Wrexham University