

Consultation

Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 - Post-Legislative Scrutiny

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=288>

To assess the implementation and operation to date of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, including:

- **How far the stated objectives of the Active Travel Act are being achieved;**

The Welsh Government wishes to see walking and cycling to become the preferred ways of getting around over shorter distances. This is because there are significant economic, environmental and social benefits associated with enabling people to walk or cycle for all or part of their everyday journeys. These benefits include:

- Helping to prevent ill-health and improve general well-being;
- Helping to reduce environmental deterioration associated with motorised traffic/ travel; and
- Helping to tackle social exclusion and improve access to services and opportunities.

Since the legislation received royal assent, it has taken time to enact the legislation and publish guidance regarding the implementation of the Act.

For local authorities, the Act has required the allocation/ re-deployment of existing (and reducing) staffing and financial resources; these have been required to be directed to new duties associated with implementation of the Act. These have included the two inventory and mapping exercises that have been required to be undertaken in order to produce the Active Travel Existing Route Map (ERM) and the Integrated Network map (INM).

The level of Welsh Government Local Transport Fund grant funding made available by the Welsh Government to the Mid Wales local authorities to deliver transport interventions including Active Travel has not proven to be sufficient to fund the resources required to undertake the new processes.

Number of Active Travel Communities	Local Authority	Active Travel mapping Grant 2015/16	Active Travel mapping Grant 2016/17	Active Travel mapping Grant 2017/18	Total
3	Ceredigion	£5,000	£4,000	£4,000	£13,000
10	Gwynedd	£7,000	£4,000	£4,000	£15,000
9	Powys	£7,000	£5,000	£5,000	£17,000

The local authorities were able to continue to apply for Local Transport Fund and Safe Routes in Communities capital grants which has enabled the local authorities to continue to deliver new walking and cycling infrastructure whilst mapping took place. This annual competitive application process has enabled a range of schemes to be delivered that had been identified either within the Local Transport Plan or had become prioritised for investment through assessments for road safety or safe routes in the communities, these schemes would have come forward for funding regardless of the Active Travel Act. The Mid Wales local authority regional transport consortium had developed and published its own Walking and Cycling Strategy and draft delivery programme 2012

http://www.tracc.gov.uk/uploads/media/TraCC_Walking_and_Cycling_Strategy_February_2012.pdf

http://www.tracc.gov.uk/uploads/media/TraCC_Walking_and_Cycling_Prioritised_Programme_for_Investment_2012-2017.pdf

The shift in focus towards planning and delivering schemes only identified as designated Active Travel routes - incentivised through the Welsh Government grant funding guidance and assessment criteria - appears to have resulted in the inability to plan for longer distance inter-urban and rural routes at the expense of the longer distance network and smaller rural communities.

- **The effectiveness of subordinate legislation and guidance made under the Act;**

Active Travel Plan
Active Travel design guidance
Active Travel Statutory Guidance for the Delivery of the Act.

Local authorities and the Welsh Government have worked together to formulate the supporting documents which have become the workable resources. The most challenging of these is the electronic online mapping system, which has been used as part of the public consultation and now displays the Active Travel Maps, this system will also show any amendments that are proposed to take place, which will include either routes to be add or remove as an active travel route.

There is now a public-facing map where the public can view the Active Travel maps, however this is complicated, not easily found, and can be very confusing to users who are unfamiliar with how the system works.

- **Any action which should be taken to improve the effectiveness of the Act and its implementation; and**

Where mapping has taken place, there has been a need to utilise the Trunk Road to achieve a fully integrated active travel network. A clear process for identify active travel routes on trunk road was not established early in the network planning process. It was not clear either if the local authority had the right to consult on making changes to a trunk road, in the same way that there is a requirement to consult landowners. Going forward, there needs to be a clear understanding on who should lead on implementing active travel routes, which are located on the Trunk Road.

An amendment to the criteria of only settlements of 2,000 and over, and allow smaller settlements to have active travel routes would see the development of routes where a need is identified, rather than because legislation requires the provision to be included.

There are areas of Wales that could be disadvantaged because of the current criteria. In many rural villages, it is understandable that improving connectivity with larger settlement by means of walking or cycling is prohibited under the current criteria due to the distances needed to travel. However, if there is a clearly identified route that could be promoted/improved and would connected communities safely, it makes us better connected, and reduces residences and visitors being disadvantaged.

- **How far the Act has represented, and will continue to represent, value for money.**

The amount of funding made directly available to the three Mid Wales Local authorities to undertake the new duties has been limited, and therefore it has been necessary for authorities to divert existing resources towards delivery of the new legislation in order to meet the Welsh Governments deadlines.

In the current economic climate with reducing budgets for staffing and delivering schemes, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain - and certainly increase – resources to support these additional duties.

We have seen a shift away from funding walking and cycling infrastructure into delivery of the maps, which has meant that the planned programme of infrastructure delivery has slowed down and in some communities of less than 2000 has now stopped altogether.

If a specific, funding is allocated to deliver the Active Travel and is embedded into all government functions, such as the national Planning framework then we will start to see the benefits. However, research shows that maximum return on investment for Active Travel infrastructure is only realised when capital programmes are supported by revenue-based schemes of promotion and behaviour change. Currently local authorities do not receive a review grant to promote active travel.

There is an opportunity for other agencies (such as trunk) to engage with the act more fully and work with Las to implement their responsibilities under the act. Currently the Act is seen as an add on to other work programmes rather than integral to the wider sustainable travel thinking. The inclusion of Active Travel should not just be limited to highways, but also regeneration projects, public health, planning, education and sports development. Clear top down targets from WG would help with the wider integration of the Act into government thinking.

- **To assess the effectiveness of wider active travel policy in supporting delivery of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, including:**
- **The effectiveness of the Active Travel Action Plan;**

The Action Plan was a useful resource to local authorities at the start of the process as it highlighted how the Welsh Government was planning its delivery of the Act, and confirmed what they expected the local authorities to undertake and by when. Having a 5 or 10-year plan would enable better planning, and ensure better value for money.

- **Whether sufficient funding and capacity are available to support implementation of the Act itself and wider active travel policy;**

As highlighted above, the level of funding made available to local authorities to undertake the network mapping and associated duties was very limited and required the diversion of additional resources to complete this work. Due to budgetary constraints within local authorities, who have very limited staffing and financial resources available to deliver Active Travel and other sustainable travel initiatives, including Travel Plan and public transport development?

- **The operation of the Active Travel Board; and**

There is limited know of the work of the Active Travel Board whilst we are aware of it through the WLGA , it seems to have largely worked in isolation from the local authorities, which is surprising considering that local authorities are required to

undertake the mapping work and other requirements of the Act. There has been no official circulation of reports or minutes of meetings and therefore the local authorities have been unable to influence the discussions and decisions, which have been made. By contrast, the Mid Wales local authorities have maintained a regional Active Travel Working group with representation from the three local authorities, WLGA, Welsh Government and Sustrans.

- **Whether active travel is integrated effectively in wider Welsh Government and local government policy.**

Whilst we have started to see discussions take place around the role of Active Travel and how it can improve the health of the nation. Further work is required to bring about a joined-up approach between health and transport. We are sure more could be done to support the development of information about behavioral change and how this is used to change the way the public think about how to travel sustainably, and how this supports the health of the nation.

For example:-

The delivery of the aims of the Act to help prevent ill-health, assist in stopping environmental deterioration, and enable more people of the opportunity to walk and cycle, requires a cross portfolio policy development where the inclusion of Active Travel interventions become a standard requirement. Active Travel engagement with schools has been difficult because many head teachers have been unable to allocate the time for discussion and “place planning” with the pupils in order to identify where they would like to see route developed or improved. This is because the curriculum time does not allow, for this type of activity. However, were the Sustrans Active Journeys Programme has gone into schools we have seen such a success move towards walking and cycling to school. This programme should be rolled out to all schools.

The local development plan process needs to place active travel connectivity requirements into both local place plans; development plans and re-generations plans. The local Health Board plans need to consider how people travel to and from locations, before making decisions about where to provide services, rather than making decisions base only upon clinical requirements of the service.

The Active Travel teams within local authorities are committed to making improvements that enable better access for all.