

**ECONOMY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
WRITTEN EVIDENCE – ACTIVE TRAVEL (WALES) ACT 2013**

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide written evidence to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee for its post-legislative scrutiny of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

Background

2. Since the predecessor to this Committee, the Enterprise and Business Committee conducted the first post-legislative scrutiny of the Act, we have achieved major milestones in its implementation with the approval of the first Existing Routes Maps and the recent approval of the majority of the Integrated Network Maps.
3. There have been two changes in Cabinet responsibility for the Active Travel Act since the time of the last Committee, and since November 2017 it falls wholly within my portfolio.

Implementation of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

4. The Act contains on-going duties and cyclical duties. Inevitably, the main focus in this early period since commencement was on the first implementation cycle of mapping duties placed by the Act on local authorities, as these constituted a completely new approach and a learning process for local authorities, Welsh Government officials and stakeholders. To cover the costs of the process in this first cycle, local authorities received each a share of £700,000 over the years 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18.
5. The statutory guidance supporting the Act, the “Delivery Guidance” and “Design Guidance” were both found to be broadly fit for purpose, but in certain important instances the process showed that the Guidance would benefit from greater detail. We have responded to this throughout the process and will address this more fully by reviewing the Guidance.
6. Due to the new nature of the audit and appraisal process for existing active travel routes, most local authorities were asked to undertake limited further work on their Existing Routes Maps initially submitted at the end of January 2016. A series of regional workshops for local authorities was arranged in spring 2016 to review the process so far, share learning and look ahead to the next stages. Following this, the complete set of Existing Routes Maps was approved in October 2016.
7. On the basis of the experience from the Existing Routes Map process, I commissioned Sustrans to undertake a project in which they worked with some local authorities in detail through key stages of the Integrated Mapping Process and shared this through advice notes and workshops with all other authorities.
8. My officials also ensured improvements were made to the mapping system, which was developed for use by all local authorities, on the basis of feedback received. They also continued to support and train local authority staff in its use.
9. As Assembly members were informed in February, the appraisal of the Integrated Network Maps submitted in November last year was concluded and the majority of Integrated Network Maps have been approved. For three local authorities, specific

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recommendations were made regarding areas that they need to address to improve their next submission. Four local authorities were directed to undertake further work on their maps and resubmit these in August this year.

10. Overall the quality of submissions and the consultation and engagement work undertaken in their preparation represented a good basis on which to build and expand when they need to be re-submitted in three years.
11. The Existing Routes Map and Integrated Network Map processes as well as the application of the Design Guidance in the development of schemes provided an opportunity to highlight areas where the statutory Guidance could provide greater clarity. The Design Guidance was intended to be reviewed as required. Phil Jones Associates has been commissioned to update the Design Guidance, reflecting feedback from local authorities and practitioners in Wales as well as new regulations and emerging best practice, and this work is currently progressing.
12. We will also consider a review of the Delivery Guidance on the basis of the experience gathered during this first implementation cycle.
13. The mapping system used by Welsh Government and local authorities is not suitable for use by members of the public, but in response to suggestions from the Committee and stakeholders the Existing Routes Maps layer has been incorporated in a simplified format on our geoportal “lle.gov.uk”, which is publicly accessible. The approved Integrated Network Maps will also be made available there. Further work is required to make this data available for wider uses including app development.

Integration of Active Travel across Government

14. Active Travel presents an opportunity to achieve wide ranging benefits extending far beyond transport, notably it supports the whole breadth of Well-being goals. This is recognised both in Prosperity for All, our National Strategy and in the Economic Action Plan, which highlight our commitment to improve and increase active travel.
15. The Active Travel Action Plan was developed together with the Active Travel Board and published in spring 2016. It sets out how Active Travel will be supported across Government beyond the Active Travel Act. It states our vision, which is simple: “For People in Wales, we want walking and cycling to become the preferred ways to get around over shorter distances.”
16. The plan sets out a set of actions, most of which we have made good progress with. Like my predecessor, the then Minister for Social Services and Public Health, I value the Board’s role in moving the Active Travel agenda forward across Government and with external partners and I will attend Board meetings regularly. I look forward to working with the Active Travel Board and across Government on those actions that we need to tackle next, such as a concerted effort on bringing together best practice and resources to promote active travel and join up communication across partners.

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Active Travel Infrastructure

17. In parallel with the planning and mapping processes we have made significant investments in the creation of new walking and cycling infrastructure. WG transport investment in active travel infrastructure in local authorities and on trunk roads rose from 12.7m in 2015/16 to £15.6m in 2016/17 and the projected spend for 2017/18 is £22.7m, equating to 6% of transport capital budgets.
18. Additionally, we have invested over £12m in local road safety interventions in those three years, the majority of which provides direct benefits for walkers and cyclists by reducing speeds and improving crossings.

Active Travel Promotion

19. We recognise that achieving a shift in travel behaviour on a large scale is crucial to the long term success of the Act. We also recognise that this will be hugely challenging and require a concerted effort by all partners.
20. There is good evidence that individual programmes like our Active Journeys programme have an impact. It is a multiyear intervention to promote active travel in schools. Its interim annual report suggests that for those schools participating we have seen an increase of 6.5 percentage points in active travel journeys to school after one year and 9.6 percentage points after two years. The Active Journeys contract has recently been extended for a fourth year, until July 2019. To provide additional resources to schools not part of the programme, a school route audit toolkit has been developed to enable all schools in Wales to audit the walking routes to their school and work with the local authority to improve them.
21. Increasing levels of walking and cycling to schools is a high priority, as behaviours formed in childhood can have a lasting impact on later life. Active Journeys and the toolkit are part of a range of programmes aimed at school settings, which include cycling and child pedestrian training, the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes and the transport module of the eco schools programme. Feeding into the Active Travel Board, Public Health Wales has set up a stakeholder group that focuses specifically on active travel to school to, starting with developing a unified monitoring approach and joint messages.
22. Due to the far ranging benefits of active travel, promotion of active travel is in the interest of Government as a whole, not just the Transport Department. Other departments have funded and currently support programmes aimed at increasing levels of active travel, often as part of wider initiatives.

Levels of active travel

23. Progress with achieving the aims of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 is monitored through indicators collected through the National Survey. The National Survey was paused for one year in 2015/16, so no data is available for that year.

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24. Active Travel levels for 2016/17 showed no change for cycling and a reduction in walking among adults, and a notable decrease in children walking to school, particularly among those walking on their own or with other children. Changing from a car culture to an active travel culture will take a considerable amount of time and needs sustained efforts at all levels.
25. The most recent data shows the level of challenge we face. The first Integrated Network Maps will now guide investment in infrastructure. Over time, as these networks are being created, and with effective promotion, we expect to see levels of active travel rising.