

P-05-898 Ban the use of A boards in Wales, Correspondence – Living Streets to Chair, 27.11.19

This petition was submitted by Angharad Paget-Jones having collected a total of 80 signatures.

Text of Petition

A petition to ban the use of A board advertising in Wales. A boards not only clutter our pavements but pose a huge risk to disabled people as getting past them in a wheelchair or if you're visually impaired often means you're forced onto the road to by-pass them.

This is especially an issue on shared spaces such as city centres as well as coastal towns where the pavements are narrower.

The Welsh Government released its latest statistical analysis on active travel this month (13th November 2019). This shows that the number of people walking for active travel in Wales at least once or twice a week has seen a consistent decline over the past six years despite having an Active Travel (Wales) Act in force since 2013.

We already have an obesity epidemic in Wales, an alarming dependency on private car use and the Welsh Government has declared a climate emergency. These are all inter-related trends to which moving to become an active nation could make a significant contribution towards their reversal. Something which must be achieved as a matter of urgency.

At Living Streets, we advocate for walkable neighbourhoods. This means creating an environment that is safe, attractive and convenient for getting around on foot, achieved through a combination of actions. If we are to begin to address the reasons why fewer and fewer people are choosing to walk for their everyday journeys, we must take note when people raise these specific and particularly problematic barriers to their mobility, and we must take appropriate action.

Street clutter, which includes things like A-boards, poorly-placed or redundant street furniture, or excessive poles for road signs may seem harmless but they can create unnecessary obstructions which are inconvenient for everyone and particularly problematic for people with wheelchairs, buggies, or those living with sight loss.

By getting rid of redundant street clutter, our streets can be made safer, tidier and less confusing. Reducing street clutter and making attractive, interesting and beautiful public spaces is a major part of how we can create vibrant areas for walking.

We agree that A-boards can cause an obstruction and support their removal from the highway, recognising that if on private land within curtilage of the building it's not applicable.

Unnecessary street clutter is something which can and should be addressed under existing legislation, however, it evidently continues to present a problem on our high streets in towns and cities across Wales. We recommend the Welsh amend and adopt national Outdoor advertisements and signs guidance for advertisers (the Welsh Planning Portal links to English guidance https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11499/326679.pdf) - in particular the 'standard conditions' (page 5) so that outdoor advertisements do not otherwise obstruct or endanger the passage of pedestrians.

Currently we show members of the public how to ask their local authorities for area wide bans :

- a) Area-wide bans are one option and, on our website, we now give people the tools to write to their local council to ban A-boards at the local level. Our toolkits can be found here: <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/pavements-for-people>
We have a case study from Edinburgh where the local Living Streets group successfully campaigned for a city-wide ban. Edinburgh previously had a voluntary approach, with guidance, but this was found to be ineffective. Now, Street Environment staff manage the ban, the same team that looks after trade waste etc. (separate from parking controls). The case study can be found here: <http://www.livingstreetsedinburgh.org.uk/actionareas/a-boards-placed-on-pavement-edinburgh-council-policy/>

As a matter of best practice:

- b) We would recommend that lamppost hangers, advertising on the premises' own railings or other similar solutions should be explored in the first instance, with A-boards only considered as a last resort and only where it would seriously impact on the economic viability of a local business. For example, where appropriate, specific businesses such as those operating from basements or back lanes might be able to apply for permits.
- c) We would recommend that where/if A-boards are permitted that these are controlled under license. Where this is already happening in the UK, license fees help pay for monitoring of numbers and placement of A-boards. In these instances, a case should be made for each specific location for sufficient space on the footway to allow wheelchair users, parents with buggies and people with sight-loss to pass easily and safely and for the A-boards to be placed so as to allow a free movement of pedestrians in a straight line.
- d) We would recommend that where/if A-boards are permitted, national guidance is provided (see above) to ensure that appropriate steps be taken to prevent A-boards from being able to blow over or fall across the footway, something which poses a serious safety risk to people with sight-loss.
- e) We would recommend that where/if A-boards are permitted, national guidance is provided (see above) to ensure that that their size be kept to a minimum to allow the maximum space to pass on the footway.