

Y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu

The Enterprise and Learning Committee

Dydd Iau, 26 Mawrth 2009
Thursday, 26 March 2009

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llafarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol Committee members in attendance

Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Paul Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Nerys Evans	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Huw Lewis	Llafur Labour
David Melding	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Sandy Mewies	Llafur Labour
Jenny Randerson	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Jane Davidson	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynaliadwyedd a Thai) Assembly Member, Labour (the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing)
John Davies	Cyfreithiwr, Adran Gwasanaethau Cyfreithiol Lawyer, Legal Services Department
Ieuan Wyn Jones	Aelod Cynulliad, Plaid Cymru (y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog a'r Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth) Assembly Member, the Party of Wales (the Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport)
Richard Morgan	Arweinydd yr Adran Cerdded a Beicio Walking and Cycling Section Leader
Debbie Paramore	Uwch Ddadansoddydd Trafnidiaeth, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Senior Analyst, Transport, Welsh Assembly Government
Gerry Quarrell	Pennaeth yr Uned Natur, Mynediad a Morol Head of Nature, Access and Marine Unit
Martin Stevenson	Pennaeth Dros Dro Polisi Seilwaith, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Acting Head of Transport Policy, Welsh Assembly Government

Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol
Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance

Dan Collier	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Gwyn Griffiths	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Dr Kathryn Jenkins	Clerc Clerk
Victoria Paris	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service

"Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.30 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.30 a.m."

Cyflwyniad ac Ymddiheuriadau
Introduction and Apologies

<p>Gareth Jones: Bore da a chroeso i'r cyfarfod hwn o'r Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu. Yn unol â'n harferiad, gwnaf un neu ddau o gyhoeddiadau. Fe'ch atgoffaf i ddiffodd ffonau symudol ac unrhyw ddyfais electronig arall. Ni ddylech gyffwrdd â'r microffonau. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os bydd argyfwng bydd yn rhaid i ni symud o'r ystafell a'r adeilad o dan gyfarwyddiadau'r tywysyddion. Mae'r cyfarfod yn ddwyieithog, ac mae clustffonau ar gael i dderbyn gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd o'r Gymraeg i'r Saesneg ar sianel 1 ac i chwyddleisio'r sain ar sianel 0. Bydd cofnod o'r cyfan a ddywedir yn gyhoeddus. Ni ddaeth unrhyw ymddiheuriad i law, felly nid oes dirprwyon.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: Good morning and welcome to this meeting of the Enterprise and Learning Committee. In accordance with our usual procedure, I will make a few announcements. I remind you to switch off mobile phones and any other electronic device. You should not touch the microphones. We do not expect a fire drill, so if there is an emergency we must exit the room and building following the ushers' instructions. The meeting is bilingual, and headsets are available to receive a simultaneous translation service from Welsh to English on channel 1 and to amplify sound on channel 0. There will be a record of everything that is said in public. No apologies have been received, therefore there are no substitutions.</p>
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9.31 a.m.

Gorchymyn (Cymhwysedd Deddfwriaethol) Arfaethedig Pwyllgor Drafft (Llwybrau Di-drafftig) 2009, a Chynllun Gweithredu ar Gerdded a Beicio a Menter Trefi Teithio Cynaliadwy Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru

The Draft Committee Proposed (Legislative Competence) (Traffic-free Routes) Order 2009, and the Welsh Assembly Government's Walking and Cycling Action Plan and Sustainable Travel Towns Initiative

<p>Gareth Jones: Fel gair byr o gefndir, mae'r pwyllgor wedi cynnal ymchwiliad craffu cyn deddfu ar ei Orchymyn cymhwysedd deddfwriaethol arfaethedig drafft ar llwybrau di-drafftig. Wedi'r Aelodau graffu ar y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ym mis Ionawr, penderfynwyd bod angen craffu ymhellach ar gynllun gweithredu ar gerdded a beicio a menter trefi teithio cynaliadwy Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru cyn penderfynu a ddylai'r pwyllgor symud ymlaen i osod Gorchymyn arfaethedig ger bron y Cynulliad. Felly, mae'r cyfarfod hwn yn bwysig o ran trefn a gwneud penderfyniad.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: As a brief background, the committee held a pre-legislative scrutiny inquiry on its draft proposed legislative competence Order on traffic-free routes. After Members scrutinised the Deputy First Minister in January, it was decided that further scrutiny was required on the Welsh Assembly Government's walking and cycling action plan and sustainable travel towns initiative before deciding whether the committee should move forward to lay a proposed Order before the Assembly. So, this meeting is important to the process and to making a decision.</p>
<p>Yr wyf yn troi felly at y gynrychiolaeth o Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru, gan estyn croeso cynnes i Ieuan Wyn Jones, y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog a'r Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth, a Jane Davidson, y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynaliadwyedd a Thai. Yr wyf yn estyn croeso arbennig i chi, Jane, gan mai hwn yw eich ymddangosiad cyntaf ger bron y pwyllgor. Yr wyf hefyd yn croesawu John Davies, cyfreithiwr o'r adran gwasanaethau cyfreithiol, Martin Stevenson, prif ymgynghorydd polisi trafndiaeth, Debbie Paramore, uwch ddadansoddydd trafndiaeth, Gerry Quarrell, pennaeth yr uned natur, mynediad a morol a Richard Morgan, arweinydd yr adran cerdded a beicio. Croeso cynnes i chi atom. Yr ydym yn ddiolchgar am y dystiolaeth ac am gopi o'r strategaeth a ddaeth i law. Fel Aelodau, yr ydym wedi cael cyfle i ddarllen y dystiolaeth honno. Yr wyf yn eich gwahodd i gyflwyno'r hyn y dymunwch ei ddweud mewn tua pum neu 10 munud. Cawn gyfle wedyn fel Aelodau i ofyn cwestiynau i chi.</p>	<p>Therefore, I now turn the representatives of the Welsh Assembly Government, and I extend a warm welcome to Ieuan Wyn Jones, the Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport, and Jane Davidson, the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing. I extend a warm welcome to you in particular, Jane, as this is your first appearance before the committee. I also welcome John Davies, who is a lawyer from the legal services department, Martin Stevenson, chief transport policy adviser, Debbie Paramore, senior transport analyst, Gerry Quarrell, head of nature, access and marine unit and Richard Morgan, leader of the walking and cycling section. A warm welcome to you to the committee. We are grateful for the evidence and for the copy of the strategy that we have received. As Members, we have had an opportunity to read that evidence. I invite you to present what you wish to say in about five or 10 minutes. We will then have an opportunity as Members to ask you questions.</p>

<p>Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog a'r Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth (Ieuan Wyn Jones): Diolch yn fawr iawn, Gadeirydd. Yr wyf yn falch o'r cyfle i ddod yn ôl i drafod cynllun gweithredu Cymru ar gerdded a beicio a'r ffaith ein bod erbyn hyn wedi cyhoeddi y dref gyntaf yn dref teithio cynaliadwy. Yr wyf yn gobeithio y bydd y wybodaeth a roddwn yn y dystiolaeth yn dangos ein hymrwymiad i drafnidiaeth gynaliadwy. Byddaf yn rhoi ychydig o gefndir, a bydd Jane yn sôn mwy am fanylion y cynllun gweithredu.</p>	<p>The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones): Thank you very much, Chair. I am pleased to have the opportunity to return to discuss the Wales action plan on walking and cycling and the fact that we have now announced the first sustainable travel town. I hope that the information that we provide in the evidence will demonstrate our commitment to sustainable transport. I will give some background, and Jane will elaborate on the details of the action plan.</p>
<p>Fel yr wyf wedi sôn fwy nag unwaith mewn tystiolaeth i'r pwyllgor hwn, mae ymrwymiad y Llywodraeth i ddulliau trafnidiaeth fwy cynaliadwy wedi ei adlewyrchu yn strategaeth trafnidiaeth Cymru, a diwygiwyd y strategaeth honno yn dilyn yr ymrwymiad yn 'Cymru'n Un'.</p>	<p>As I have mentioned more than once in evidence to this committee, the Government's commitment to more sustainable transport methods is reflected in the Wales transport strategy, which was amended following the commitment in 'One Wales'.</p>
<p>Un o'r themâu allweddol sydd yn waelodol i'r strategaeth yw gwneud defnydd mwy o ddulliau teithio mwy cynaliadwy, sydd yn cynnwys cerdded a beicio. Yn unol â hyn, yr ydym wedi mabwysiadu cyfres o bolisiau yn yr agenda Dewisiadau Doethach, sydd yn golygu defnyddio mwy o'r cynlluniau teithio fel rhannu ceir, cynlluniau parcio a theithio, mesurau blaenoriaeth i fisiau a darpariaeth well ar gyfer cerddwyr a beicwyr.</p>	<p>One of the key themes that are fundamental to the strategy is to make greater use of more sustainable forms of transport, including walking and cycling. In line with that, we have adopted a series of the policies in the Smarter Choices agenda, which means greater use of travel schemes such as car sharing, park and ride schemes, bus-prioritising measures and better provision for pedestrians and cyclists.</p>
<p>Ers y cyfarfod pwyllgor diwethaf, yr wyf yn falch o ddweud ein bod wedi cyhoeddi mai Caerdydd fydd y dref cyntaf i ddod o dan y cynllun trefi teithio cynaliadwy. Mae'n fuddsoddiad sylweddol ar y cyd, gyda £14.5 miliwn wrth Lywodraeth y Cynulliad a swm cyffelyb o Gyngor Caerdydd. Mae hwn yn gynllun arloesol, yn cyfuno gwelliannau i seilwaith a gwasanaethau ac yn cynnwys cyfres o ddatblygiadau, fel creu ardaloedd cerdded i siopwyr, coridorau bysiau, bysiau am ddim yng nghanol y dref, cynllun llogi beiciau am ddim, sydd wedi derbyn croeso mawr, cynlluniau rhannu teithiau a chlybiau ceir. Y nod yw symud pobl allan o'u ceir i ddefnyddio trafnidiaeth gyhoeddus, beicio a cherdded, a'i gwneud yn haws i bobl ddefnyddio dulliau gwahanol o deithio. Wrth wneud hynny, yr ydym yn gallu hybu iechyd ac yn lleihau tagfeydd ac allyriadau. Nid hwn fydd yr unig gynllun; dyma'r cyntaf o gyfres o gynlluniau yr ydym yn gobeithio eu cyhoeddi mewn ardaloedd eraill yng Nghymru.</p>	<p>Since the last committee meeting, I am pleased to say that we have announced that Cardiff is to be the first town that will come under the sustainable travel town scheme. It is a significant joint investment, with £14.5 million from the Assembly Government and a similar sum from Cardiff Council. This is an innovative scheme, combining improvements to infrastructure and services. It includes a series of developments, such as creating pedestrian areas for shoppers, bus corridors, free city-centre buses, free bike hire—a scheme that has been warmly welcomed—journey-sharing schemes and car clubs. The aim is to get people out of their cars and using public transport, cycling and walking, and to make it easier for people to use different forms of transport. In doing so, we can promote health and reduce congestion and emissions. This will not be the only scheme; it is the first of a series of schemes that we hope to announce in other parts of Wales.</p>
<p>Ochr yn ochr â hynny, ac yn gynharach o ran amser, lansiodd Jane a minnau'r cynllun gweithredu cerdded a beicio i nodi sut mae'r Llywodraeth yn cefnogi cerdded a beicio yng Nghymru. Fel yr awgrymais yng nghynt, bydd Jane yn siarad am fanylion y cynllun, ond hoffwn dynnu sylw at y ffaith fod y cynllun yn cynnwys rhoi blaenoriaeth i ddarpariaeth ar gyfer cerddwyr a beicwyr wrth fuddsoddi mewn trafnidiaeth gyhoeddus. Mae'n bwysig ein bod yn rhoi blaenoriaeth i hynny. Mae'n cynyddu'r ddarpariaeth ar gyfer rhwydweithiau cerdded a beicio diogel di-draffig drwy'r cynllun Llwybrau Diogel mewn Cymunedau.</p>	<p>Alongside that, and earlier in chronological terms, Jane and I launched the walking and cycling action plan to note how the Government supports walking and cycling in Wales. As I suggested earlier, Jane will talk about the details of the scheme, but I would like to draw attention to the fact that the scheme includes giving priority to provision for pedestrians and cyclists by investing in public transport. It is important that we give that priority. It increases the provision for safe traffic-free walking and cycling networks through the Safe Routes in Communities scheme.</p>

<p>Wrth gloi, hoffwn ddweud bod y fenter trefi teithio cynaliadwy ynghyd â'r cynllun gweithredu yn gamau pwysig ymlaen o ran annog pobl i newid eu ffordd o fyw yng Nghymru. Yr wyf yn siŵr y bydd y buddsoddiadau helaeth hyn yn sicrhau newid sylweddol o ran sut y bydd pobl yn dewis teithio. Yr ydym yn gobeithio y bydd annog pobl i wneud hyn yn newid sut mae pobl yn edrych ar deithio. Pan fydd y sesiwn cwestiynau ac ateb yn digwydd, gobeithiaf y bydd y pwyllgor yn sylweddoli bod gan y Llywodraeth ymrwymiad sylweddol i'r agenda hwn. Drosodd i Jane.</p>	<p>In closing, I would like to say that both the sustainable travel towns initiative and the action plan are important steps forward in encouraging people to change their way of life in Wales. I am sure that these large investments will ensure a significant change in how people choose to travel. We hope that encouraging people to do this will change how people look at travel. When the question and answer session takes place, I hope that the committee will realise that the Government has a significant commitment to this agenda. I now hand over to Jane.</p>
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The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson): The walking and cycling action plan is turning out to be an exciting document, because, for the first time, we have been able to bring together in one place all the key initiatives that both we and our partners are undertaking or planning to undertake in support of walking and cycling in Wales between 2009 and 2013. The overall objective of the plan is clear and simple, and, from the environmental perspective, we would articulate it in exactly the way that Ieuan has done. It is about securing a change in public behaviour towards a much greater participation in walking and cycling, as a means of both transport and recreation.

The action plan sets out the practical steps to be taken by the Assembly Government and our partners over the next four years to deliver that objective and to create more of a walking and cycling culture in Wales. We have had a wide range of stakeholders involved in this, and it is linked to our efforts under 'One Wales' to encourage more people from all backgrounds to enjoy and use the natural environment. We established the walking and cycling steering group in May last year to ensure that efforts to increase the levels of walking and cycling are co-ordinated across national and local government, because, when we held a conference on walking and cycling, we found that none of us knew all the initiatives that were happening in Wales in health, education, environment, transport and other areas.

9.40 a.m.

We now have the steering group, which is able to bring all of this together, and we jointly chair that. A very wide range of organisations are represented on it, including Sustrans, Disability Wales, the Cyclists' Touring Club, which is the UK cyclists' organisation, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Welsh Association of National Park Authorities, the Countryside Council for Wales, and the Children's Commissioner for Wales among others, along with a range of Welsh Assembly Government departments. As one of its first activities, the steering group oversaw the preparation of the action plan and, importantly, it will now assist in monitoring progress on the actions in the plan, ensuring that they are effectively followed up, otherwise there would be a danger that the list of initiatives that are going on in Wales would not be used effectively.

We set out four key themes. The first is behavioural change: getting people away from using the car to use more sustainable means of travel. To do that, we need to enable people to travel by bike or on foot by providing a safe and appropriate walking and cycling infrastructure—Ieuan has touched on that already—and ensuring the provision of traffic-free routes where appropriate. That will only be achieved if supporting policies and programmes are joined up and co-ordinated. That leads into the territory of planning, and providing showers and support in buildings.

The third theme is the main policy objectives, which we have already outlined. The fourth theme is evaluation, and enabling local authorities as well as the Assembly Government and others to track progress in delivering the plan and associated performance indicators. We have already given a commitment to publishing an annual report on progress under the plan, and that report can come to both this committee and to the Sustainability Committee. Our approach has been to ensure that the action plan builds on existing programmes and partnerships, and efforts to improve access to the countryside for recreation are particularly relevant here, because that has led to £3.7 million being invested from my department in the rights of way and coastal access improvement programmes, and both of those programmes increase access to the countryside for walkers and cyclists.

There is a critical issue about ensuring that people can undertake these activities safely. We have had some dreadful cases, particularly in relation to cyclists, who, in unsafe environments, have paid with their lives, and it is critical that we ensure that our walking and cycling action plan enables people to walk and cycle safely, so that they can reap the many benefits that come from active, sustainable and affordable travel, which I hope this committee will endorse.

Gareth Jones: Diolchaf i'r ddau ohonoch am hynny. Trof yn awr at yr Aelodau, a David Melding sydd â'r cwestiwn cyntaf.

Gareth Jones: I thank both of you for that. I now turn to the Members, and David Melding has the first question.

David Melding: I do not think that anyone here would do anything other than commend the vision of this strategy. It reflects the public mood and recognises that we have perhaps not paid enough attention to walking and cycling. I commend the bold targets, which reflect your ambition. However, I have some concern about the fact that there does not appear to be a clear route-map. Section D is on monitoring and evaluation. It is clear that you have committed to evaluation—and you obviously cannot say what your evaluations will be in advance of the programme being implemented—and we can scrutinise that over the next four years. However, there is no indication of how you are going to monitor this, as far as I can see, although the section is on monitoring and evaluation. When are you going to bring forward a route-map with clear milestones and targets that have been broken down so that they can be effectively monitored? It will not be possible for this committee or AMs in general to scrutinise you effectively if we do not have that. As Ministers and senior officials, have you looked at the Audit Committee's report on 'Climbing Higher', which has faced quite a lot of difficulty in its implementation? That strategy also contained very bold targets and a commendable vision, but, to paraphrase the conclusion of that report somewhat, it has proven miserably difficult to change behaviour. That has been the position, particularly with regard to co-ordinating what is a complicated set of things to deliver, because it goes across so many activities of the Welsh Assembly Government and involves so many partners. So, my first question is on monitoring, which is the key to giving life to these commendable commitments and visions.

Jane Davidson: We have set up a monitoring sub-group of the steering group, but I will ask Richard to tell us where he is on this, because he is the person who will have to ensure that we monitor effectively, that we have the right performance indicators in place, and that that information is sent back to us, as Ministers.

Mr Morgan: The targets that we have set are based on robust sources of evidence, namely ones that we know will be collected again in future years. They are based on national transport statistics, Sports Council for Wales data, and the information that we will be gathering via the Countryside Council for Wales, through the outdoor recreation survey, by the end of this financial year. The aim is to monitor that information annually, and perhaps more regularly, to ensure that we fulfil the aim in the plan to undertake regular evaluations of progress against the actions contained in the plan. The steering group comprises about 20 different organisations, and we will use a small number of those to help us to ensure that we gather the right sort of data. If those data are found wanting, we can identify other sources. I must say that it is not particularly straightforward to measure participation in some of these things, but we believe that the targets that we have set are based on robust sources that will help us to keep an eye on the progress made against those targets.

Jane Davidson: I wish to re-emphasise the annual reporting structure for the plan, which will ensure that we keep the document live.

David Melding: I am not going to flog this point, but I advise you to talk to the Wales Audit Office about how you could monitor effectively, as Mr Morgan has described an evaluation process, not a monitoring one. I do not wish to be disparaging, but, if you are involving so many partners, you need indicators that will drill down to quarterly reports, through a reporting mechanism, to this committee or the Assembly in general, but I have not heard that. As long as you are committed to providing it, you will not hear more criticism from me. However, there have been difficulties with implementing this sort of strategy, and, as I said, 'Climbing Higher' is a key example. I will leave that comment with you, but, as the opposition spokesman on transport, I will certainly be following up how you monitor effectively the actions of various agents. Most of the action will be carried out not by the Welsh Assembly Government but by various people who work with you.

I am generally pleased that two lead Ministers are here and that you have a steering committee, which you chair jointly. That level of leadership is appropriate. However, I wonder whether either of you has lead responsibility for the overall co-ordination. How will you manage that? Is there a senior official who has overall responsibility for ensuring that the strategy progresses? Again, the Wales Audit Office has made the criticism in the past that joint working can lead to rather fractured lines of responsibility. I would be interested to hear how often the steering committee is meeting and whether there are also meetings of officials, perhaps with a clear lead official who is the supremo or the tsar, if I may use such pungent descriptions. ["Laughter".]

Mr Quarrell: The steering group meets about three times a year; it was set up only last May, Mr Melding. As for the officials within the department working on this, I guess that I take a clear lead with our transport colleagues. We are working very closely with transport officials on this issue, as well as with our health colleagues, who are busy preparing the physical activity action plan, which is another push down this road.

9.50 a.m.

The Deputy First Minister: There is also a fairly clear division, I suppose, between what one would regard as the infrastructure necessary to develop, promote and increase availability, which obviously comes under transport, and how you promote and change behaviour, which Jane is taking a lead on. The way in which the group has developed has quite effectively, I think, given us an insight into the links needed to bring the two together.

Jane Davidson: I agree. I have the function of promoting walking and cycling, which means that my department co-ordinates that across the Assembly Government. The steering group comprises representatives from health and other departments, but if you were to make dramatic changes, the opportunities and the infrastructure elements for which Ieuan is responsible are absolutely critical. So, the best partnership for telling the public how we are driving this agenda forward is our joint chairing.

The Deputy First Minister: To add to that, one thing that struck me when I was discussing the sustainable travel towns initiative with Cardiff Council was that the current infrastructure is a disincentive to promotion in many places. The infrastructure often works against the use of walking and cycling, and encourages the use of a private car. In fact, it conflicts with bus lanes, and so on. So, changing the infrastructure is a prerequisite in some areas if we are to increase the rates of walking and cycling, and the promotion is then easier when the infrastructure is good. So, this all dovetails quite well.

Jenny Randerson: I have a number of questions that I will put to you as quickly as possible. I want to start by saying how much I welcome the fact that the first sustainable travel town initiative has been announced. You would expect me to say that as the AM for Cardiff Central, would you not? However, once you have an announcement like that, which is hugely welcome, you start thinking about the practical issues, so I just wanted to point out that cycle routes are controversial when it comes to not being able to park outside your own house, and so on. At a local level, it can be very difficult. Do you think that the current criteria are sufficiently strong to give local authorities the steer and the strength to deal with those local controversies, and I do not just mean in this case, in Cardiff? I am thinking of the committee-proposed LCO on traffic-free routes, which would strengthen the powers available on this, but I am also looking at the current situation. Is there work still to be done by the Assembly Government on strengthening the arm of local authorities in relation to providing cycle routes and making infrastructure improvements that encourage walking and cycling?

I also have a simple and quick second question, which is closely linked. I do not expect you to give me a precise date, but you say that this is the first of a number of announcements, so what sort of timescale are we looking at before the second announcement? Will it be within the next year, or will it be longer than that?

The Deputy First Minister: You are absolutely right to identify that some decisions can be controversial. I am well aware of the history of these decisions in parts of Cardiff. When I was discussing this with representatives of Cardiff Council, both at political and officer level, it was clear to me that it had given a great deal of thought to how it wanted to take forward its plans. I was encouraged to see that it had thought about some of these sensitive issues, or had made provision for them in the plans that it was bringing forward. It seemed to me that it was quite developed in certain areas, and we agreed that there was still a lot of work to do in other areas, especially around park and ride, and schemes like that. However, generally speaking, I was impressed with the thought that Cardiff had given to this.

I would say that the sustainable travel towns initiative cannot succeed unless there is a strong partnership between the Assembly Government and the local authority involved. That is primarily because the finance involved means that the local authority budget probably would not be able to deliver the kind of change that is necessary. There needs to be a partnership approach, and money has to come from both areas. Therefore, these plans need to be agreed between the partners. You cannot get away from the fact that particular routes have to be agreed by the local authority, so we cannot impose a particular route on a local authority, although we can encourage it, talk to it and work in partnership. Nevertheless, if it is necessary for us to look at strengthening the role of local government in taking those decisions, I would be quite happy to do so.

It is currently a bit difficult for me to give a very firm timetable for the sustainable travel towns announcements, although I hope to be able to do so later in the year. We are looking at a number of other areas in Wales that might want to get involved. Let us be honest about this: we need to make a fairly substantial investment. I can tell you that I am actively discussing the financial requirements of each of the proposals. Until those discussions are concluded, Jenny, I am sure that you will understand that it is difficult for me to give a firm timetable.

Mr Stevenson: I would add one point to what the Deputy First Minister said about guidance to local authorities. There is a good document that we signed up to, along with the Department for Transport and the Scottish Government, on cycle infrastructure design. I can make a copy available to the committee. It sets out a wealth of evidence and guidance on best practice on cycle infrastructure design, on-road issues and off-road issues. Any authority wishing to take forward the sustainable travel towns initiative would want to refer to that and would find it useful. So, there is plenty of evidence and guidance for them on how to design the schemes.

Jenny Randerson: Thank you, Martin. My other questions relate directly to the walking and cycling action plan. There is an issue of transparency here. There appears to have been a reduction of a couple of million pounds in the Safe Routes in Communities fund. I assume that you get the £10 million that you announced by adding to that fund the money for the walking and cycling routes. Would it not be easier to have one fund rather than two different ones? I am sure that you will respond by explaining that you have different criteria, but I am concerned to hear that, according to Sustrans, the walking and cycling fund has been frozen for some years to new entrants, so it is dealing only with existing schemes. Is it your intention to alter that situation? How far do you monitor the money that goes out under the walking and cycling fund? David referred to the importance of monitoring, and we have been given information that some of the existing funds have not been spent as they were intended to be spent, and they have been diverted into other things.

Connected with that, given that you do not want a legal approach to this, you are encouraging local authorities to do their own work in their own area without any legal responsibility. How are you ensuring connectivity between local authorities, your departments, and the officers of local authorities? For example, I gather that the Cwmbach to Newbridge-on-Wye A470 improvement scheme does not include a segregated walking and cycling path. That is one of your schemes and there is an issue with connecting initiatives within your department and, indeed, with connecting local authority initiatives with your department's initiatives.

10.00 a.m.

The Deputy First Minister: I will first deal with the issue of the funding. I am sure that you will be aware, Jenny, from your experience of these matters, that looking at one individual pot does not give you the whole picture.

Jenny Randerson: That was my point.

The Deputy First Minister: Okay. It may help the committee if I briefly ran through the funding arrangements. Most, but not all, of the funds have been allocated to walking and cycling. A fund of £2 million has been dedicated to those; I think that that sum was £3 million last year. There is £8 million for Safe Routes in Communities, which includes some for walking and cycling. A sum of £2 million is allocated to the Denbighshire and Clwyd coastal package. There is a sum of £1.6 million, as part of the sustainable towns initiative, for Pont y Werin in Cardiff, which I have visited and I was impressed with the plans. There is £1 million for walking and cycling where that is related to trunk roads. The total budget is £14.6 million, whereas the total budget for all of those heads last year was £14 million, so there has been a small increase. So, when you consider the total budget, it is broadly on a par with last year's, if one counts inflation, although I am not sure that one can include inflation these days, looking at the figures. There is also a sum that is in Jane's budget, to which she can refer. So, the total budget is there.

The issue of monitoring is important. We take that quite seriously. I have inquired about some of the problems associated with walking and cycling schemes for which local authorities have bid, but which have not been delivered. In at least two areas, part of the problem was due to the fact that they had been unable to acquire the necessary land. There had been some issue about the purchase of the necessary land to enable that scheme to go forward, but I accept the point that it is important that, when local authorities bid for money for particular schemes, we ensure that they are delivered.

You mentioned connectivity between local authorities, but that is the point of having the national transport plan that will follow the strategy, followed then by the regional transport plans. The intention is that local authorities work together to come up with priorities for their region so that, where a road scheme, rail scheme, or whatever it may be crosses local authority boundaries, the relevant local authorities agree what those priorities should be and how they connect with each other. That point should probably have been made earlier in this discussion, when David raised an issue relating to monitoring and evaluation. Within the national transport plan, there will be a need for local authorities and the Assembly Government to develop their own schemes for walking and cycling and there will be an opportunity for those to be considered by the main committee monitoring my department. I would be happy to share some ideas on how that could be done.

Jane Davidson: I will add a few points. I said in my introduction that there is £3.7 million, which is new money; £1.7 million of that has gone into the rights of way improvement plans and £2 million has gone into the coastal path, for the ambitious agenda of creating a coastal path by 2012. In addition, in my department, we found money to put into two pilot Bike It! schemes, in Conwy and in Neath Port Talbot, to see what happens if you invest in schools to encourage cycling. As a result, they have seen dramatic increases in the number of children cycling regularly to school. We have also put money into the contribution of cycling training standards.

When we publish the annual report on the walking and cycling action plan, referring to David Melding's question, perhaps we could write to committee about how we are going to monitor and evaluate it, because it is a critical difference in that context, taking into account the recommendations in the Audit Committee report on 'Climbing Higher'. We should note all the information about what is spent on walking and cycling, because there are also initiatives in the health department, for example. One of the critical areas for us was to find out exactly what was going on, which we can now do effectively through the steering group. Of course, in addition to that, there is the support of Sustrans and other organisations as well. We can make sure that, with the first annual report, there is an accurate picture of all the investment that is going in to this agenda. I think that we will find that it is substantially more than what you can see clearly is £18.7 million as a result of our coming to committee today.

Mr Stevenson: May I pick up the point that Jenny raised about the Cwmbach to Newbridge-on-Wye A470 scheme that is being planned at the moment? The issue is that the proposal for the scheme that we have is that there would be a cycleway at the Builth Wells end of the scheme, but we have received an objection from Sustrans that it would like to see a walking and cycling facility along the whole length of the scheme. We are yet to discuss that with Sustrans; we intend to do so with a view to resolving its objection. If we cannot do that, the fallback is that it would go to the independent planning inspector when the inquiry into the scheme takes place later this year. It is in train, if you like; there are ongoing discussions.

Gareth Jones: Ar ran y pwyllgor, diolchaf i chi am yr atebion hynny. Yr ydym yn sylweddoli eich bod yn rhoi blaenoriaeth amlwg i seiclo, pan fod newidiadau i ffyrdd fel yr A470, ond mae trafferthion neu rwystrau ymarferol weithiau, o ran prynu'r tir ac ati. Drwyddi draw, yr egwyddor yw y darperir ar gyfer seiclwyr pan fydd newidiadau o'r fath yn cael eu gwneud. Diolch i Jenny am ofyn y cwestiwn. Hefyd, yr wyf yn siŵr bod aelodau'r pwyllgor yn croesawu'r ffaith fod Jane wedi canolbwyntio ar y gwahaniaeth rhwng yr arfarnu a'r monitro, a'r swm cyfan sydd ar gael. Mae hynny, wrth gwrs, yn hwyluso ein gwaith craffu ni. Yr ydym yn croesawu'n fawr iawn eich sylwadau ar hynny.

Gareth Jones: On behalf of the committee, I thank you for those answers. We realise that you give a clear priority to cycling when there are changes to roads like the A470, but sometimes there are difficulties or practical barriers, when buying the land and so on. Overall, the principle is that cyclists will be provided for when such changes are made. Thank you to Jenny for asking that question. Also, I am sure that committee members welcome the fact that Jane has concentrated on the difference between the appraisal and the monitoring, and the whole sum that is available. That will, of course, expedite our scrutiny work. We very much welcome your comments on that.

Mae tri neu bedwar Aelod arall am ofyn cwestiynau, felly trof yn awr at Jeff Cuthbert.

Three or four other Members wish to ask questions, so I now turn to Jeff Cuthbert.

Jeff Cuthbert: Thank you for the paper and for what has been said so far. I regard all this as a very positive development. I will ask all my questions in one go in order to save time. Mr Quarrell mentioned earlier that this whole programme forms part of the physical activity action plan—I think that that is right. On monitoring and evaluation, looking at the big picture, how are you going to ensure that there is good joined-up thinking right across the whole scheme of encouraging physical activity, so that there is no wasteful duplication, particularly of resources?

I am also obviously concerned that we should have access for all, as far as possible, to walking and cycling—a point that was made by a number of disability groups. I noted that you said that Disability Wales is one of the partners involved in this. Concern has been expressed to us about the shared use of paths and cycleways, particularly by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and the Royal National Institute of Blind People. What scope will there be for modification, should the reports come back that there are significant issues as a result of shared paths? I appreciate that there could be major funding implications, but, nevertheless, presumably there will be some scope for modification.

Finally, in the action plan, aim 10 is to make Wales a premier destination for walking and cycling events. I think that it is very important that we do that, as one of the outcomes of attracting high-profile events to Wales is that that will significantly raise the profile of walking and cycling. That will be very important, and not just for the events themselves, but because it promotes greater awareness, particularly among younger people, and it will encourage them to take up, in this case, walking and cycling.

10.10 a.m.

Do you have any particular events in mind? I assume that it is not just a statement that has been put down, but that you have something in mind. Are you considering organising new events? If so, what sort of events would they be? If you are thinking of bringing existing events to Wales, what might those be?

Jane Davidson: I will start, although I know that Richard wants to say something about events.

We can demonstrate the good, joined-up thinking because of the membership of the steering group. Alun Ffred will shortly produce his physical activity action plan, which takes full account of the work that is going on in the walking and cycling strategy. It is important that we do that.

It is also important that we have a strong disability voice on the steering group—which we have. That means that, when we are discussing broad principles—the steering group itself is not looking at specific plans; those will go through normal consultation processes—we have been clear that, in the context of rights of way improvement plans and the coastal path, we will create safe opportunities for walkers and cyclists alike. Sometimes, because of its nature, an opportunity will be shared, while at other times it will be discrete. We are mindful of those issues. Interestingly enough, we have a requirement for access statements in the broad context of planning, and they are being introduced this year, very much taking account of that kind of agenda.

On the events issue, the interest in the sportive-type events in Wales is dramatic. The Merlin ride, which started last year, was attended by many hundreds of cyclists, while the Dragon ride, which is being run again this year, has a limit of 3,500 cyclists, and that has already almost been reached for a ride that does not take place until June. We already have major interest there. Of course, we did lobby, unsuccessfully, for the mountain-biking element of the Olympics to come to Wales, in the full knowledge that we have some of the best mountain-biking terrain in the world, and not just in the UK.

Mr Morgan: Mountain biking and road events are important. As a general observation, most of the people who engage in those sorts of events are more than comfortable to cycle on the roads as part of their everyday lives. Sportive events are growing rapidly, as is their audience. The summer calendar of events in Wales is already pretty well developed. There are events just about every weekend from April through to the autumn. The action plan acknowledges that fact, and it contains an objective to build on the situation. A major events unit has just been established within Visit Wales, and one of the target events that it is looking at is based on cycling. It will focus on one major mountain-bike event and one major road event. The benefits for tourism are significant, too. The unit is actively looking at that as a result of the action plan.

Jane Davidson: Another point to make concerns how we link the available opportunities for accommodation for walkers and cyclists so that people can see them easily on the Visit Wales website. I assume that that is now in place—

Mr Quarrell: It is practically done.

Jane Davidson: So it is in its final arrangement. It is those kinds of features that will bring people to Wales, because they will be able to see cycle routes and accommodation side by side with all the other tremendous opportunities.

The Deputy First Minister: The only point that I would make in this regard is to remember that you are catering for events that attract different types of people, such as the real enthusiasts who will want to spend their time pursuing their sport, and those who are engaging in leisure pursuits, the walkers and cyclists—

Jane Davidson: Me.

The Deputy First Minister: I was going to say that about myself, Jane. ["Laughter."] I mean those of us who are more leisure types, if I can put it like that, who would walk and cycle occasionally. One of the things that you could do would be to look no further than at what we do in Anglesey, because we now have very well developed walking tours there, organised by Menter Môn, that link in with things like the coastal path and local history. So, you can do a lot around walking and cycling, beyond physical exercise. That is growing from year to year. There is no doubt that that also has a tourism element, so having the right kind of accommodation nearby is very important.

<p>Nerys Evans: Hoffwn ategu'r gefnogaeth i'r cynlluniau yr ydych wedi'u hamlinellu heddiw. Mae gennyf bedwar pwynt penodol i'w codi. Soniodd Jenny am werthuso. Yr ydym wedi clywed am un cynllun yn nyffryn Aman, lle mae arian wedi'i arallgyfeirio i bethau eraill, gan gynnwys adeiladu heolydd. O ran y broses werthuso a monitro, a ydych yn ffyddiog y bydd y system newydd yn sicrhau nad yw'r arian hwn yn cael ei arallgyfeirio i gynlluniau eraill a'i fod yn cael ei wario ar y nod gwreiddiol?</p>	<p>Nerys Evans: I would like to endorse the support for the plans that you have outlined today. I have four specific points to raise. Jenny mentioned evaluation. We have heard about one scheme in the Amman valley, where money has been redirected to other things, including the building of roads. On the evaluation and monitoring process, are you confident that the new system will ensure that the money is not redirected to other schemes and is spent on the original objective?</p>
<p>O ran y fenter trefi cynaliadwy, soniasoch am y ffaith eich bod yn trafod gyda llefydd eraill, a deallaf nad ydych mewn sefyllfa i roi manylion inni ar y trafodaethau hynny. Beth yw nod hynny yn y pen draw? Ai cael rhywbeth mewn pob ardal awdurdod lleol ynteu cael dau neu dri chynllun drwy Gymru gyfan o dan y faner trefi cynaliadwy?</p>	<p>You talked about the fact that you are discussing the sustainable towns initiative with other areas, and I know that you are not in a position to give us the details of those discussions. What is the ultimate aim? Is it to have something in every local authority area or to have two or three schemes across Wales under the sustainable towns banner?</p>
<p>A ydych yn dal i gredu bod y GCD arfaethedig yn ddiangen oherwydd y cynlluniau sydd gan y Llywodraeth? A ydych yn hapus bod eich cynlluniau'n mynd yn ddigon pell?</p>	<p>Do you still believe that the proposed LCO is unnecessary, because of the plans that the Government has? Are you happy that your schemes go far enough?</p>
<p>Os ydych yn darganfod, wedi ichi werthuso'r cynlluniau, nad yw'r nod wedi'i gyflawni, a fydddech yn barod i ystyried cynnig eich GCD eich hunain?</p>	<p>If, having evaluated the schemes, you find that the objective has not been achieved, would you be willing to consider proposing your own LCO?</p>
<p>Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog: Mae'r cwestiwn cyntaf yn anodd yn yr ystyr nad yw'r arallgyfeirio yn dod drwom ni ond drwy'r awdurdod lleol. Os yw'r awdurdod lleol yn darganfod, o dan y grant trafnidiaeth, er enghraifft, na all ddefnyddio'r arian ar gyfer y cynllun a oedd ganddo mewn golwg am ba bynnag reswm, mae gennym ddau ddewis—tynnu'r arian yn ôl a gweld a all rhywun arall ddefnyddio'r arian, neu arallgyfeirio'r arian i ryw gynllun arall. Hoffwn iddi fod yn anos arallgyfeirio'r arian. Os ydych yn dod o fewn wythnosau i ddiwedd y flwyddyn ac mae'r awdurdod lleol yn dweud na fydd yn llwyddo i wario'r arian, beth ydych chi'n ei wneud? A ydych yn tynnu'r arian yn ôl, pan fyddwch yn gwybod efallai na fyddwch yn gallu ei wario oherwydd ei bod hi'n rhy agos at ddiwedd y flwyddyn? Felly, mae eisiau inni fod yn eithaf hyblyg ond mae hefyd eisiau gwneud y pwynt mai mewn achosion arbennig yn unig y byddem yn fodlon arallgyfeirio arian. Credaf y byddem yn hapusach gyda hynny.</p>	<p>The Deputy First Minister: The first question is difficult in the sense that the redirecting does not come through us but through the local authority. If the local authority finds, under the transport grant, for example, that, for whatever reason, it cannot use the money for the scheme that it had in mind, we have two options—we can withdraw the money and see whether someone else can use it, or redirect the money to another scheme. I would like it to be more difficult to redirect the money. If you get to within a few weeks of the end of the year and the local authority says that it will not be able to spend the money, what do you do? Do you withdraw the money, when you know that you may not be able to spend it because it is close to the end of the year? So, we need to be quite flexible but we also need to make the point that only in special cases would we be willing to redirect money, I believe that we would be happier with that.</p>

<p>Bwriedir creu hyd at bedair tref teithio cynaliadwy ar hyd a lled Cymru. Bydd yn amhosibl cael un ym mhob ardal awdurdod lleol, ond yr ydym yn disgwyl y bydd angen iddynt fod mewn rhannau gwahanol o Gymru. I ryw raddau, mae'n dibynnu ar natur y cynlluniau sy'n cael eu datblygu gan awdurdodau lleol, ac efallai y bydd awdurdodau lleol yn gallu cydweithio i symud ymlaen ar hyn. Hoffwn weld y cynlluniau hyn yn datblygu. Credaf fod y cynllun yr ydym wedi'i gyflwyno ar gerdded a seiclo yn gynhyrfus ac arloesol a bod ganddo dargedau clir. Yr ydym hefyd yn datblygu'r system drefi hon. Os ydym yn darganfod nad yw hynny'n cyflawni yn y ffordd yr ydym wedi ei awgrymu, yn naturiol, byddem yn fodlon ystyried—a gwn fod Jane yn cytuno â hyn—symud ymlaen gyda deddfwriaeth ein hunain.</p>	<p>We intend to have up to four sustainable travel towns across Wales. It will impossible to have one in each local authority area, but we expect that they will need to be in different areas of Wales. To some extent, it depends on the nature of the schemes developed by local authorities, and local authorities might be able to work together to move forward on this. I would like to see these schemes developing. I believe that the scheme that we have brought forward on walking and cycling is exciting and innovative and has clear targets. We are also developing this towns system. If we find that that does not deliver in the way that we have suggested, naturally, we would be willing to consider—and I know that Jane agrees with this—bringing forward our own legislation.</p>
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<p>Sandy Mewies: I have a couple of questions, and the first is on sustainable towns. I am aware of a town not too far away from me that put in a bid for this, and I do not think that it was aware that there were going to be future announcements. There was a great deal of disappointment that a lot of work had been done.</p>
<p>10.20 a.m.</p>
<p>Cardiff is fine, although I would make the point that I had a visitor last week who travelled to Cardiff by train from London, and bought a ticket that included travel on the bendy bus down to Cardiff bay from the train station. However, the first problem is that that scheme is not well-publicised, and the second is that the machine swallows the ticket as you leave the train station, so that you then have to queue up again and get another one.</p>
<p>Jenny Randerson: And you get told off for doing so.</p>
<p>Sandy Mewies: I do not know how sustainable that is, and how that fits in with your plans. I know that that is a digression, but it was a real irritation for a visitor I had last week.</p>
<p>The Deputy First Minister: It is an irritation that many of us share.</p>
<p>Jane Davidson: You only do it once.</p>
<p>Sandy Mewies: I am worried about the criteria for sustainable towns, because it seems that, if the local authority does not agree with the town council, it may not have the opportunity to go forward with the bid. I would like to be assured that this is not the end of the story on sustainable towns.</p>
<p>Like Nerys, I see this in the light of the proposed LCO that we have been discussing. Perhaps you can reassure me on a couple of points. This encourages local authorities to provide a network, rather than putting a statutory duty on them; how can we be sure that, first, this will result in a strategic approach across the whole of Wales, and secondly, that maintenance will be carried out? The chief constable made the point that maintenance of the strategic network is important if these tracks are to be used. I know that an example in Flintshire is mentioned in the Sustrans paper, and it illustrates the point that Jenny made about the kind of problems that arise. This instance is not in my constituency, but I am aware that the money was not used, and one of the reasons was that people were not awfully keen on their gardens being taken away for a cycle track to whistle past their houses. There will always be that kind of difficulty—you cannot impose these things on people and their properties.</p>
<p>At the same time, you have to encourage local authorities to think around such problems. How will you be able to do that? Are you confident that you will be able to do that? It is a good plan, and encouraging walking and cycling is a marvellous idea. The Dee coastal path, for example, is a wonderful asset for tourism, the economy, and for physical health.</p>

My last point is this: the Welsh Assembly Government is always looking at social inclusion, equality of opportunity and child poverty. Child poverty is not just a monetary issue—it is also about poverty of experience. Bicycles are quite expensive; I got a bike for passing my 11-plus, and I bet that is true of a few people here. However, it is something that not everyone can afford. Has any thought been given to that? Will any thought be given to that? Some families might love to take advantage of this initiative if the cash was available to allow them to do so.

Gareth Jones: Before you come in, Deputy First Minister, I think that Christine wants to ask a question.

Christine Chapman: It is on that point, so perhaps it will save time to ask my question now—it is on health inequalities, and is related to Sandy's point on child poverty. The report is very good, and it is good that progress is being made on this, because it is important. A new report is out today, and—although I may have misheard this—apparently some areas of Wales have a 14-year difference in life expectancy. That is absolutely shocking, if it is the case, and it should be considered as part of this action plan. I wonder, like Sandy, whether any account has been taken of whether we should be prioritising some of the poorest areas, because they are the ones that will benefit the most—and they need to benefit the most, if you look at obesity levels and life expectancy. So, I suppose that that is my question really. As Sandy said, there are huge challenges in these areas: there is the cost of bikes to consider and, in poorer areas, there is poor public transport. I am not convinced that local authorities are really signed up to this. How important a priority is this for local authorities? If we are relying on them to deliver this, I am not convinced that it will be delivered as we would like it to be. I am someone who enjoys cycling and walking and I think that this should not just be about providing a nice leisure activity for the more affluent—it must be more than that. I have visited Sweden, Finland and Denmark, and I would like to see that model here, where everyone is cycling, rich or poor. That is the model we should be working towards, if we are to achieve that modal shift.

The Deputy First Minister: I will address Sandy's main questions, and I think that Jane will answer Christine's questions and Sandy's final one. We, as a Government, have a general duty to promote walking and cycling, but the question is whether that duty needs to be specific and, if so, whether that specific duty would then be transferred to local authorities. We have our action plan and the sustainable towns initiative, which, in fact, Christine, is aimed at increasing participation in walking and cycling across all age ranges and classes, as it were; I think it is quite an exciting plan. Rolling that out to other areas of Wales would represent a tremendous asset. It is also about behaviour change, making people aware of the opportunities, giving them dedicated paths to enable them to take up those opportunities, and making it safe for people to use bikes. The national transport plan will be a delivery mechanism for some of this, and the regional transport plans, which will obviously be drawn up by local authorities, will have to address these issues.

Therefore, we have the action plan, the national transport plan, the regional transport plans and the sustainable towns initiative. My view is that this is a comprehensive package that we are bringing together, largely in consultation with stakeholders, which will have to be delivered by local authorities. If this does not work, the case for legislation would become much clearer. Sandy raised an important point about maintenance. Our promoting and encouraging activity does not deal with the issue of maintenance. I have asked Martin and the team to look at how we can deal with maintenance, which is not currently addressed under the things that we have been talking to you about. I will give the committee an undertaking that I will look at ways to address the issue of maintenance separately from promotion and development. I am aware that, in many areas, there may be a grand opening, so to speak, for a particular scheme but that, some years down the line, you will find that the facilities have not been properly maintained and have become disused as a result. I am prepared to look at the issue of maintenance separately, and perhaps we can come back to you with some ideas on how that could be done.

10.30 a.m.

Jane Davidson: To pick up on the other points, the physical activity action plan, which is due to be consulted on in April, is, as I said earlier, designed to be complementary to the walking and cycling action plan. We are not replicating the same actions; it is important that the activity is complementary, so we are looking at more actions that will support this agenda from the physical activity action plan. That is why it has been very important for officials in all departments to work alongside each other on that delivery. There will be elements of that that focus on the social inclusion agenda. However, work has been going on—and more work needs to be done—in the context of Communities First and creating appropriate walking and cycling routes. We know that there are examples of very good cycle routes that go through socially disadvantaged areas, for example, on the back of the Porth relief road in the Rhondda, there is a superb cycle route and a very good cycle route goes right through the centre of many estates in the Caerphilly area, but they are not used as well as they might be. So, sometimes the infrastructure is in place, but it has not been adequately embraced by the local community. That is where initiatives such as the Bike It! scheme are important in encouraging people to cycle, because although you may have had your bike since you passed the 11-plus—

Sandy Mewies: It was the only one that I had. ["Laughter."]

Jane Davidson: The point that I was going to make is that, if you look at the statistics, you will see that there is a high percentage of bicycle ownership among people in all communities across Wales. We need to translate that into use. One of the major promotional aspects of this plan, which we have not picked up so far, is the tax-free schemes that are available. Next week, the Assembly Commission and the Assembly Government will be launching the opportunity for all employees, including Members and their support staff, to take advantage of tax-free cycle purchase schemes. We are strongly promoting this, and not only across the whole public sector in Wales, because many private employers already do this. We think that it is important that people take up these kinds of opportunities, because many people who work in the public sector, particularly in low-paid jobs, in communities the length and breadth of Wales. There is a major opportunity there.

Another point is that we must put our cycling infrastructure in the right places. We opened the link here through the barrage to Penarth in July last year, which has had thousands of users, because it is such a logical route. As Ieuan said earlier, the extra investment that his department is putting into Pont y Werin will complete a circuit and I think that will attract many more walkers and cyclists. We also need to do more to promote walker-friendly towns; many towns in Wales are actively embracing the notion that they are particularly open to walkers and that their guesthouses, their pubs and so on welcome them. That has not always been the case, and, in a country that is renowned for activity opportunities, we must ensure that all those elements are in place.

The Deputy First Minister: Sandy raised a point that I did not address, namely the issue of sustainable towns and how we go forward. When I made the announcement about Cardiff, I made it clear that others would follow, and I would encourage areas throughout Wales to come forward with ideas as to how that can be taken forward. We would be happy to engage with people on those ideas, as we develop our plans.

Gareth Jones: Dyna ddiwedd y cwestiynau ond gwnaf un sylw, gan i chi gyfeirio at y cynllun trefi cynaliadwy. Yr wyf i, fel pawb arall, yn croesawu bod Caerdydd wedi cael ei ddewis, ond mae Caerdydd yn unigryw mewn sawl ystyr—gallwch ei gymharu ag Abertawe, i ryw raddau, ac efallai Casnewydd. Pan sefydlir arfer da dan y math hwn o gynllun, mae'n bwysig eich bod yn medru ei gopïo neu ei ledaenu i lefydd eraill. Mae hynny'n allweddol. Hoffwn feddwl, os ydych yn penderfynu, dyweder, ar bedair tref arall, byddai'r trefi hynny'n cynrychioli trefi eraill. Byddai cymuned yn y Cymoedd yn un enghraifft. Gallech wedyn gymhwyso'r hyn yr oeddech yn ei ddysgu am y math hwnnw o dref mewn ardaloedd cyffelyb. Mae mathau eraill o drefi yng nghanolbarth Cymru, ac, ar yr arfordir, mae trefi glan môr fel Llandudno, er enghraifft. Hynny yw, dylech fedru dysgu o'r profiadau hynny a'r hyn sydd yn digwydd, fel bod modd lleadaenu'r amcanion i lefydd eraill. Wedi'r cyfan, mae'r cynllun trefi cynaliadwy yn dod â phob peth at ei gilydd. Mae'n cynnwys pob agwedd yr ydym wedi trafod y bore yma.

Gareth Jones: That brings the questions to a close, but I will make one comment, as you referred to the sustainable towns scheme. Like everyone else, I welcome the fact that Cardiff has been chosen, but Cardiff is unique in many ways—you could compare it to Swansea, to some extent, and perhaps Newport. When good practice is established under this type of scheme, it is important that you can replicate it or disseminate it in other places. That is crucial. I would like to think that, if you decide, say, on four other towns, that those towns are representative of other towns. One example would be a community in the Valleys. You could then apply what you learned about that type of town to similar areas. There are other types of towns in mid Wales, and, on the coast, seaside towns such as Llandudno, for example. That is, you should be able to learn from those experiences and from what happens in such a way that you can disseminate the aims to other places. After all, the sustainable towns scheme brings everything together. It contains all the aspects that we have discussed this morning.

Gyda'r ychydig sylwadau hynny o'r Gadair, yr wyf yn diolch yn fawr i'r Gweinidogion a'r swyddogion am ddod atom heddiw, am rannu eu sylwadau a'u syniadau gyda ni, ac am ymateb i'n cwestiynau.

With those few comments from the Chair, I thank the Ministers and the officials for their attendance here today, for sharing their comments and ideas with us, and for responding to our questions.

10.35 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

Gareth Jones: Yr wyf yn gwahodd yr Aelodau i gynnis ein bod symud i sesiwn breifat. A oes unrhyw un am roi cynnis gerbron?

Gareth Jones: I invite Members to propose that we move to a private session. Does anyone wish to propose the appropriate motion?

David Melding: I move that

"the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37(vi)."

Gareth Jones: Gwelaf fod y pwyllgor yn gytûn.

Gareth Jones: I see that the committee is in agreement.

"Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed."

"Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.35 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.35 a.m."