

## Enterprise and Learning Committee

EL(3) 09-09 (p3) : 26 March 2009

### Note on Walking & Cycling Action Plan

Sustrans Cymru supports the Assembly Government's Walking & Cycling Action Plan and applauds the bold targets. We also welcome the £4.5 Million announced to fund a Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town in Cardiff and the match-funding for the walking and cycling bridge from Penarth to Cardiff Bay.

We are now anxious to ensure that the targets are translated into action. The Action Plan's targets are ambitious, for example, tripling the number of children cycling to school, doubling the number of adults walking to work, triple the number of adults cycling to work. But there is no clear route map on how these will be achieved.

We have seen ambitious targets before that have come to nothing. In December 2003, WAG published its Walking and Cycling Strategy for Wales which committed to triple the number of cycle trips by 2010 (on a 2000 base); in January 2005 in its Strategy for Sport & Physical Activity, Climbing Higher, WAG committed to getting 95% of people in Wales will have a footpath or cycle-path within a ten-minute walk (Target 11).

The Action Plan has no new funding attached to it. In fact, the recently announced Transport Grant funding has seen a cut of some £2 Million to the Safe Routes to Communities fund - the only stream available for new walking and cycling projects.

Safe routes to Communities:	8,084,000	9.2%
Road schemes:	57,135,000	65.4%
Integrated Transport Packages:	8,819,000	10.10%
Walking and cycling:	13,350,000	15.3%
Total	87,388,000	100%

There is an ongoing problem with the Transport Grant for Walking & Cycling schemes. For some years this fund has been frozen to new entrants and funding will only be granted to schemes already underway. As highlighted in the evidence taken during the pre-legislative scrutiny stage of the LCO, many Highways Authorities do not prioritise walking and cycling schemes. For example, the Amman Valley scheme in Carmarthenshire has been receiving funding for several years without any work being taken forward. Funding from previous years has been diverted to other projects, including road schemes.

The Action Plan 'encourages' Authorities to progress schemes but without a legal duty to develop a network of traffic free routes, in practice schemes are low down the list of priorities and are allowed to drag and in some cases for the funding to be returned. £500,000 allocated last year to the Taith consortium for a new path from Mold to Saltney has been diverted to another transport project because Flintshire Council decided after a cursory assessment that it was too difficult to proceed with.

Furthermore, new road schemes continue to be planned without providing facilities for walkers and cyclists. For example, the planned A470 Cwm-Bach to Newbridge on Wye Improvement Scheme does not include a segregated walking & cycling facility along its entire length.

The measures in the Action Plan are welcome but they do not address the systemic problems identified in the evidence to the Enterprise Committee, nor deal with the strategic issues that the LCO was designed to address.

**Lee Waters**

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2009**