

AQS36a Sustrans Cymru

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Bil yr Amgylchedd (Ansawdd Aer a Seinweddau) (Cymru) | The Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill

Ymateb gan Sustrans Cymru | Evidence from Sustrans Cymru

Supplementary written evidence for Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee.

1. Other than ‘school streets’, which you refer to in your written evidence, can you provide examples of “policies proven to effectively reduce emissions at [hotspots]”?

In the Explanatory Memorandum [3.213] the Welsh Government sets out the intention to “minimise risk to vulnerable receptors [such as children or individuals with pre-existing health conditions] by tackling unnecessary vehicle idling in idling hotspots, particularly in locations around schools; healthcare settings; and residential care homes.”

There are many policies that have been proven to effectively reduce emissions caused by vehicles at hotspots such as schools, healthcare settings, and residential care homes.

The most effective way to reduce emissions is to encourage modal shift away from emitting vehicles. Policies encouraging modal shift can be targeted at schools, healthcare settings or care homes. Other policies can aim restrict or discourage near-by access for emitting vehicles, which can be effective for specific hotspots. The follow list contains examples of policies designed for these purposes.

Local traffic regulation orders

School streets are proven to be effective at reducing emissions on streets surrounding schools. A similar approach could be taken at other settings with a high volume of visitors arriving at certain times, such as hospitals. Introducing designated drop-off and pick-up zones for hospitals and care homes would help to reduce congestion and emissions close by to these hotspots.

No stopping/waiting orders are frequently used around schools. They can also be used around local services such as GP surgeries to limit idling or waiting nearby.

Street design

On street parking can be reduced and road space reallocated to promote walking, cycling or recreation.

Traffic calming measures can be installed to slow down traffic around hotspots like schools and care homes. Slower speeds can reduce emissions from vehicles and also improve safety for vulnerable road users like children and older people.

Modal filters can be introduced to prevent routes alongside hotspots being used as rat-runs.

Routes to schools, and other hotspots, can be improved with intervention following the high standard designs in Active Travel Act guidance. Safer, more accessible and appealing routes encourage modal shift.

Car parking

Car parking can be removed, reduced or priced so as to deter use. Schools need not have onsite parking for pupils. Rather than offering free parking at hospitals, a more effective policy at reducing emissions and might be to offer free public transport to hospitals.

Active Travel Promotion

Encouraging active travel reduces the number of vehicles on the road and lowers emissions. This can be done through various measures, including improved infrastructure, incentives, and awareness campaigns. Active travel has been shown to have numerous health benefits in addition to reducing emissions and traffic congestion.

Road User Charging

Low Emission Zones are areas where certain types of high-emission vehicles are restricted or banned from entering, while low-emission vehicles are permitted.

Low Emission Zones have been shown to improve air quality and reduce emissions in urban areas.

A Congestion Charging policy can charge drivers to enter congested urban areas during peak hours, reducing the number of cars on the road and incentivizing the use of public transportation. Low Emission Zones or a Congestion Charging zone can be localised, to include a hospital, for example.

Improving Public Transport

Increasing the availability and accessibility of public transport, such as buses and trains, can also reduce emissions caused by vehicles. This can be achieved through improvements to infrastructure, such as building new bus priority lanes, or through incentives to encourage people to use public transport, such as reduced fares or improved service.

School bus transport can be improved. All Welsh local authorities spend many millions of pounds on school transport every year – much of which is on low occupancy, pollution-emitting taxis. There could be financial savings as well as air pollution benefits through improving school bus routes.

Shifting business and personal vehicle ownership

Bike purchasing can be supported. The existing cycle to work scheme has so far enabled over two million people to access new bikes for commuting, reducing congestion and pollution on our roads. The scheme could be extended to provide access and more financial support for people on low incomes or out of work. The scheme could be extended to buy scooters and potentially e-scooters if the legislation changes.

Free bicycle and scooter loan schemes can be implemented. Sustrans eMove project, funded by Welsh Government, has enabled dozens of individuals and businesses to try out electric bikes and e-cargo bikes to commute and use for their business. Some schools – but still only a small proportion – now have their own fleets of bicycles and scooters which their pupils can learn on and loan.

Electric Vehicles (EVs) Incentives: The Welsh Government can offer incentives for purchasing electric vehicles or installing EV charging infrastructure in and around hotspots, which can encourage more people to switch to cleaner vehicles.

Fleet Upgrades: Organizations like local health boards, ambulance trusts and care providers can upgrade their fleets to electric or hybrid vehicles, reducing emissions and improving air quality around their facilities. Many of their

employees could actively travel, both to and from work and also on local visiting rounds.

2. What legislative changes do you consider are needed to tackle emissions at hotspots?

In the Explanatory Memorandum, the Welsh Government acknowledges that “anti-idling measures can be most effective if included in a package of different but complementary measures” [EM 3.227] and sets out many similar policies to those we have shared above:

3.226. Anti-idling policy can be incorporated into a range of policies and behaviour change actions such as: Incorporation of anti-idling interventions into a broader package of measures to address air quality and noise, encouraging use of public transport and take-up of active travel; promoting the uptake of low emission vehicles; promoting No-Idling Zones in and around public premises that are particular hotspots for idling; creating electric vehicle charging infrastructure; promoting the use of cleaner fuels; using spatial planning policy as a way of reducing emissions and reducing exposure to air pollution; and encouraging behavioural change via public information campaigns etc.

Not all of these policies require new legislation. They may benefit from renewed focus, funding and targets to encourage implementations. The following list contains examples of legislative changes that could be feasible to tackle emissions at hotspots such as schools, healthcare settings, and residential care homes.

Establishing Low Emission Zones (LEZs): LEZs restrict the entry of high-polluting vehicles into designated areas. Legislation could encourage LEZs in hotspots where air pollution is particularly high, such as such as hospitals or school zones. Hospital sites may contain private roads already in the ownership of Welsh Government.

Air quality monitoring: There could be a specific requirement to install monitors that measure air quality around hotspots like schools, healthcare settings and care homes. The data could then be used to inform policy decisions and encourage behavior change among drivers in those particular locations.

Supporting high-standard active travel infrastructure: The legislation could amend and strengthen existing laws to support active travel. The Active Travel Act requires local authorities to provide safe and accessible infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. However, using the best design standards found in the Active Travel Act guidance is not a statutory requirement. This could be

strengthened in the new legislation so that all new developments and transport schemes are built to the best possible standards to encourage modal shift.

Promoting active travel: The Active Travel Act duty for Welsh Ministers and local authorities to promote active travel is confined to when 'exercising their functions under this Act'. It could be amended to be far wider, requiring public bodies to promote active travel wherever a relevant opportunity arises, for example, in all matters relating to travel to school, in building regulations and planning guidance, and in administering the rail franchise.
