

ATW03 Dr Dafydd Trystan, Chair, Active Travel Board

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus a Gweinyddiaeth Gyhoeddus | Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

Teithio Llesol yng Nghymru | Active Travel in Wales

Ymateb gan: Dr Dafydd Trystan, Cadeirydd, Bwrdd Teithio Llesol | Evidence from: Dr Dafydd Trystan, Chair, Active Travel Board

Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee Inquiry into Active Travel in Wales

Written Supplementary Evidence

Welsh Government's Independent [Active Travel Board](#)

Submitted by Chair, Dr Dafydd Trystan

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Active Travel Board for Wales (the Board) published its **first annual report** on Active Travel in Wales (2023-24) on 30 August 2024, which independently reviewed efforts to promote walking, wheeling, and cycling across Wales. Together with the report written by the Auditor General for Wales on Active Travel in Wales on 19 September 2024, it formed the basis of the Inquiry into Active Travel in Wales by the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee (the Committee).
- 1.2 On 4 December 2024, the Committee met in relation to its public consultation into active travel, where they heard oral evidence from the Board's Deputy Chair, Rhiannon Letman-Wade; Ruth Billingham, Head of Campaigns and Public Affairs at Living Streets; and Stephen Cunnah, Policy and External Affairs Manager at Sustrans Cymru. This session, along with all papers related to the Inquiry, can be accessed [here](#).
- 1.3 The Board plays a crucial role in evaluating and guiding the implementation of active travel initiatives, ensuring that policies effectively promote sustainable transportation and align with national objectives. Information relating to the Board can be found [here](#).
- 1.4 The Active Travel Act 2013 (the Act) sets out the need for an annual report on active travel in Wales, and in a recommendation by the Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act. The Board's report addresses this need in part, though it remains unclear what precise plans the Welsh Government has to publish a report in line with the Act. The Board's annual report will evolve over time and is currently constrained by the lack of available data.

2. Role of the Active Travel Board

- 2.1 The Board's role in scrutiny is a vital component of its work, as outlined in the annual report. The Board's formal sessions combine discursive elements e.g. discussing the interface between walking and cycling provision and the police, to scrutiny sessions e.g. with Welsh Government officials, Sustrans and Transport for Wales. The Board also welcomed the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales, Ken Skates MS, to its meeting in November 2024. Invitations extended in 2025 have included Welsh
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Government's planning policy officers, and staff from its Knowledge and Analytical Services.

- 2.2 In addition to providing an independent voice that scrutinises the effectiveness of active travel related measures delivered by the Welsh Government, including their funded delivery partners and agencies, the Board identifies key themes in active travel policy, recommending how active travel can be improved in Wales to ministers and delivery partners. They often relate to two key areas that are analysed in-depth by two sub-groups: the Active Travel to School sub-group and the Inclusive Active Travel sub-group.
- 2.3 The Board is fortunate to have, on a voluntary basis, knowledgeable and skilled Independent Board Members, bringing a wealth of information to support Wales' goal to become an active travel nation. This adds significant value. Most recently, Independent Board Member Professor Alan Tapp is developing an advice note on the use and regulation of e-bikes, e-scooters and illegal e-motorbikes, following a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary where he suggested the need for an inquiry or investigation into these matters. This note will also look at their role in increasing active travel inclusivity, the ability to connect homes with bus stops, schools and train stations, as well as links to antisocial behaviour.

3. Work of the Active Travel to School sub-group

- 3.1 Since the publication of the Board's annual report, the sub-group has produced a report aimed at improving coordination of active travel to school interventions by the creation of a national hub which will integrate the programmes of the various delivery agencies and improve the prioritisation and focus of both behaviour change and infrastructure programmes. The hub will also have a public facing role, acting as a 'one stop shop' for schools wishing to increase the numbers of their pupils who walk or cycle to school. The report was approved by the Board and Welsh Government is now working on creating the hub.
- 3.2 In parallel with the development of the hub, the sub-group is working on the development of a new active travel to school strategy, which will be co-created with delivery partners and key stakeholders. This will be underpinned by a new approach to the collection and use of active travel to school data, for which the sub-group is developing proposals.
- 3.3 The Cabinet Secretary has requested that the Board provide ideas on how to effectively deliver on Welsh Government priorities, in particular regarding safe travel to school.
- 3.4 It should be noted the quality and outcomes of active travel school plans is a key concern for the sub-group, and the Co-Chairs are currently seeking to meet the Welsh Government in relation to these matters by summer 2025.
- 3.5 For information, the Chair of the Board and the Co-Chairs of the sub-group will be attending the Healthy and Active School Journeys Conference on 27 March in Sophia Gardens, Cardiff; the Welsh Government conference will include speakers, workshops, and interactive sessions, addressing key themes such as community engagement, infrastructure development, and ensuring accessibility for all children.
- 3.6 The sub-group has completed a mapping exercise of those organisations working in active travel in the education sector, and it has been agreed that the Welsh Government will act as a hub to support the general public in accessing the services and information they need.

4. Work of the Inclusive Active Travel sub-group

- 4.1 Co-chaired by Board Members, Kirsty James (Independent Member), and Sustrans Cymru's Stephen Cunnah, the main aim of the Inclusive Active Travel sub-group is to ensure active travel is accessible and inclusive to all, particularly for short everyday journeys undertaken by disabled people, older people and people with children.
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- 4.2 The first meeting was held in November 2024, which established a work programme that has a strong theme of inclusive design and inclusive language. The first report reviewed by the sub-group was the advice note by Independent Board Member, Richard Brunstrom, on the removal of illegal access barriers on cycle paths or shared-use paths.
- 4.3 The draft advice note on barrier removal emphasises the importance of enabling access for all. The Board is working with Welsh Government to ensure the effective dissemination and implementation of the advice note. In the meantime, the Board has seen progress already with some barriers removed in North Wales.
- 4.4 Relatively affordable interventions can help to make active travel more accessible and this is something that is being explored by the sub-group. Investing in community-led initiatives like bike buses, well-placed bollards and benches as frequent resting points, active travel becomes a practical, affordable, and inclusive choice for all generations enabling independent living, and ultimately supporting both carers and those they care for.

5. The Board and the Regional Transport Plans

- 5.1 The Board is actively engaging with the development of the Regional Transport Plans; in its 2023-2024 annual report, the Board highlighted the potential value of a regional approach in allowing for better resource allocation and collaboration, while noting the importance of prioritising active travel investment.
- 5.2 The Board has begun the process of reviewing each of the Regional Transport Plans and provide a collective response to all four consultations. In February 2025, the Board met with Alwen Williams, the Chief Executive of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC), as it begins consultation work on its North Wales Regional Transport Plan. The session was important as it illustrated the potential for investment in active travel. However, the discussion focussed on the wide range of potential programmes highlighted in the RTP and how they might be prioritised i.e. there is a danger that cost-effective active travel plans might lose out.
- 5.3 The Board is seriously concerned that the end of the ring fencing of funding for active travel funding could result in a significant drop in investment in walking and cycling infrastructure. Effective budgeting decisions need to be made, such as ensuring that Active Travel funding, for example, is allocated on a multi-year basis. Long-term funding allows for more planning, meaning teams are able to move beyond one-year plans, ensuring more cost-effectiveness and value for money.

6. Improving monitoring and evaluation

- 6.1 Data collation remains a key concern for the Board, not least due to the problems faced in securing accurate data for the first annual report published in August 2024. That said, Board Members are heartened by recent updates that suggest that the lag in data we are experiencing at the moment will shortly come to an end.
- 6.2 At the end of 2024, Matthew Gilbert from Transport for Wales (TfW) updated the Board on the Active Travel Monitoring Framework, **now launched in March 2025**, which aims to provide consistent active travel data collection. The Board welcomed the development of dashboards and the use of proxy data until the National Travel Survey is available, which is expected to provide comprehensive data on the impact of active travel investment by 2026.
- 6.3 Vitally important is the need for robust data. On meeting with the Welsh Government, it was confirmed to the Board that they are discussing with Knowledge and Analytical Services an in-depth analysis of SHRN data, which would be beneficial in this regard.
- 6.4 There remain real difficulties in securing accurate data in relation to primary schools. While Sustrans and Living Streets report impact in the short-term, it is difficult to track to what
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extent this impact is sustainable and goes much beyond the immediate intervention. Finding ways to accurately track longevity in impact is crucial.

- 6.5 If the Government is to adopt the Board's recommendation of a specific area to be targeted with a range of interventions – effective monitoring and evaluation will be crucial to the success of the project in identifying replicable interventions for all communities in Wales. We believe these 'demonstrator towns' should complete the active travel network in the area, include full integration of hard and soft measures, with health and education services, while combining infrastructure investment with behaviour change and promotional activities. This would, for example, include some level of car-restriction, like School Streets.

7. Funding and developing the Active Travel Network

- 7.1 It should be noted that the original intention for the active travel network was to have it fully complete in 15 years' time. During the oral evidence session, and in reference to our annual report completion date estimate of 2073 (based on progress to date), Stephen Cunnah of Sustrans Cymru suggested that it is a 'generation's work' to build the network in its entirety. The Board believes that, with sufficient budget, capacity and political will, the active travel network can be completed sooner.
- 7.2 There are examples of good practice in urban and rural settings across Wales and beyond and we believe that more could be done to share good practice and ensure that solutions that work (particularly cost effective ones) are replicated.
- 7.3 Multi-year funding would provide greater certainty, allowing local authorities to develop a more holistic and balanced approach to extending the network and filling gaps. We need to ensure that both immediate, incremental changes and long-term strategic investments are made: delivering small-scale, quick-win improvements, as well as ambitious, big-ticket infrastructure, like cycle bridges. Multi-year funding will allow local authorities to strike a better balance, as it will allow time to prepare and prioritise, hire qualified staff on a long-term basis in delivering an effective work schedule.
- 7.4 We would also encourage Government to ensure effective and appropriate governance of funding mechanisms. The range of individuals and organisations with detailed specialist knowledge in these fields is small, and therefore good governance demands effective mechanisms in place to deal appropriately with any potential conflicts of interest – whether perceived or real.
- 7.5 This requires mainstreaming active travel considerations in wider policy and programmes ensuring that active travel does not remain in a silo.
- 7.6 In our oral evidence session, Deputy Chair Rhiannon Letman-Wade suggested that Wales should explore what England is already doing, which is to rank local authorities based on their capability to deliver active travel. This is an action included in the Welsh Government's Active Travel Delivery Plan and the Board would be keen to see Transport for Wales taking it forward.
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