

ATW08 Royal Town Planning Institute

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: Sefydliad Cynllunio Trefol Brenhinol | Evidence from: Royal Town Planning Institute



28th March 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to: Active Travel in Wales

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional body for town planners in the UK and Europe and represents around 27,000 members in over 80 countries worldwide, with approximately 1,300 members in Wales. The Institute has been shaping planning policy and raising professional standards for over 100 years and is the only body in the UK to confer Chartered status to planners, the highest professional qualification. The RTPI champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. Our ambition is to promote healthy, socially inclusive, economically, and environmentally sustainable places.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above Inquiry.

RTPI Cymru fully supports the objectives of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. Many of the towns, cities and neighbourhoods in the UK and elsewhere most noted for the quality of their built environment are those where people can get around easily on foot or by bicycle. Active Travel is a key component of 'liveable' communities. The prevalence of motorised transport presents a continuing

challenge to planners and other built environment professionals seeking to create the attractive, healthy, vibrant and sustainable places which most people aspire to live in.

We have the following comments in response to the Senedd's Inquiry into Active Travel.

Opportunities for improved mainstreaming of Active Travel considerations in wider policy and programmes.

We welcome the clarity provided by Llwybr Newydd and the ambition of aligning land use and transport planning at a regional level via emerging Regional Transport Plans (RTPs) and

Strategic Development Plans, and at a local level, alignment of Active Travel Network Maps (ATNM) and Local Development Plans (LDPs). Emerging LDPs are starting to properly realise this clear policy intent and aligned SDPs and RTPs will strengthen this further.

It is essential to make links between policy areas including planning, flooding, transport and connectivity, and energy if we are to adapt to climate change. The latest Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy (WIS) 2021 makes progress in this area, including a section on placemaking. We very much hope this sets a standard for further integration, not only in relation to outcomes on the ground, but future iterations of the WIS and all plans, strategies and levels of Government, including regional and local. We are grateful for the recent changes to TAN15 to allow Active Travel routes to proceed, addressing an unintended consequence in the earlier, revoked draft version. Delivering new routes can be funded via Welsh Government capital grant or S106 contributions from developers, however there is considerable pressure on the limited pot of infrastructure funding, and therefore collaboration and prioritisation are essential to maximise benefits and ensure delivery.

While the principle aims of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 are welcome and align well with the wider placemaking agenda, there are limitations in relation to rural areas. Firstly, the requirement for the designation of Active Travel towns means smaller rural settlements do not meet the threshold despite being sizeable service centres (in a rural context) to their communities. These settlements are unfortunately excluded from Active Travel improvements. The swell of tourism to coastal areas also means settlements that could benefit on a seasonal basis are often excluded. The issue is further compounded by poor rural bus provision. As a result, it is difficult to promote a modal shift to the public or the allocation of

development sites, when many rural areas are not accessible via public transport. Although planning focuses the majority of development of towns and cities, smaller rural settlements require a proportionate level of growth to be sustained socially and economically. Often, such growth is mostly affordable housing, limiting the potential for S106 funding for Active Travel improvements.

Consulting on the ATNM can lead to public expectation that the proposed schemes will be delivered, when often in reality, there is insufficient funding. This results in frustrated and disengaged communities. In rural parts of Wales, it's about creating more choice and where possible, connecting public transport nodes to homes and employment by safe and convenient walking and wheeling as well as cycling routes.

We would emphasise the need to avoid progressing Active Travel routes in silos and find ways to deal with challenging issues such as land acquisition. As discussed above, there is an opportunity for more joined up working to improve integration between transport, land use and economic development, etc.

The Welsh Government's new [Active Travel delivery plan](#), including any perceived gaps in coverage.

While we support in principle the Active Travel Delivery Plan, we remain concerned regarding capacity and resources in the system to delivery Active Travel ambitions. Key actions should be prioritised to support delivery, including training and development for practitioners, including sharing best practice, support with monitoring, improving linkage between Welsh Government policy and programmes, and support with promotion and messaging.

It is important that TFW shares its data freely with both Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) and Local Planning Authorities to ensure decisions are evidence-based.

All these important factors need to be fully resourced and supported through wider public education on behaviour change. This is discussed further below.

Whether the [Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013](#) itself remains fit for purpose, including its requirements around Active Travel network mapping.

The progress made by the Act needs to be considered in context. Implementation of the Act came at a time when Local Authorities, Welsh Government and other key stakeholders faced unprecedented pressures on budgets and capacity due to the pandemic and public sector resourcing. Active Travel is still in its infancy, as a

transport mode, with only 4-5 years of significant budgets. Time and support are required to deliver Active Travel ambitions on the ground.

Further rural proofing is required, supported by realism in what can be achieved in rural areas. See above comments.

However, overall, Active Travel as a concept is fit for purpose. The definition should remain as walking, cycling or wheeling for a purpose (e.g. commuting, school travel, shopping) rather than leisure. Success will require continuation of current policy and certainty of funding (capital and revenue) together with a communications campaign to support behaviour change.

The extent to which local authorities are prioritising Active Travel and related investment, capacity constraints, and potential impacts from an increased emphasis on regional transport planning.

Clarity and realism is needed about priorities. If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.

At present, Local Authorities are working towards addressing the Climate Emergency, Nature Emergency and Housing Crisis (with a Cabinet Secretary letter requiring Planning Authorities to prioritise affordable housing delivery).

The developing role of Transport for Wales as part of the delivery arrangements for

Active Travel.

Delivering Active Travel requires a concentrated effort and the collective commitment of multiple organisations and professionals across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Welsh Government has a key role to play in harnessing and co-ordinating the energies, expertise and actions of the many actors involved.

Promoting the Act across all sectors, providing advice to practitioners delivering the Act and working with professional institutions, the development industry, academia, and local advocacy groups to facilitate inter-disciplinary collaboration through training and professional development programmes are all important factors in delivery.

It is important that TfW continues to be supported and well-equipped to support the delivery of Active Travel. An important issue to address is the relationship between TfW and CJs. It is vital that this relationship is clear to all stakeholders and TfW's capacity and skills in this area are utilised by the CJs not replaced or

duplicated. It is equally important that CJs are empowered to help Local Authorities deliver their RTPs, with TfW helping pull in the same direction rather than progressing their own schemes and design capabilities.

How will Local Authorities apply for funds? It is important there is no double handling if Welsh Government/TfW are also required to assess bids, so the process is not slowed down.

There is confusion around the role of CJs, Local Authorities and TfW in scheme development, design, funding and delivery. Some clear examples of roles, responsibilities and governance would be helpful. For example, to what extent can TfW's evidence be questioned, if needed? TfW has the statutory powers to deliver schemes outside trunk roads but local authorities working as part of coordinated CJs should continue to be delivery bodies, using their powers, connection to local communities, and injected with skills and capacity support from TfW or consultants when helpful.

The Welsh Government's Active Travel spending and how it is distributed and prioritised between different schemes and types of intervention.

We understand that the Core Allocation has been found to be useful, providing funding for the design stage of schemes, so Local Authorities can go through every stage of preparation prior to applying for funding to construct the scheme, enabling the development of a pipeline of major and small schemes.

Longer term certainty over funding is essential to ensure schemes can progress with confidence.

There is a lack of revenue funding to maintain Active Travel networks in the longer term. Linked to this, Active Travel routes must secure SuDS Approval Body (SAB) approval, a complicated process that has additional maintenance costs and where routes are passing through existing built-up areas, practical solutions can be challenging.

How best to drive behaviour change in support of Active Travel, and current barriers. The RTPI (2021) report, ['Overcoming Barriers to Net Zero'](#) noted, "behavioural attachment to cars, and the idea that streets and roads are primarily for the movement and storage of vehicles, is perhaps the most intractable barrier to delivering place-based solutions to decarbonisation."

Behaviour change is currently under funded and under recognised and yet forms a significant part of the requirements of delivering the Act. Much more emphasis

is needed on behavioural change. This goes beyond what can be delivered on the ground and includes partnership working across the sectors including Government, communities, businesses, educators, the health sector etc. The Wales Centre for Behaviour Change and other institutes could be a useful stakeholder to engage with. [Wales Centre for Behaviour Change | Bangor University](#) “The Wales Centre for Behaviour Change has recognised that many people often have “sustainable intentions”, but few keep up new behaviours in the longer term”.

More should be done in wider areas, to support behaviour change - e.g. car sharing, workplace travel planning etc, which we are starting to see come through in draft RTPs currently out to consultation across Wales, which should be supported. Regional and national coordination of skills and expertise assisted by local consultation and delivery will be key to turning policy into practice and delivery. The RTPI Cymru [Living Locally](#) report sought to discuss some of the issues in respect of rural areas.

A further gap in the delivery of culture change is the traditional approach taken by some Local Authority Highway Departments, for example, the over-engineering of roads and a reluctance to agree reduced parking requirements in sustainable locations. Elected members also have a role to play in this respect, in recognising the wider impacts of their decision-making and communicating national policy with local communities.

Ensuring Active Travel is accessible and inclusive, including around scheme design.

Consultation on Active Travel proposals can be limited, and it is often difficult to engage the silent groups within communities, who may be in support. In such cases objections can often disproportionately influence design. Education and behaviour change could help in this respect, over time, as communities begin to better understand the role of Active Travel.

Any other issues of concern in relation to delivery of the Welsh Government’s Active

Travel ambitions.

The term Active Travel has become synonymous with the delivery of cycle routes, yet there are many more people in Wales who walk regularly, and therefore there are significant opportunities to rethink street design, for example to reflect 20mph speed limits and recent changes to the highway code to better access to railway stations etc.

We note that Welsh Government is refreshing its Road Safety Strategy. This is an opportunity for more joined up thinking with Active Travel planning / delivery and road safety.

Improving monitoring and evaluation and the Welsh Government's plans for enhanced data collection through a new National Travel Survey.

Data collection and monitoring is important to evaluate schemes and provide a feedback loop that can inform future provision and delivery. Sophisticated technology exists to capture movement patterns and travel modes, however it is often prohibitively expensive and data is not shared. Support for monitoring and evaluation is essential, and a long-term vision is required.

Measurements could include:

- Mode shift data
- Road safety statistics
- Public attitude

Guidance should clarify who is responsible for ensuring schemes are delivered as intended.

Yours faithfully,



Mark Hand MRTPI

Director
