

## **ATW10 Cycling UK**

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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: Cycling UK | Evidence from: Cycling UK

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### **Senedd Cymru - Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee**

#### **Active Travel in Wales Inquiry**

#### **Submission from Cycling UK in Wales**

##### Summary

- The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 was a positive piece of legislation, but the Welsh Government have not yet utilised it to deliver an increase the number of people cycling in Wales.
- The Welsh Government must now focus on delivering cycling infrastructure and projects on the ground so that people can cycle for everyday journeys.
- Funding for active travel must be increased to deliver the scale of change needed to meet Welsh Government targets for active travel, with funding ring-fenced at the local level for active travel projects.
- Governance of active travel delivery must be improved and the capacity of local authorities to deliver high quality active travel projects enhanced. Clarity is needed on the role of Corporate Joint Committees in the governance structure.
- The Welsh Government must put definite measures in place to meet its car journey reduction target and achieve modal shift so that roads feel safer and more welcoming for people wanting to walk and cycle.

##### Who we are:

Cycling UK is a charity which represents over 2500 members in Wales, in addition to our wider group of supporters, and people who cycle in Wales.

Over the past 147 years, we have evolved to become a driving force in advocating for people who cycle, improving infrastructure and fostering a vibrant community of cyclists.

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We inspire people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to embrace the joys of cycling. We champion the many benefits of cycling for recreation, wellbeing, and the environment. Our work is not just for those who already cycle, but for future riders too. More people cycling benefits us all. Together, we are creating a healthier, happier, greener, and more connected society through the power of cycling.

## Introduction

One element of our [charity's strategic purpose](#) is that 'We speak up for all who cycle to make sure it's a safe and easy choice for everyone to travel, explore and have fun.' To achieve this, we work to:

- Improve perceptions of cycling so that everyone sees the benefits
- Boost the number and diversity of people who cycle □ Make cycling an even more positive experience
- Increase transport choice by enabling and encouraging more people to cycle local journeys

Cycling UK's response to the Committee's inquiry is based on the point of view of people who cycle, want to cycle, and those who will cycle in the future. Our response will aim to answer whether everything is in place to make cycling a safe, easy, and convenient choice for them for their everyday journeys, and if not, what needs to change to make this happen.

The Welsh Government's stated goal is 'to make active travel the first and natural choice for all or part of everyday journeys for many more people.' Our response aims to answer what is needed for the Welsh Government to achieve this goal.

Our comments and recommendations will therefore ask whether the Welsh Government and all partners involved in Active Travel in Wales, and all processes currently in place are working for people and optimising the opportunities to cycle. In other words, is the current system in place and working?

## Background

According to the [National Survey for Wales covering April 2021 to March 2022](#), 6% of adults cycled at least once a week for active travel purposes.

Around one-third of journeys in Wales are currently carried out by walking, cycling, or public transport. [Llwybr Newydd](#) commits government to increase this to 45% by 2040.

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People in Wales want to cycle or cycle more. Whilst not representing the whole of Wales, the [Cardiff Walking and Cycling Index 2023](#) showed that, 26% of residents surveyed reported that they do not currently cycle but would like to. This interest is notably higher among certain groups, with 30% of women, 39% of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and 24% of disabled individuals expressing a desire to start cycling.

A [national active travel survey published in 2018](#) showed that the two biggest barriers to cycling in Wales are lack of safe cycling infrastructure and concerns about road safety.

A [YouGov survey, commissioned by Cycling UK in 2022](#) showing one in four adults (24%) in Wales would likely cycle more if streets were redesigned to be safer for pedestrians and cyclists, and one in five (21%) would drive less frequently. Applying these statistics across Wales would mean 517k more adults would cycle if the streets were safer. The survey also found that 59% of people in Wales support redesigning the streets to make them safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

A [majority of people in Cardiff](#) (55%) support building more cycle paths physically separated from traffic and pedestrians, - crucially, they want this even when this would mean less room for other road traffic.

## **Benefits of cycling**

The many benefits of cycling to individuals and to wider society are well documented<sup>1</sup> but come in two categories:

- Multiple benefits to the individual – e.g. health, freedom, financial savings
- Multiple benefits to society – e.g. reduced costs to NHS, boosting local economies, climate, and air quality improvements.

Importantly, investment in active travel is excellent value for money and better than many other transport investments. The UK Government estimates that for every £1 spent on cycling and walking schemes in the UK, [£5.62 worth of benefits](#) are achieved on average. Officially those BCR ratios are ‘very high,’ i.e. above 4:1. In contrast, BCR for the major road are just [2.3:1](#). Furthermore, because cycle lanes can be built quickly, government can realise the return on that investment more swiftly.

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<sup>1</sup> References - benefits of cycling:  
Active Travel Board – [Active Travel in Wales Annual Report 2023-2024](#) IPPR, 2024, [Stride and Ride](#).  
Cycling UK, 2022, [Getting there with Cycling...](#) report

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## Government commitment to promote active travel

The Active Travel (Wales) Act was a hugely positive step in 2013, and the Welsh Government's Active Travel Delivery Plan includes positive commitments and actions which now need to be delivered. In addition, the Welsh Government has committed relatively large amounts of money for AT over recent years – compared to other nations in the UK on a per capita basis.

In recent years, many other bodies have published reports highlighting actions which the Welsh Government must take to deliver the Act and government's aims and objectives. These include the following

- Cross Party Group on the Active Travel Act - Review of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013
- Audit Wales - [Active Travel report 2024](#)
- Active Travel Board - [Active Travel in Wales annual report 2023-24](#)

At Cycling UK, we feel that we do not need to repeat the many recommendations made – which, overall, we agree with. Instead, we highlight a number of significant issues which the Welsh Government needs to focus on for the benefit of people who cycle, want to cycle, or will cycle in the future. The key issue now is to focus on delivery of active travel initiatives for people.

We believe that Wales does not need a major review of the Act to meet its goals for active travel, however, there is currently a gap between aspiration and delivery. What is needed now is for the Welsh Government and other public bodies to use the powers they have to deliver the change that surveys show is wanted by the people of Wales. Politicians, at all levels, need to redouble efforts and focus on delivery.

The Welsh Government should do much more to lead by example by ensuring the public sector has a strong commitment to delivering active travel and net-zero outcomes. For example, government must do more to enable the public sector workforce to commute and travel for work by active and sustainable forms of transport with commitments to targets for modal shift across public sector bodies (including Welsh Government) with published progress and outcomes.

- Cycling UK recommends that the Welsh Government publicly re-commits to delivery of active travel interventions, promoting active travel, meeting its goal, and showing clear policy direction to local authorities.
  - Cycling UK recommends that the Welsh Government works with all parties in the Senedd to achieve cross-party support for active travel and delivering for the people who want to cycle and cycle more for everyday journeys.
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## Funding

Sufficient funding is at the core of enabling more people to cycle for everyday journeys. Funding is needed to create the safe cycling infrastructure and pay for the behaviour change initiatives which enable more people to cycle. Cycling UK believes that the Welsh Government is not allocating or spending enough money on active travel to achieve its targets and enable people to cycle who want to.

In 2024/25 the Welsh Government allocated £65m for active travel in the budget. This works out to be approximately 3.5% of the total transport budget and represents £21 spent per capita.

The [Active Travel in Wales Annual Report 2023-2024](#) shows that the Welsh Government has distributed funding so that all local authorities benefit – an average of £2.5m was awarded across the 22 local authorities. This shows a commitment to all areas of Wales benefiting from the funding rather than only larger towns and cities.

[Stride and Ride](#), a report by IPPR calculated the amount of money needed to create world class active travel infrastructure. Whilst the data used was based on England, the recommendations hold true across the UK. IPPR recommended allocating 10% of transport budgets to active travel, or £50 per head. In Wales, these figures are approximately the same and average £150m per year.

Providing this level of funding and consistently maintaining it would be transformative for the people of Wales as it would allow local authorities to scale up delivery and make places better for people. It would enable councils to create much needed physical space for cycling and walking, and projects which support people to cycle. This would enable more people to cycle and to cycle more, making more journeys by bike, and thus fulfilling the government's goal. In addition, it would help those people realise the benefits of cycling, as explained above.

- Cycling UK recommends that the Welsh Government increase investment in active travel ramping up to 10% of the total transport budget or at least £50/head within five years.

## Cycle routes and infrastructure

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Capital funding is needed to create the safe, high quality cycling infrastructure, separated from traffic, which people want to use. As already described, surveys show that people on bikes prefer to cycle along cycling infrastructure with physical separation from traffic, rather than sharing road space with motor vehicles.

Investment in active travel infrastructure yields real impacts on cycling levels. [Data from Cycling Scotland](#) shows that Glasgow's South City Way cycle route has boosted cycling and now 15% of journeys along Victoria Road are made by people cycling. In Edinburgh, the City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL) recorded a cycling modal share of 8.3% in September 2024, just nine months after it was completed.

London, which has invested in cycling for longer, continues to reap the rewards, seeing much higher cycling levels than the national average. Almost one-quarter (22%) of London's population now lives within 400 metres of the cycling network, and there are now on average [1.2 million cycling trips per day](#) in London, around [four times as many](#) as there were in 2000.

Cycling UK strongly believes that these impacts can be repeated in Wales if funding is targeted, and projects of a sufficient scale and quality are delivered. Wales is at a point in time where a small number of ambitious, significant, high quality infrastructure projects are needed to show what can be achieved. Councilors and taxpayers need to have confidence that spending significant amounts of money on these projects will result in more people cycling and modal shift. People need to be able to see that these projects work and have wider benefits for people, communities, and wider society.

Wales needs to develop and build new major active travel routes which provide continuous cycle tracks alongside roads but physically separated from traffic. These should be located where they can have maximal impact, taking people where they want to go, and designed to boost active travel rather than leisure cycling. Delivering a few of these 'landmark' high-quality routes and using data to show how they are working to increase cycling could be used to learn best practice and win support for roll out of similar initiatives more widely.

- Cycling UK recommends prioritising the building of high-quality cycling infrastructure, physically separated from traffic – proven elsewhere in the UK to increase the number of cycling journeys.
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- Cycling UK recommends developing comprehensive cycling/active travel routes and networks as the centrepiece of the demonstration towns initiative – as described in the Welsh Government Active travel delivery plan 2024 to 2027.

## Behaviour change projects

Revenue funding for active travel projects is as important as capital funding for active travel infrastructure – although not at the same levels. Revenue funding is needed to fund projects which enable, encourage and support people to cycle rather than travel by private car. These projects complement capital funding by helping people to make use of the cycling infrastructure that has been built.

IPPR's Stride and Ride report recommended spending £35 per head on capital and £15 per head on revenue. This aligns well with evidence which shows that to achieve high BCRs from cycling schemes '[significant proportions of \[revenue\] funding, in the range 20-40%](#)', are needed. Revenue funding should be used to support interventions, including the following:

- [cycle training](#) for people of all ages and abilities;
- programmes to promote cycling and walking in [schools](#), [workplaces](#) and [community settings](#) (including '[social prescribing](#)' schemes under which GPs 'prescribe' cycling or walking for patients needing increased physical activity).
- projects which improve access to bikes – especially for the most disadvantaged people and for children.
- schemes which enable people to trial e-bikes (electrically assisted pedal cycles) or provide purchase subsidies for ebikes or non-standard cycles, especially for those with disabilities.
- support for [bike share schemes](#), particularly in more disadvantaged areas;
- on-street cycle storage, particularly in areas where housing does not include private storage space.
- Cycling UK recommends spending at least 20% of active travel funds on revenue funding.
- Cycling UK recommends widening the range of projects and beneficiaries covered by revenue funding in Wales to enable many more people to change their travel behaviours and make more journeys by cycling.

## Governance

Adequate funding is important but not enough to achieve the Welsh Government's targets. Robust systems and processes need to be in place to

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ensure Welsh Government money benefits people who want to cycle. This involves clear collaboration between Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, Corporate Joint Committees, Local Authorities, and other delivery partners.

Good governance structures and processes are important for transparency – so people who cycle or want to cycle can understand what is happening to make journeys easier by bike. Outputs of good governance include:

- maps - so people can see where cycle routes will be created in the short and long term
- targets – so people can hold government to account
- data collection and reporting –to allow people to understand when progress is being made and how society is benefiting.

As already explained, many others have made useful recommendations in the recent past about improving the governance and delivery of active travel infrastructure and services. The following are issues we believe are significant.

### **Mapping**

The Active Travel Act's legal duty upon local authorities in Wales to map active travel routes has been positive. However, the mapping process should be used beyond planning to engage communities.

- Cycling UK recommends that local authorities ensure easier public access to the active travel maps and use them more to engage communities in short-term and long-term active travel route planning and development.

### **Targets**

The Welsh Government already has targets which will help to boost cycling:

- 45% of all journeys to be made by public transport, walking, or cycling by 2040
  - increase the trip mode share of active travel from a 27% baseline to 33% by 2030 35% by 2040
  - 10% reduction in miles driven by cars by 2030
  - Cycling UK recommends that delivering these targets guide delivery and be mainstreamed across government departments where appropriate.
  - Cycling UK recommends that Transport for Wales is made responsible for the delivery of these targets and their monitoring.
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## **Role of Transport for Wales**

Cycling UK considers that Transport for Wales' (TfW) establishment of their active travel team been a remarkable success. TfW's Active Travel Academy which trains local authority staff, and the creation of an expert design team have been positive developments and helped to build the capacity of local authorities to deliver active travel projects. We also welcome TfW's role in developing [active travel infrastructure design guidance](#). We feel, however, that this guidance should be made statutory so that high quality infrastructure is the norm in Wales.

We believe that TfW should be enabled to broaden its scope in order that the health benefits of active travel are within its remit – not just transport objectives.

- Cycling UK recommends that TfW is given more powers as a statutory consultee on major planning applications – to ensure active travel is put at the heart of developments from the beginning.
- Cycling UK recommends that [Active Travel Infrastructure Design Guidance](#) is made statutory.

## **Role of Corporate Joint Committees and Local Authorities**

At a local level, Cycling UK wants to see a more strategic approach to delivery – creating infrastructure and delivering projects according to clear priorities, rather than a scattergun approach.

It is too early to assess the impact that the Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) will have on active travel delivery. Their role has not yet been fully defined or explained.

- Cycling UK recommends that local authorities and CJCs work to ensure that funding allocation strategically deliver most value and enable the most people to cycle for active travel.
- Cycling UK strongly recommends that CJCs ring-fence active travel funding for active travel projects in their areas. In addition, we want to see CJCs support strategic use of other funds to also deliver active travel goals and outcomes.

## **Data collection and evaluation**

Government needs to ensure transparency - that funding is spent well and is achieving intended outcomes. It is disappointing that for too long, data on active travel has not been collected. We welcome the recent announcement of a new [Wales National Travel Survey](#) – although we are disappointed not to have been consulted on the content of the survey.

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- Cycling UK recommends that the Welsh Government regularly carries out the national travel survey collection to evaluate the changing impact of investment and delivery.

## Mainstreaming

As we have shown above, the benefits of active travel are not confined to transport. It also has health, economic, equality and climate benefits. So active travel should be mainstreamed across government and not simply placed in a transport silo (or: dealt with as a transport issue). A good example is active travel to school, which should be central to the Education Department's plans.

- Cycling UK recommends that other government departments, at all levels of government, where appropriate, be required to consider how they can support and deliver government's goal and objectives for active travel.
- Cycling UK recommends that TfW is supported and enabled to consider and maximise the wider benefits of cycling for people and society.

## Modal shift

Cycling UK believes that to enable people to cycle for everyday journeys, creating safe cycling infrastructure and provide behaviour change projects is not enough. The Welsh Government must also proactively deliver measures to reduce private motor vehicle use in Wales and put firm measures in place to achieve its target to reduce car journeys.

As already explained, one of the main barriers which stops people from cycling is that roads are too busy and feel unsafe to cycle on.

### The Welsh Government must do two things:

- Provide safe, affordable, accessible, convenient, and reliable alternatives to driving, including cycling, but also better public transport services.
  - Employ measures which make people think twice about driving – especially for short local journeys where alternatives are available. These measures should make driving a less attractive option, less convenient, slower, and/or more costly. Measures include:
    - Pedestrianisation
  - Reallocation of road space from private motor vehicles to cycling, walking and buses – including reducing the number of parking spaces in towns and along main roads.
  - Ban pavement parking
  - Create modal filters and liveable neighbourhoods – to prevent rat running.
  - Road user charging schemes
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- Low Emission Zones – to improve air quality where people live
- Congestion charging
- Workplace parking levies
- Tolls
  - National road pricing schemes – pay-as-you-drive, developed in collaboration with HM Treasury.

Public approval of road user charging schemes has increased in the past two decades, and they [tend](#) to garner more support once they have been implemented. However, research shows that the public is much more likely to [accept](#) road pricing if the revenue raised is earmarked for improvements to public transport and active travel. The revenue from London's congestion charge, for example, has been re-invested into public transport, and the charge was complemented from the beginning by expanded bus services and new park and ride facilities. This helps explain why [approval](#) among Londoners jumped to nearly 75% just one year after implementation.

- Cycling UK recommends that the Welsh Government urgently put measures in place to meet its car journey reduction target and achieve modal shift so that roads feel safer and more welcoming for people wanting to walk and cycle.
  - Cycling UK recommends that national and local governments communicate the need for car journey reduction in a positive way, highlighting the societal benefits, and hypothecating revenue to pay for improvements in active travel and public transport.
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