

ATW13 Disability Wales

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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[Teithio Llesol yng Nghymru](#) | [Active Travel in Wales](#)

Ymateb gan: Anabledd Cymru | Evidence from: Disability Wales

Active Travel Consultation 2025 – Disability Wales

Introduction

Disability Wales (DW) is the national association of disabled people's organisations. We strive to achieve equality, rights and independence for all disabled people, regardless of physical, sensory or neurological, learning difficulty or mental health condition. Full inclusion in society for disabled people begins with the right to accessible travel including active travel plans.

Time and time again disabled people in Wales are often forced to rely on private transport due to barriers in active travel infrastructure and public transport. For us to live independently we often rely on public transport to travel whether locally for work, volunteering, shopping or to socialise and visit family and friends. When we do not have access to these modes of transport, this is proven to negatively impact the mental health of disabled people who are often already isolated. While we welcome efforts to expand active travel in Wales for the health benefits that it brings, accessibility still remains a critical issue that is not sufficiently addressed.

As part of our consultation response we have been gathering case studies from members of Disability Wales on their experiences of active travel. Please review this video as part of our response by visiting the following link:

[Disability Wales - Active Travel Case Studies BSL - YouTube](#)

The Welsh Government's new active travel delivery plan, including any perceived gaps in coverage.

While disabled people in Wales welcome the efforts to improve active travel, there remain key gaps in ensuring accessibility is a core component of planning and implementation.

Generally, disabled people we spoke to felt that there still needed to be more focus on accessibility. Many people report that they have a lot of issues with accessing active travel and that this needs to be a higher priority reconsideration for the plan.

Therefore, any proposed route design implementation must not impede on private car use by local disabled people. Some common issues reported included parking on pavements and other obstacles that prevent safe routes.

“Accessibility should be higher up the priority list. There is too little acknowledgement that many disabled people have no choice about using private transport and this should be made clear in any policy work.” – DW Active Travel Survey Respondent

Disabled people do not feel included within the active travel plans as one of our respondents suggested “Wide, flat paths, clear delineation between walking and cycling to make it safe. Ban scooters!! Disabled bike schemes do they exist?”

Within the plans, a commitment and funding to allowing disabled bike schemes would allow some disabled people to gain access to an activity they are frequently excluded from.

“As a keen cyclist before my sight lost became too bad I would love a scheme that provided a pilot with a tandem.”

Frequently, we hear our members experiences regarding the dangers of cycle paths that are close to walking paths, please refer to our digital submission of case studies to review first hand experiences with the current infrastructure and how this causes risks for many disabled people.

“Cyclists don't like wheelchair users on 'their' paths. We get sworn at frequently for being in the way and/or too slow.” – DW Active Travel Survey Respondent

Additionally, recently on 5th February 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport Ken Skates stated that “Everybody should be able to access public transport, and our trains in particular, when they wish to.”

Despite this view unfortunately, they often do not. We welcome the suggestion that “we've required local authorities in the coming year to utilise 60 per cent as a minimum of their funding for delivery on the ground to drive inclusive movement—to make sure that pavements are fixed, to make sure that there are dropped kerbs in places as wide as possible, to make sure that there's tactile paving used, to make sure that there are seats that people can access.” However, we would like to see far more measurable targets and monitoring of the implementation.

Opportunities for improved mainstreaming of active travel considerations in wider policy and programmes.

Accessibility needs to be coproduced with disabled people and should be a core principle not a separate afterthought. Active travel routes should be designed with us so that we are considered from the planning stage. Many infrastructure projects

built without disabled people in mind will simply require costly retrofits in the future. It seems the reactive approach is counterproductive with costly infrastructure investments. We call for a universal coproduced design guidelines of active travel routes.

The Active Travel plan 2024-2027 suggests that the plan content 'will adapt over time to meet evolving needs and local authorities are requesting training including equalities and inclusive design including equality assessments.' These plans should be embedded immediately, not considered later down the line.

Rather than local authorities assigning budget amounts as they see fit, we require a more dedicated national wide funding for accessibility changes to ensure that the needs of disabled people are met within active travel plans. In addition to this the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Ken Skates, MS suggested that 'we firmly believe that local authorities know best what their communities require in terms of infrastructure and in terms of services' we disagree, we believe that the people themselves will know best what they need in their local authorities. We are aware that not all infrastructure cannot be changed at once due to funding and therefore, consultation with disabled people is necessary to ensure the correct priorities are adopted.

Many disabled people who use powered wheelchairs have a restricted range due to battery life. This means that they cannot always rely solely on active travel routes. Without consideration of the need for public transport to be including as interlinking points then often wheelchair users are unable to fully engage in active travel. With this in mind active travel should include these broader elements of public transport.

Although the Wales transport strategy 2021 set out to include accessible transport for all, there seems to be little improvement on the ground from the disabled people that we speak to. The active travel plans along with the transport strategy should be considered together with accessibility further up the priority list.

The developing role of Transport for Wales (TfW) as part of the delivery arrangements for active travel.

We have received mix feedback from the TfW schemes. With some having positive experiences and others coming up against barriers.

Whilst the TfW has allowed lots of disabled people to take more trips on planned schemes but far more still needs to be done to expand these offerings.

Additionally, there is a focus on trains which we have seen improvements but far less focus on ensure the accessibility of buses for all in Wales. Some members report missing up to three buses due to wheelchair capacity whilst attempting to go to work or doctors appointments.

The role and activities of the Welsh Government's Active Travel Board.

We firmly believe that the Welsh Government's Active Travel Board are key to holding the government responsible for the plans to active travel. We urge the board to ensure that plan include consideration of disabled people and their needs to access active travel.

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

The Welsh Government should ensure to prioritise specific funding allocations for accessibility. Without ensuring accessibility is built into these future plans, we will only be returning to these problems down the line and then needed more funding to make further improvements.

Whether the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 itself remains fit for purpose, including its requirements around active travel network mapping.

It remains fit for purpose for non-disabled people mostly. For disabled people, it is disappointing to see that this act has been in place for over ten years, however, we are still facing the same problems to be included within these plans.

How best to drive behaviour change in support of active travel, and current barriers.

The current barriers for a lot of disabled people are the inaccessible nature of active travel rather than behaviour. They would adopt these far more often if given access to.

Ensuring active travel is accessible and inclusive, including around scheme design.

In addition to the responses above – below are our responses sent to Welsh Government back in 2021. It is a shame to see that we are still requesting the same things four years later with very little improvement for disabled people. Therefore, the information below is still relevant and very much still our asks for active travel plans.

Access barrier removal to encourage the increase in walking.

Safety concerns: (along shared routes especially) – actual and perceived risks of having an accident coming to harm or injury through collisions. These dangers are very real and discourage many disabled people who may otherwise use the paths to perhaps to keep fit for example. Shared space especially is a great concern to disabled people and other 'vulnerable' pedestrians. Disabled people with invisible impairments which are not obvious to approaching cyclists; a visual impairment, being deaf or pedestrians with cognitive impairments or mental health issues may be more of a risk of having an accident caused by inconsiderate cyclists. For example the cyclist could assume that a ring of the bell will make the pedestrian move out of the way speedily. Many disabled people cannot move / jump out the

way quick enough at the sound of the bell. Collisions and possible altercations may result due to disabled pedestrians and cyclists clashing over right of way misunderstandings and near misses.

Placing a dividing line to separate cyclists and pedestrians may solve the issue of cyclist pedestrian collisions. However careful considerations have to be given to the widths of each and how the dividing line is indicated. Disabled 'pedestrians' include wheelchair users using manually/ electrically propelled chairs and also mobility scooter users of various sizes. Many of these pedestrians would not want to travel along the route in single file. Two or more wheelchair users may want to stroll together in a social group. Or a disabled family may wish to travel from A to B as a group, chatting rather than negotiating the paths regimentally in a straight line, therefore the pedestrian 'side' width must accommodate this.

Allowing enough room to safely pass other pedestrians coming in the opposite direction or those wanting to overtake slower pedestrians along the route is important. The dividing line must be clearly visible to avoid ambiguity / possible dispute and thus accidents. Serious attention must be given to the surface colour in comparison to the dividing line. It must be ensured that these are colour contrasting and are clearly distinct in all weather conditions, also the type of delineator line used, whether the line is slightly raised in comparison to the path, or of a different texture to the path would also have to be considered. Distinct separate walking and cycling areas along all of the shared space active travel routes could abate danger and lessen disabled pedestrians' fear of injury.

Path surfaces (smooth tarmac or uneven earth or gravel surface terrain?), use of cambers (which are difficult for visually impaired individuals and other disabled people to negotiate), gradient considerations¹ (i.e. disabled people using wheelchairs or with mobility impairments would find steep gradients difficult to navigate), type and frequency of lighting along the whole length of the path. Will there be lighting? Located at frequent intervals along the routes? Will these ensure 'vulnerable' pedestrians feel safe, especially in the darker winter months? Will they be adequately maintained to ensure they are in good working order? Provision of strategically placed seating to allow frequent breaks as required could assist many disabled people in using the routes. Provision of CCTV may also increase disabled people's confidence in using the paths. These should all be considered thoroughly when designing Active Travel routes. The proximity of paths to facilities should also be a consideration. Although Active Travel routes do not focus on leisure trips per se, those pedestrians using the paths for their intended means may also be caught short and need the toilet for example.

¹ Using ramp gradients for comparison. CAE states 'as a general rule most ramp manufacturers recommend a gradient no steeper than 1:12 for independent use and 1:6 for assisted use.'

Inconsistency of access available would result in a major access barrier for many disabled and older pedestrians. While planning the journey disabled people must be confident that the path remains accessible for the entirety of their journey not just for part of the journey, otherwise disabled people could reach a point that they cannot travel further due to inaccessibility and find themselves having to make their way home, causing added exhaustion and upset in the process. Creating Active Travel routes/ paths should not create additional barriers; instead these routes should encourage disabled people to use these paths independently.

Access barrier removal to encourage the uptake of cycling

Some disabled people enjoy cycling; either with a conventional pedal bike or hand cycle. Travel routes must reflect ease of use for all cyclists not only those with 'standard upright bikes'. Wider path widths could be required to ensure wider bikes used by disabled people can adequately pass those travelling in the opposite direction and which allow faster cyclists to overtake without impeding the disabled cyclist. The path surfaces should be smooth and obstacle free, avoiding unhelpful 'clutter', superfluous objects and visual aesthetics like overly large flower tubs or ornaments along the route in place 'to brighten it up' making the route pleasing on the eye. Inclusion of facilities along the route that adequately ensures disabled cyclists access requirements are met is a must such as rest stops, fully accessible changing facilities and accessible bike stands. Consideration should be given to the type of surface used, texture, colour and how distinct the surface is compared to the pedestrian side, if the path is of shared use.

The gradient must be suitable for disabled cyclists to navigate, too steep a gradient and the route would become unnegotiable, therefore disabled cyclists could become frustrated due to their non-productive journey if forced to turn back due to inaccessibility.

As with disabled pedestrians, shared space could cause access issues and barriers for disabled cyclists too. Adapted cycles e.g. tricycles or hand cycles could require extra space due to a wider turning circle needed, also two disabled cyclists may wish to cycle alongside each other rather than one in front and one behind. Therefore access provision along whole Active Travel routes must be ensured to implement full inclusivity amongst cyclists.

Disability Wales advocates the Local Authorities should coordinate a fully inclusive, active engagement process with local disabled people and disabled people's groups and organisations rather than merely consult with them. Positive engagement and open, honest, transparent dialogue at the route planning stage is a must to ensure local disabled people have a say in route creation and are able to inform Local Authorities of potential access barriers to their use.

Where Active Travel routes cross Local Authority boundaries there must be clear collaboration and dialogue between neighbouring Local Authorities to ensure disabled peoples access consistency throughout the whole route. Local Access Groups and disabled individuals in each Local Authority should all be given an opportunity to contribute their views which should be taken on board within each Local Authority and also as a whole to avoid having differing access quality as per Local Authority section of the Active Travel route. Consistent accessible routes which match pan disability access requirements for whole routes is paramount.
