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Sustrans Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to the committee's inquiry on the State of Roads in Wales.

This letter outlines our overall response to the questions posed by the inquiry. The overall point we would emphasise is the impact limiting funding has had on the state of roads in Wales.

Whether the current condition of roads in Wales and whether the approach to funding and delivery of maintenance programmes for the local road, trunk road and motorway network in Wales is effective, managed so as to minimise disruption to road users, and provides value for money:

There are two main issues: general wear and tear, and repairs and the situation after road works.

First, on general wear and tear, the historic funding situation of local authorities has negatively impacted on the condition of roads, particularly on the minor road network. With limited budgets, local authorities have tended to prioritise major roads (above minor roads) for maintenance work. Cyclists generally preferred to use minor roads as they tend to be quieter, very often for safety reasons. Sustrans' Bike Life Cardiff (2017) report highlighted that safety is the major concern for people who either currently cycle, or would like to cycle more in the future.

This creates a situation where cyclists are more likely to favour using roads that have been poorly maintained (in relative terms). This applies to both active travel journeys (short, utility trips) as well as leisure and tourism trips on the National Cycle Network.

Second, on repairs and the situation after road works, the standard of repair can have a particularly impact on the safety of cycling. For example, if after road works have taken place, there is an uneven surface between the existing tarmac and the repaired area, an effect known as 'tram lining' can occur which creates road surface that leaves cyclists particularly vulnerable to significant accidents when travelling at speed. During the process of road works, cyclists and to a lesser extent pedestrians can often not be sufficiently catered for. Diversions and alternative arrangements during repair work prioritise the needs of motor vehicles, rather than cyclists and pedestrians.

Whether major enhancement projects on the local road, trunk road and motorway network are prioritised, funded, planned and delivered

effectively, and provide value for money. Relevant issues include the implementation of the Early Contractor Involvement approach and the opportunities offered by the Welsh Government's Mutual Investment Model:

Despite the passage of the Active Travel Act, active travel provision can still be marginalised within major infrastructure projects. The Newtown bypass project could have delivered active travel enhancements, but these elements have steadily been dropped as the costs of the de-trunking elements increase. Although some of these elements can be provided from alternative funding, these are often on different projects to the original plans and it is less cost effective to undertake these works separately (rather than as part of a major infrastructure scheme).

Sustrans Cymru remains concerned that larger schemes are still failing to take into account active travel provision effectively and, notably, seek to enhance it rather than just catering for the 'status quo'.

Our experience of Early Contractor Involvement on the A465 Heads of the Valleys duelling works had initially been positive, with early engagement on design of active travel elements. However, we note that in many cases the final build differs considerably from agreed designs and can be considered to be below current active travel guidance standards. For example providing only narrow footways where wider shared use paths were specified, or a footbridge where a shared cycle/footbridge was agreed. This often relates to the project requiring cost savings in its later stages, as stated in the above example, but this should not automatically result in active travel infrastructure being cut on the perception that it is "less important".

In principle, ECI should allow effective early engagement with a range of stakeholders and interested parties to influence the design effectively, but in practice it seems that overall project costs still dictate the final outcome, beyond the control of these inputs. It remains to be seen if the new Mutual Investment Model provides any improvement to this situation.

In terms of more local road networks, we consider that one option to save money would be for local authorities to share services and consider better maintenance of the existing road network with available funding, instead of focusing on building new roads.

Whether Wales is adopting a sustainable approach to the maintenance and enhancement of its road network in the context of key legislation such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013:

Sustrans is of the view that it is too early to comment fully, but early indications predict that this may not be the case. The Active Travel Act has been in existence since 2013 but 2018/19 will be the first year where significant funding for active

travel infrastructure has been provided. There still remains no central quality assurance over active travel schemes on the ground in terms of design details and therefore many schemes continue to receive Welsh Government funding despite the fact that they may be poorly designed, or that they utilise older design standards.

Short term single year or end of year funding puts too much pressure on local authorities to deliver schemes without appropriate preparation and effective design, leading to a continuation of infrastructure that does not meet the high standard of design guidance. Welsh Government funding programmes should be spread over multiple years and monitored effectively to ensure they deliver sustainable and cost effective infrastructure that actively encourages greater use.

The introduction of the 5 key ways of working under the WfGA is welcomed and should lead to improvements in sustainability of schemes over time. However this must be applied consistently and within the context of current design guidance and best practice.

Should the committee require further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,



Steve Brooks
National Director, Sustrans Cymru