

Peter McDonald
Director of Transport
Welsh Government

5th of June, 2023

Dear Peter

Active Travel Board Scrutiny of the Draft Active Travel Delivery Plan

Thank you and your colleagues for attending the Active Travel Board meeting and participating in our first scrutiny session as an independent board. As you are aware, our plan, as a Board, is to write formally to all of those who appear before the Board in scrutiny sessions with our advice. We will then publish both our advice and your response in due course.

We are grateful to you for the open and engaging way you presented the draft plan – highlighting both the opportunities and challenges. We hope our advice is received in an equally positive spirit.

We welcome the production of the plan and many of the commitments contained within. Given the nature of the scrutiny session and our opportunity to feed into the development of the plan, this advice will focus on those areas where we believe further work is needed before the plan is finalised.

Targets

We considered carefully your cautious approach to target setting. We agree that there is no point setting arbitrary targets with no clear plan to deliver them. However, we believe that suitably set targets help focus the minds of all partners on what needs to be delivered.

The Welsh Government Programme for Government sets out to ‘Work towards our new target of 45% of journeys by sustainable modes by 2040, setting more stretching goals where possible.’ We agree and would encourage you to reflect the Programme for Government in this delivery plan, as we are concerned that the plan as stands is not ambitious enough to achieve the desired modal shift.

We would like to see national targets set for active travel immediately (in practice purposeful walking and cycling), and this could be based on the National Survey data. However, we acknowledge that without a baseline set through an authoritative and large¹ National Travel Survey (or similar robust national survey), such targets may not be meaningful for smaller geographies. **We therefore recommend** that you set out in the Active Travel Delivery Plan a clear timetable for developing such meaningful targets. These targets should be developed in consultation with partners to ensure that they both ambitious and achievable.

¹ Thus allowing local/regional data to be produced.

In the meantime **we further recommend** that a series of national outputs measures or targets are included within the plan. We would suggest a basket of measures, but are content for the precise detail to be worked on by yourself and the team. They could potentially include:

- The number of new kms of active travel routes developed in line with the Active Travel Guidance standards
- The number of school streets installed
- The number of schools with an approved active travel plan
- The %age of the active travel network map(s) that are covered by routes that meet the guidance standard
- The number of new health and education facilities built with high quality active travel routes linking them to centres of population

This list isn't exhaustive but hopefully serves to illustrate what measures could be adopted prior to the full establishment of the National Travel Survey. As members of the Board we would happily take part in a seminar / workshop to fully consider the range of potential targets / measures.

Timetable

The plan as it stands is a mixture of concrete plans, longer term plans or aspirations and broader declarations of intent. We are unclear at the moment how we might, as the active travel board scrutinise your progress in delivering this plan on an annual basis. **We recommend a clear timetable** setting out what is to be delivered, by when and by whom is included as part of the plan. This could be an appendix.

Resources

In your presentation to the Board you noted clearly that the plan was based on no further resources becoming available to deliver on the Active Travel Plan over the period of the plan. Given the urgency of the climate crisis we are disappointed that no further resources are available. However, we are more concerned as to the lack of focus in the plan on ensuring that the resources that are available are deployed in the most effective way possible. As the plan notes the Government has committed to invest at least £50 million into active travel projects and programmes along with staff resources and leveraging in other resources from other partners. How far do our current investments deliver on meaningful modal shift – if at all? If they do not, what are we going to do differently in the future, to ensure that significant and sustainable modal shift, in line with Llwybr Newydd is at the heart of our active travel investment.

We recommend that a robust monitoring and evaluation framework is included in the plan so that the Government (and the Board) can be assured that the significant resources expended on developing Active Travel are being expended in the most effective and efficient way possible to deliver modal shift.

We would also encourage you to consider the most effective way to ensure that funding for local government to deliver on active travel infrastructure is undertaken and prioritised in the most efficient manner possible – the comments from Local Government colleagues suggested that the process could be more nimble and agile.

Integration

The draft plan in parts refers to different parts of Welsh Government and external stakeholders. However, we are not persuaded that sufficient thought and buy-in has been achieved to this plan across Government. We note this, as we take the view that if for example, the Health, Education and Planning Departments at Welsh Government were to be fully engaged partners in this delivery plan the potential for achieving significant modal shift would be large. **We recommend therefore that the plan is clear on the cross-governmental commitments made to deliver active travel** along with information regarding what is to be delivered and when. We further note that the level of integration with local government, third sector organisations and other interested stakeholders such as the Future Generations Commissioner is unclear, and that this should be clarified. This is particularly evident for example in relation to Active Travel to School where the plans appear under-developed and not properly integrated with either the work of the Education Department or Public Health Wales.

Equality

The plan as it stands commits the Government to removing physical barriers and to consider facilities for active travellers at the start and end of a journey. **We recommend that this section is revisited with a focus on the barriers that are faced by individuals who have protected characteristics under the Equality Act** who are currently under-represented amongst the active travellers of Wales. By better understanding the barriers faced, these can be tackled with a clear focus on achieving the overall aim of active travel for all.

Active Travel Town

We welcome the proposals relating to the establishment of an 'Active Travel Town'. This has the potential to be a very significant demonstration of what can be achieved, **but we recommend that detailed planning** is undertaken to ensure sufficient resources – both capital and revenue to ensure the success of such a 'town.'

We would be most grateful if you could reply having considered the points raised at your earliest convenience. Given the range of comments made in our scrutiny session, we would welcome the opportunity to consider the second draft of the plan, along with your response to the points raised.

You also noted in your discussions with us that a detailed policy response has been prepared to the report of the Cross Party Group, and you indicated that you would be happy to share this with the Board. We'd be grateful therefore to receive a copy of this document so that it may be circulated to the Board.

Once again thank you very much for your very positive contribution to the first scrutiny session of the Active Travel Board Wales,

Yn gywir iawn

Dr Dafydd Trystan
Chair, Active Travel Board Wales