

W.G. CONSULTATION PAPER WG34276

'ACHIEVING OUR LOW-CARBON PATHWAY TO 2030'

This paper is written on behalf of Wheelrights which is the cycle campaigning group for Swansea Bay. We have over 40 members and organise the highly popular Gower Cycle Festival every year. In writing this response, I am particularly indebted to the IWA's report 'Decarbonising Transport in Wales'

INTRODUCTORY SECTION

Regrettable that Wales will almost certainly miss the 2020 Carbon Emission (C.E.) targets, which makes achieving the 2030 goals so much harder. It is therefore incumbent on this document to show leadership and initiative to ensure that Wales gets back on track. Our conclusion for transport is that this paper fails to show that leadership or initiative.

There is a statement in the last para on Page 10: 'We are using the national well-being goals, our own well-being objectives and ways of working to help identify areas for action throughout the consultation'. The national well-being objectives are mentioned several times but never spelt out, so whilst it is possible to argue that a prosperous and resilient Wales are considered at some points in this paper, a healthier, more equal and more cohesive Wales appears to have been forgotten. I am able to find very few references to Wales in a global context following or taking the lead of other nations.

I am unable to find any other reference in the document to 'our own well-being objectives'.

TRANSPORT SECTION (pages 36-43)

Given the very poor progress of a 3 per cent reduction in C.E. between 1990 and 2016, the reduction target for transport in the next 12 years is 43%. This very ambitious target needs clear and decisive action not found in this section of the paper. Interestingly, whilst a model for the 43% has been produced, the paper produces few specific measures as to how the 5 goals might be achieved (Page 37). Wheelrights argues strongly that an independent organisation like Transport Wales based on Transport for London would be empowered to produce specific changes and monitor and implement their proposals. Annual reports should be made to the Welsh Assembly, where AMs would hold TW to account.

There are only 4 specific actions that the paper looks to take, pinning almost all its hopes on Electric Vehicles, without being able to see the bigger picture. Let's look at the individual actions.

- Firstly, it suggests early take up of E.V.s with no details of how this might be achieved other than by more charging points. If this is an option to be considered in the final document, there needs to be work done by an independent body like Transport Wales, to ensure that any benefits for early take-up don't just accrue to the better-off driver leaving poorer drivers to foot the bill for running carbon based vehicles. It then advocates, giving E.V.s access to bus lanes. This is a preposterous idea as it would slow the progress of those using a sustainable form of transport (the bus!) and make people less likely to use it.

Wheelrights wants to see a sea change in transport choices so that bus, walking, and cycling are prioritised for health and environmental reasons. We would be strongly opposed to this suggestion and the suggestion to offer free municipal parking to E.V.s . By reducing the Local authorities' income, this would amount to a cross subsidy from sustainable transport users to car users. Car parking charges should be seen as a way to encourage people to think about alternative transport methods. Free municipal parking

would also reward wealthier car drivers over bus users and cyclists, thus cutting across one of the well-meaning aims to make Wales a more equal nation.

- Secondly, it proposes reducing the carbon footprint of buses and taxis to zero by offering public financial incentives to private bus companies, whilst introducing national taxi standards to force taxi owners to buy carbon free vehicles. Any public financial incentives to reduce the carbon footprint must be given to publicly accountable companies, not unaccountable private firms. We are in agreement with the proposal for national taxi standards.
- Thirdly to double the number of adults who cycle at least once a week and increase the number of walking journeys. This is a very laudable aim but no comprehensive plan as to how to achieve this behaviour change has been produced, other than to suggest that it is down to local authorities. This is an abrogation of the duty of the Welsh Government and firm plans must be put in place. The Government should take heed of the very successful waste disposal targets and working with local authorities introduce year by year targets for more cycling and walking. More sanctions and incentives need to be put in place and monitored by an independent body like Transport Wales
- Fourthly, to explore the relationship between speed limits and greenhouse gas emissions. Whilst this is a worthwhile aim, this seems to imply there will be no further action other than research. We already know that lowering the speed limit reduces deaths and serious injuries, so that reason alone is enough to support a general 20mph limit in urban areas. This would allow both cyclists and walkers to feel safer and improve the urban environment by putting people before vehicles. Indeed in the case of cyclists, this would make many urban journeys compatible in terms of time taken with car users.

NEW PROPOSALS

Wheelrights now considers the actions that might be taken if we took the 7 well-being goals into consideration. These actions mean that transport is not seen in isolation to other facets of Welsh developments e.g. Planning policy

Resilient Wales

- To reduce the overemphasis on the car and the highway system . The paper scarcely mentions trains and has no actions in this regard. The paper should produce figures of how the different transport modes should appear in 2030. An independent organisation, like Transport Wales, should be tasked to produce a plan to achieve these figures (e.g. like the UK commission on climate change).
- To look at how to reduce the need to travel in the first place by for instance curtailing out-of-town developments in favour of locations that are nearer to sustainable transport routes.
- To make the public more aware of the ecological and mental well-being damage caused by transport emissions and people's current detachment from the natural environment produced by car travel in particular. There needs to be a continued media campaign to change people's attitude to sustainable transport options in a similar way that the Welsh Government acted on the issue of organ donation.

Prosperous Wales

- Looking at how a skilled workforce might provide employment opportunities. In transport for example, this might focus on providing incentives for E-bike production and retailing in Wales which could well be a game changer in our many hilly areas.

- Re configuring the subsidies that the poor currently give to the rich in transport see Equality Trust's paper 'Taken for a ride' 2015. This paper showed that in the UK the biggest public investment went to the rail network which tended to benefit the wealthiest who commuted by rail compared to those who used buses.
- Increased expenditure on active travel measures like cycle and walking routes would provide an economic boost to L.A.'s Civil Engineering service and DLA sections and ensure that new training opportunities are offered to local people with low or no qualification.

Healthy Wales

- The physical state of our nation is dire, with record numbers of overweight adults and children, closely linked with diabetic diagnoses. In addition, the lack of physical exercise means that a new emphasis must be placed on actions that increase physical activity. Even using a bus is shown to be healthier than using a car. Electric cars will not solve this problem but only exacerbate it.
- National targets for active travel to work and school should be set on a yearly basis by TW like the waste recycling targets with bonuses for LA.s who reach their targets. An examination of the Nottingham car park tax for employees should be completed and a trial enabled by the W.G.
- The issue of poor mental health and loneliness has been highlighted in the last few years. We know that physical exercise and contact with a green environment as well as fellow travelers is extremely beneficial to everyone, whereas travel by car (using electric or petrol), often with drivers on their own, will only make increase a sense of isolation.

More equal Wales

- The subsidy that poor people currently make to the rich in transport has been highlighted above.
- Many poorer members of our communities live in social housing in outlying areas often a long distance from city and town centres. They have to spend both more time and money when travelling to work, shops or leisure activities. Public transport finance and priorities need to be changed, so that these citizens are not left out from society.
- The increased take up of E vehicles and the subsidy that it entails will once again benefit those with the deepest pockets as they are likely to be able to make the initial outlay. Cars need to be seen more as a community resource rather than just an individuals' choice. Car sharing schemes like Rev4 in Pembrokeshire need to be subsidized and provided in all poorer areas and linked perhaps to a community facility like a school.

Cohesive communities

- The need for increased contacts within communities has already been eluded to above. The more resources like employment, leisure and shops are provided locally the less need there is to travel.
- Communities need to have a say in how their communities are run rather than relying on outside agencies. Localising transport resources like shared E car schemes, bus services and cycle and walking routes would make communities much more viable as well as producing less carbon
- The introduction of a 20 mph speed limit combined with more cul-de-sacs, restrictions on cars going near schools at the start and end of the school day would lead to safer communities. These communities would also be more active ones as children and parents could reclaim their streets for play and socialising.

A Vibrant Culture

The cost of transport remains a limiting factor for many people in attending events both within and outside people's home location. The mass participation by local people during Hull's tenure of the city of culture shows the appeal of culture it is offered at affordable venues where transport costs are a small factor.

Globally responsible Wales

All of our actions should be seen in the context of their impact on others. It is of little use if the solutions that we propose for Wales are seen as valid only for the developed world and not for other countries. In suggesting that EVs should replace our current fleet of diesel and petrol cars, the report does not mention the impact of mining (especially in the 3rd world) to produce the materials for the batteries and other components.

The report should have mentioned that the daily use of buses, trains and cycles in countries like Netherlands and Denmark has a much lower environmental impact than cars and that these forms of transport need to be the starting point for Government expenditure in both short and long distance travel.

John Sayce Wheelrights Chair
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