

Wheelrights response to the Active Travel (Wales) Bill consultation

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Questions:

1. What are your views on the proposals for Local Authorities to have a duty to:

- **identify and map the routes within their areas that are safe and appropriate for walking and cycling;**
- **identify and map the enhancements that would be required to create a fully integrated network for walking and cycling and develop a prioritised list of schemes to deliver the network;**
- **deliver an enhanced network subject to budget availability and following due process;**
- **consider the potential for enhancing walking and cycling provision in the development of new road schemes?**

We strongly support the aims and broadly the proposed duties but note the following:

In identifying the routes a distinction often needs to be made between walking and cycling. The tendency throughout the document to link walkers and cyclist should be reviewed. Thus:

In rural areas whereas some off-road routes will be suitable for both walkers and cyclists (or at least mountain bikers) other hiking trails will not be suitable for cycling. This is touched on in section 67. As cyclists rather than pedestrians are the main users of roads the focus here should be on the needs of cyclists. (This will generally also help pedestrians.)

In urban areas as most streets have pavements there would appear to be little point in showing walking routes on maps. This is not the case for shared-use paths and roads, and the duty to provide maps for these is welcome. (*Wheelrights* and *Sustrans* initiative in providing a Swansea cycling map – largely funded by the then WAG – is a step in this direction.)

It is important when delivering the network that strict quality criteria are applied to infrastructure. Lessons learned from the “crap cycling lanes” which permeate the UK need to be taken. The focus must be on slowing traffic, in particular by the wider use of 20mph zones and enforcement measures. A requirement to consider the introduction of shared use areas as in, eg, Kensington in London and across the Continent should be included in the document. See also our answer to Qu.5.

The need to design for non-motorised as well as motorised traffic in new road schemes should be a mandatory requirement. Some rewording of sections 7 (incorrectly labelled ‘5’), 12 and 43 to make this clearer would be appropriate.

A duty to maintain cycle routes needs to be included, together with the means to pay for it.

A duty to provide cycle training, such as the Bikeability scheme, is needed. The statement “... might involve cycle training” in section 71 needs strengthening.

2. How do you think the duty should be enforced?

Education of highway design teams to enable them to produce appropriate infrastructure should be a requirement. The expertise to provide this is available within the CTC and Sustrans. The WG could facilitate this by providing a list of those qualified to give seminars or lay on courses. (Swansea has set a precedent by providing such a seminar.)

The necessary funding to enable the various duties must be made available.

3. Do you think the type of routes and facilities that Local Authorities be required to map should be specified in guidance or regulation?

Mainly guidance. Implementation of our recommendation under 2. above should make this sufficient.

4. What are your views about revising rights of way definitions, for example allowing cyclists to use footpaths, or equestrians to use cycle paths?

A more flexible approach is required. This will require legislative change. In urban areas there are some situations, eg when footpaths are devoid of pedestrians or on uphill sections where cyclists would otherwise hold up traffic, where it makes sense for cyclists to use them. They should not ride on pavements where path entrances or driveways are crossed.

In rural areas there are some public paths, eg across private land, where cyclists are unreasonably banned. Here there should be a "legal right to cycle".

Rural walking routes are widely signposted. Where these routes can be used by cyclists they should be signed as such and obstructions removed, eg gates unlocked or 'kissing gates' made deep enough to accommodate a bike.

Horse riders and cyclists can of course share bridleways. Measures such as the provision of a horse friendly lane (of chippings or shells) as on part of a North Gower cycle path might be included in the Bill as guidance.

5. What are your views of the proposal for new design guidance?

The comprehensive design guidance available, in eg Manual for Streets or Local Transport Note 2/08, needs to be enforced. Continuity across driveways and minor junctions (of both shared use paths and on-road lanes), a good surface and proper treatment at major junctions is needed.

We welcome the emphasis in sections 12, 14 and 77-81 on providing appropriate design standards (in particular which incorporate the "hierarchy", ie pedestrians top, cars bottom priority) but are unclear why Wales needs a separate standard. Is there not an adequate UK standard?

6. What would the costs and the benefits of these proposals be to you or your organisation (or the people your organisation represents)?

They would clearly help our aims ("... to get people on bikes"). They would also help us in working with L.A.s (mainly Swansea Council but also NPT) to support them in implementing the measures.

7. We have asked a series of specific questions. Is there anything else that you would like us to consider as part of the development of the Active Travel Bill, or wider activity to encourage walking and cycling?

One of the most important parts of the document is contained in section 74. where it is made clear that the key to funding is for L.A.s to demonstrate that it will be used to facilitate active travel. Consideration should be given to spelling out the source of this funding: should it be a percentage of the Transport fund or perhaps so much per head of population per year? Related to this is the point made in our answers to Qu. 1 of the need for maintenance funding.