

# Active Travel in Wales Annual Report


2023-2024



Active Travel Board

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*Dr Dafydd Trystan and Chris Boardman, Active Travel Commissioner for England, cycling in front of Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff.*



# Foreword

I am delighted to present the Active Travel Report for Wales for 2023/24. The Active Travel Act sets out the need for an annual report on active travel in Wales, and following the recommendation of the Cross-Party Group on Active Travel, the responsibility for publishing such a report has been given to the Active Travel Board.

As this is the first report, it is very much a work in progress (much like active travel in Wales). We seek to highlight the progress made during the past 12 months and those areas where progress has not been as rapid as we would have wished. We also highlight those examples of good practice from across the country, so that others may hopefully be inspired by these case studies of successful delivery in action.

Towards the end of the 12-month period, a new minister for transport was appointed with responsibility for active travel – Ken Skates MS. As Chair of the Board, I have had a very productive meeting with the Cabinet Secretary and look forward to making further progress on our shared priorities over the next years. They include ensuring that investment made delivers clear and measurable outcomes, that we support and promote walking for short journeys and we ensure that, across the public sector in local government and Transport for Wales, there is sufficient capacity and capability to deliver on our ambitious goals.

I should also like to pay tribute to the previous Minister, Lee Waters MS. He was a genuine champion of sustainable transport and it is striking that, as I travel internationally both within these islands and beyond, his work and that of the Welsh Government on active travel is recognised and celebrated as an example of good practice. Diolch am bopeth Lee.

Our report presents a mixed picture. We report on significant progress in terms of investment in active travel infrastructure and support for those wishing to travel actively – most clearly in terms of active travel to school. But the behaviour change we seek – and is outlined as an ambition in the Welsh Government’s Llwybr Newydd – is for the most part absent in the available data. As more (desperately needed) data becomes available we should be able to identify at a more granular level those interventions that have the greatest success in delivering modal change.

We have set the ambition of becoming an active travel nation, but as yet progress on that journey has been painfully slow. I very much hope we will be able to report on definitive progress in the years ahead, rooted in innovative and people-centred research that utilises investment in such a way as to yield demonstrably higher levels of active travel.

If you would like to suggest themes or studies for future reports, please do not hesitate to share your views with the Active Travel Board for Wales.

**Dr Dafydd Trystan**  
Chair  
Active Travel Board for Wales

# Introduction

The Active Travel Board for Wales provides an independent voice that scrutinises the effectiveness of active travel related measures delivered by the Welsh Government, including their funded delivery partners and agencies. Our work involves identifying key themes in active travel policy and making recommendations to ministers and delivery partners as to how active travel can be improved in Wales.

Read more about who we are and a detailed description of our work on page 32.

## What is Active Travel?

'Active Travel' is a term used to describe walking, wheeling or cycling for purposeful journeys to a destination, alone or in combination with public transport.

These are journeys that involve, for example, travel to school or work, rather than for leisure, pleasure or health reasons alone. It is often the cheapest and greenest form of transport.

## Active Travel Benefits

We know that active travel contributes towards developing better health, more equality, a reduction in carbon emissions and congestion, increased social interaction and greater community cohesion. Walking, wheeling or cycling instead of driving just once or twice a week still bring health and environmental benefits.



### Health

It is estimated that obesity costs NHS Wales £73 million a year. Evidence from multiple UK longitudinal population studies say active travel helps maintain and improve physical and mental health throughout our lives, with a 2022 World Health Organisation report pointing to a:

- 30% decrease in Type 2 Diabetes
- 10% decrease in cardiovascular disease.



### Economy

Almost 20% of households in Wales do not have access to a car. 52% of disabled people in the UK have reduced their essential travel, due to the cost-of-living crisis, with the cost of running a car becoming unaffordable for a range of people,<sup>1</sup> putting them at risk of transport poverty.

Active travel can also boost economic growth, including a 30% increase in local retail spend.



### Environment

17% of Wales' total carbon emissions come from transport. Increased active travel in place of private car use would play a vital role in Wales becoming carbon net zero by 2050.



### Wellbeing

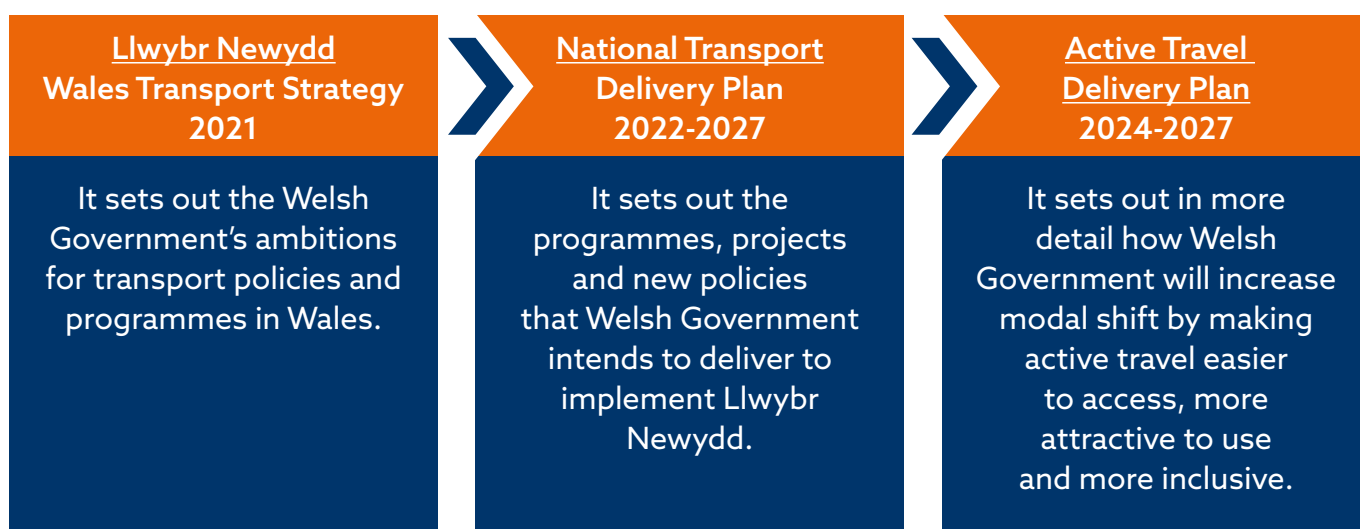
Active travel routes often increase social interaction and engagement among residents, leading to notable improvements in overall wellbeing and social connectedness because they have more opportunities to interact and engage in community activities.

That's why – for many countries, including Wales – active travel measures are often part of a wider strategy relating to health and climate change as well as transport. For example, 2023/24 amendments to the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill – now Act – placed a duty on certain public bodies to promote active travel in relation to air quality, and report back every three years.

Levels of active travel in Wales are currently low compared to other countries in Europe (like the Netherlands and Denmark), but it is a key Welsh Government priority that meets all seven of Wales's well-being goals,<sup>2</sup> under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, in addition to other major strategies.

## Our Pioneering Legislation

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 places a duty on the Welsh Government and local authorities (LAs) to promote active travel and continuously improve active travel provision through securing new and improved active travel routes and related facilities. It also requires LAs to prepare Active Travel Network Maps (ATNMs) showing existing active travel routes, alongside new proposed routes.



Welsh Government's transport strategy was developed in 2021, and is called Llywyr Newydd. It set an overall target that 39% of all journeys by 2030 should be done sustainably, increasing to 45% by 2040.

The National Transport Delivery Plan maps out how Welsh Government proposes to deliver Llywyr Newydd's targets, which was followed by the publication of the Active Travel Delivery Plan (2024-2027) (ATDP) in March 2024. This aims to detail the work required to increase modal shift in Wales and to do so equitably and inclusively.

This annual report is the key vehicle in scrutinising the ATDP over the coming years.

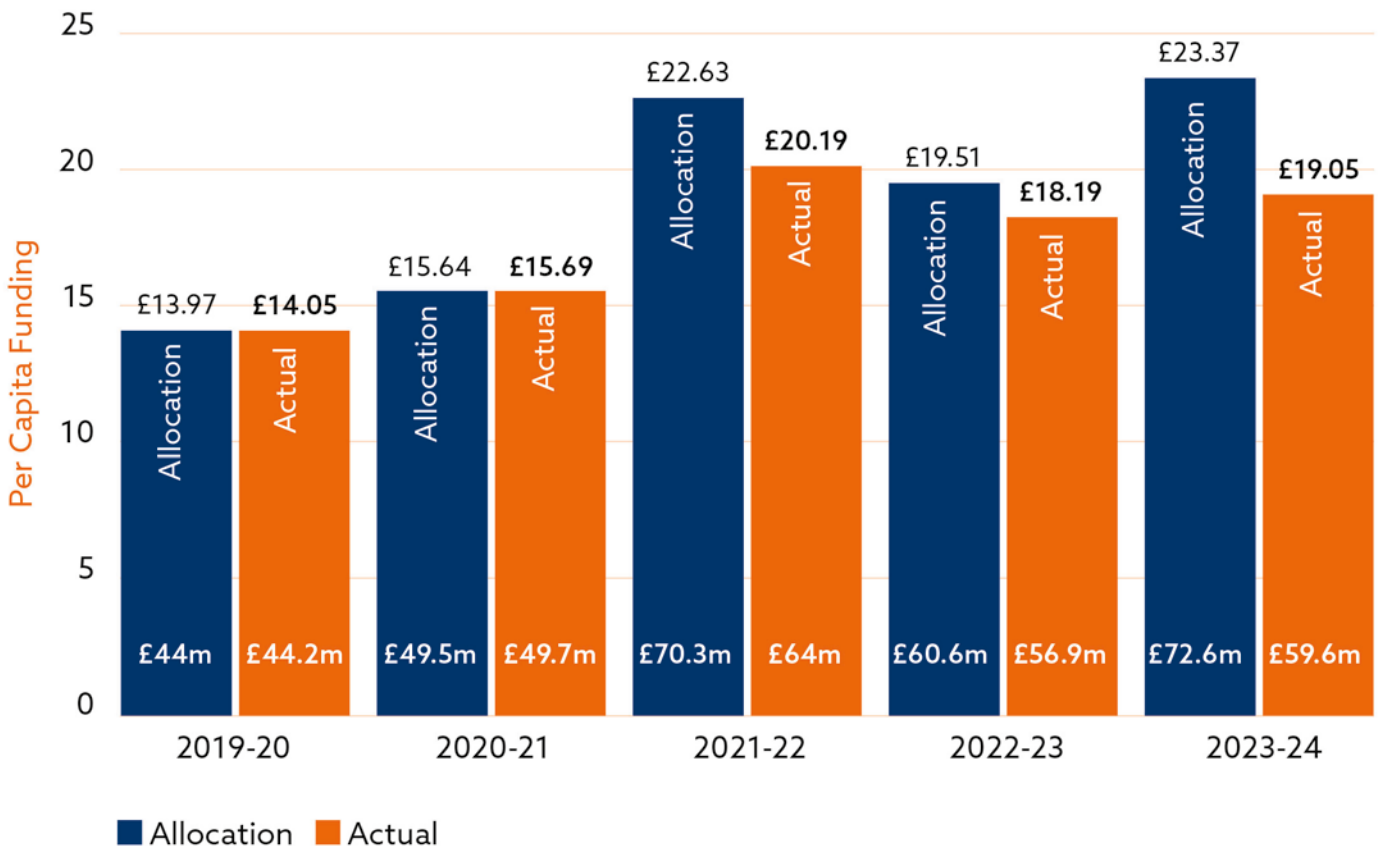
At national level, political will to increase active travel has been high, evidenced by the significant progress in funding allocation (see graph opposite).



## Active Travel Funding Per Capita 2019/20 - 2023/24

### Allocation and actual spend

Welsh Government



### Example per head figures from across Great Britain

Wales	£19 per head	London	£24 per head
England	£12 per head	Scotland	£38 per head <sup>3</sup>

You will see that Wales has increased funding for active travel,<sup>4</sup> but the challenge for this report is to be able to form a judgement as to when the increased investment will lead to results in terms of significantly increased levels of walking and cycling in Wales.

While we've seen substantial and welcome increases in capital spend in recent years, we do have a great deal of ground to make up. After all, the total sum of investment in active travel across Wales over the course of the past 20 years of devolution is less than the amount we continued to spend on widening 8km of the 'Heads of the Valleys road' – the A465 – at approximately £321m.<sup>5</sup>

Our hope is that, from 2024/25, we will be able to see indications of significant growth in our everyday walking, wheeling and cycling so that the majority of us are walking at least once a week and that we can also see growth in our cycling, where one in ten of us choose to cycle each and every week.

## Key Data



### Good progress

Wales has made good progress in active travel during this period, particularly in levels of investment (now £19 per head) and in its strategic planning (publishing its Active Travel Delivery Plan in March 2024). Political will at a national level is strong.

### But we need a gear change

We've yet to see significant impact, even though it is estimated two out of three of all our journeys are fewer than five miles. There appears to be no significant increase in active travel since 2013: the year of the Active Travel Act.

## Active travel funding allocation

Over

**£72m\***

(\*almost 20% increase from 2022-2023)

Includes **£58m** allocated to:

- » **37** new active travel routes & detailed development for an additional 22 routes
- » **£3m** to upgrade primary routes on the Strategic Road Network
- » **30** Safe Routes in Communities schemes across 17 local authorities

**Current Network**

**3,129km**

active travel routes

**Future Network**

**7,491km**

active travel routes

(including current routes)



# Active Travel Journeys

Currently

32%

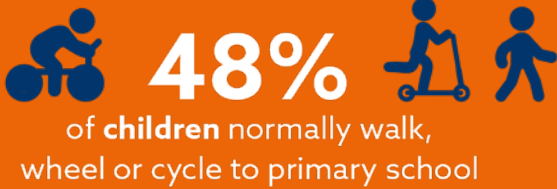
of all journeys



2040 Target

45%

of all journeys



## Adult Walking

51%

walk at least once a week

*Down from 60% before pandemic (2019-20)*

17%

walk daily

Urban Areas

62%

walk at least once a month  
(64% in 2021-22)



Rural Areas

52%

walk at least once a month  
(47% in 2021-22)

## Adult Cycling

6%

cycle at least once a week

*(no change from previous year)*

10%

cycle at least once a month



Men more likely to cycle (& more frequently) than women

Source: National Survey for Wales 2021/22 & 2022/23

# Health

Healthier individuals are more likely to travel actively...



# Improving our Active Travel Network

Connecting people with where they love and where they need to go.

Key commitments from the Active Travel Delivery Plan in providing greater opportunities to walk, wheel and cycle in Wales include:

- creating high-quality infrastructure that improves the National Cycle Network (NCN), delivers active travel upgrades on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and reducing physical barriers for all to access them, including “people with protected characteristics”
- maintaining current levels of investment to local authorities through the Active Travel Fund
- enhancing the Transport for Wales’ Active Travel Hub, specifically the capacity and skill base in active travel design expertise and programme management
- improving access to procurement frameworks for active travel
- enhancing active travel facilities at public transport interchanges, incorporating active travel options in journey planners, and improving the experience of carrying cycles, mobility scooters and prams onto public transport.



A functioning active travel network is essential to encourage people in Wales to travel actively. We need high-quality cycle routes that separate bikes from cars on the roads, make walking and wheeling safer by creating new paths and better crossings, and work closely and inclusively with people throughout the process.

It is a key factor in people's travel choices: an October 2023 survey of 1,300 young people in Wales pointed to a lack of safe, convenient and appealing infrastructure as the main reason they were failing to walk or cycle more frequently.<sup>6</sup>

Our world-first Active Travel Act plays a vital role in this regard, requiring all 22 local authorities (LAs) to map comprehensive networks of active travel routes across Wales, to improve them and report on progress made. This can include interventions such as new pedestrian crossings, dropped kerbs or even benches.

In 2022/23, 90km of routes were created, increasing the active travel network in Wales

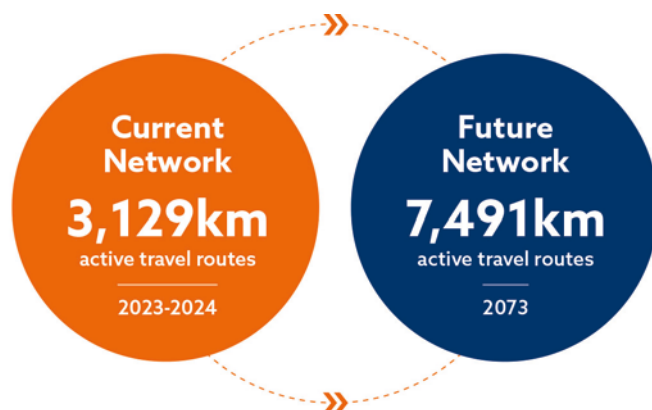
to 3,129km. This is out of a possible 7,491km (as mapped out by our LAs), which means Wales has the potential to more than double the network over the coming years.<sup>7</sup>

2020-2021: 106km new routes

2021-2022: 71km new routes

2022-2023: 90km new routes

That said, based on current progress, of an average build of 89km per year, it will take almost 50 years – until 2073 – to complete it. This needs addressing.



## Investing in the Active Travel Network

The Active Travel Fund encourages local authorities to develop strategic projects that can transform local travel behaviours, including a core allocation of at least £500,000 to each local authority to make small-scale continuous improvements to existing routes. All remaining funds are for larger schemes, including pedestrian and cycle bridges, to overcome significant barriers to active travel.

The Welsh Government's Active Travel Fund and Safe Routes in Communities Scheme's

successful grant applications were announced in June 2023, and accounted for more than £58m of the overall £72m allocation, in order to provide:

- 37 new active travel routes & detailed development for an additional 22 routes
- £3m to upgrade primary routes on the Strategic Road Network
- 30 Safe Routes in Communities schemes across 17 LAs.



**Approximate allocation of funding by local authority**

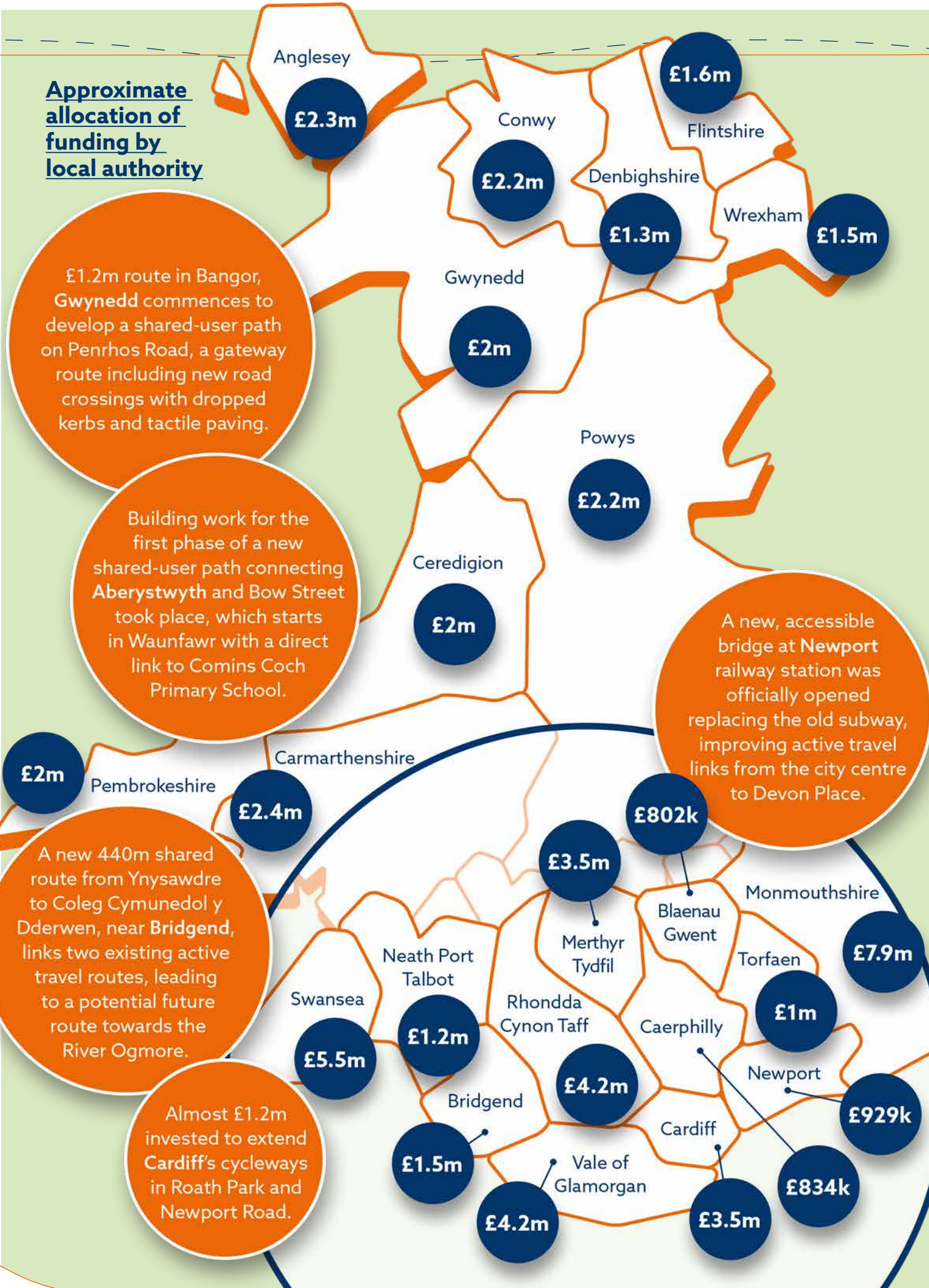
£1.2m route in Bangor, Gwynedd commences to develop a shared-user path on Penrhos Road, a gateway route including new road crossings with dropped kerbs and tactile paving.

Building work for the first phase of a new shared-user path connecting Aberystwyth and Bow Street took place, which starts in Waunfawr with a direct link to Comins Coch Primary School.

A new, accessible bridge at Newport railway station was officially opened replacing the old subway, improving active travel links from the city centre to Devon Place.

A new 440m shared route from Ynysawdre to Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen, near Bridgend, links two existing active travel routes, leading to a potential future route towards the River Ogmore.

Almost £1.2m invested to extend Cardiff's cycleways in Roath Park and Newport Road.



Monmouthshire were allocated the most funding amounting to almost £8m, for a package of measures in Monmouth, a multi-year project to build an active travel bridge across the river Usk in Abergavenny, and education and town centre links in Caldicot. (Note: the Abergavenny project is an ongoing project that was not delivered in 2023/24.)

The original intention was to complete the active travel network in 15 years' time, but with completion – and end to end connectivity – seemingly decades away (estimated at 2073 according to our figures) Welsh Government needs the stamina and commitment to get the job done.

## National Cycle Network

Almost 60% of Wales' population lives within a mile of the National Cycle Network (NCN), which spans all 22 local authority (LA) areas. It is a vital component of our Active Travel Network, maintained and enhanced by its guardian in Wales – Sustrans Cymru – which it often undertakes in partnership with local authorities.

In February 2024, we were pleased to see the value of the NCN clearly mapped out against all seven of Wales' National Wellbeing Goals in the Walk, Wheel and Thrive: Well-being and the National Cycle Network report.

While impressive work was undertaken in 2023/2024 to improve sections of the NCN, it remains incomplete. These works included the installation of 10 maintenance huts and upgrades to routes like Lon Las Cymru (NCN8) and Lon Las Ogwen (NCN82), and path widening in Llanhilleth (NCN466). Other routes benefited from, among other interventions, Ash Dieback treatment, drainage works, slope retention, tree root removal, and new fencing installations.

We have called on Welsh Government to amend the evaluation of the capital grant to Sustrans Cymru that includes a further measure on how they are enhancing and improving the NCN in addition to a current catalogue of outputs.





## Building an Inclusive Active Travel Future

Welsh Government's transport strategy emphasises the importance of designing infrastructure that meets diverse needs and fosters equitable participation in active travel; this includes removing barriers like kissing gates and chicanes, as they create significant obstacles to disabled access.

Work is underway to meet this ambition.

Transport for Wales (TfW) has undertaken a pilot project in this period to review a sample of Active Travel Fund projects with the aim of identifying any common access and inclusion issues that can be shared with local authorities to inform scheme designs.

We welcome the collaboration between Sustrans Cymru and the Assistive Technologies Innovation Centre (ATiC) at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David,

aimed at improving engagement with individuals with visual impairments.

This initiative, involving Vision Impaired West Glamorgan, evaluated tactile maps, including 3D-printed versions, based on the Welsh Government's Active Travel Design Guidance, potentially supporting more than 111,000 people in Wales living with a visual impairment.

Feedback from the project suggests these tools could lead to more inclusive and safer urban designs. While these tactile maps are available from external agencies at a cost, we are particularly delighted to see that they are developed and sold here in Wales.

We will spend dedicated time in 2024/25 scrutinising this area of work in our Inclusive Active Travel Subgroup.

### Cardiff flagship route receives UK-wide recognition

The flagship 1.8-mile protected route from the city centre to Wales' largest hospital was highlighted in Sustrans' biannual UK report: Walking and Cycling Index 2023 published in March 2024. It demonstrates very well what can be achieved in Wales when funding, skills and ambition align. More of these routes are vital if we are to become an active travel nation.



## Bridging the Skills and Capacity Gap

Some LAs are unable to bid for funding due to a shortage of specialists in active travel, which results, for some, in uneven active travel progress across Wales, with ambitious local authorities like Cardiff advancing while others lag behind.<sup>8</sup>

Addressing this skills gap is crucial.

We were particularly pleased to read TfW's 2023/24 business plan, with commitments to "develop and implement a multi-disciplinary training programme for active travel practitioners in local authorities and others in the sector" and the development of procurement frameworks "to support local authority access to supply chain and specialist skills".

TfW established its own Design Office in 2023/24 with the aim of supporting LAs and Welsh Government in establishing and sharing best practice, as well as undertaking design work, particularly for large and complex projects. There have also been training sessions delivered in 2023/24 relating to the auditing of existing routes.

Another positive development has been the growth, in November 2023, of Sustrans Cymru's 'built environment' team, known as Healthier Places, comprising mostly women with degrees in urban design and engineering, who can support local authorities in developing 'school streets', and active travel master-planning.



## Seamless Journeys: Public Transport Hubs

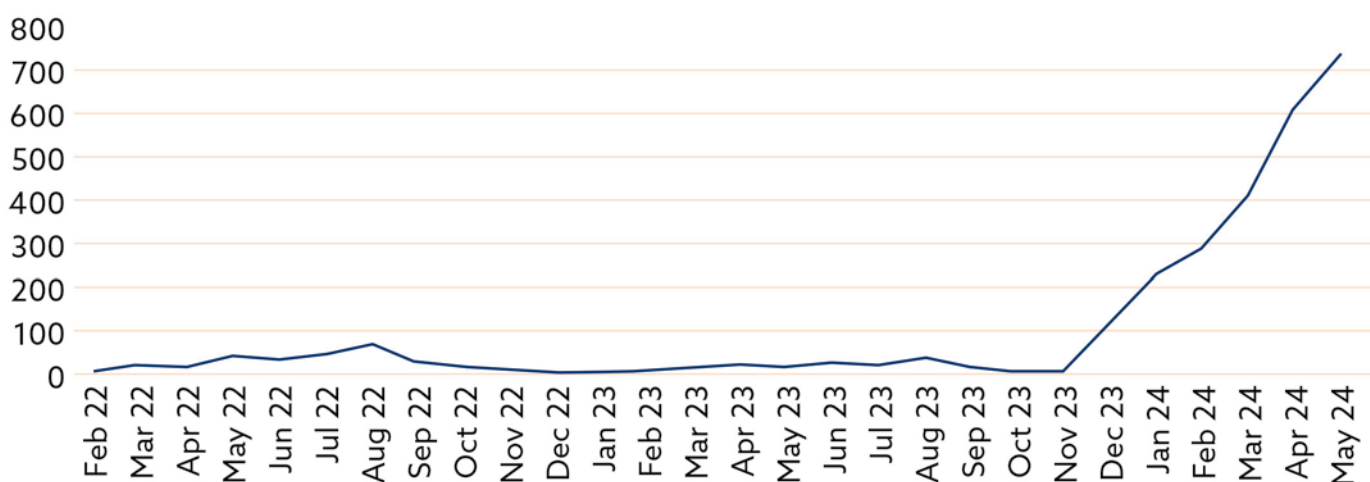
Active travel needs to be integrated into overall transport planning for a fully functioning active travel network.

TfW has told us the amount of cycle storage at stations on the Wales and Borders has increased due to station improvements since 2018. 19 stations, where improvements have already been delivered, have had cycle storage for the first time. In 2022, TfW launched a new station improvement framework to deliver further improvements, which they started implementing in 2023/24. They also point

to active travel improvements to stations delivered through bids to a £15m Department for Transport Access for All Fund.

Making it easier to combine active travel with public transport will encourage more people to use these modes. For example, the below graph supplied by TfW shows a significant uplift in recorded cycle reservations after November 2023, due to the new cycle reservation facilities launched on its app and website. Previously, it had only been possible over the telephone.

### TfW WebTIS Cycle Reservations



An £800m investment in new rolling stock means the amount of cycle capacity on train services has increased. We were particularly pleased that, in June 2023, tram-trains were being tested including six multifunctional areas for bicycles, seats for people with reduced mobility and two wheelchair passenger spaces.

We welcome the increase in reservations, but note that the very significant increase has come about when cycle reservations were facilitated. It suggests that there is much untapped potential on our public transport network and we look forward to working with TfW to see what more can be done to make the connections between active travel and public transport as simple and easy as possible.



## Flintshire Council



### Flintshire Council's Active Travel Planning Celebrated

Flintshire Council is by no means the biggest recipient of active travel funding by Welsh Government, but in June 2023 former Deputy Minister for Transport Lee Waters met with its councillors and pupils from St David's High School to draw attention to its recently completed shared active travel route on the A5104. He took the opportunity to announce the Welsh Government's £58m Active Travel Fund including the Safe Routes in Communities Scheme in 2023-2024, of which over £1.5 million was allocated to Flintshire Council.

The "much needed" 10-week installation of the new £600,000+ Sandy Lane to Saltney Ferry shared pathway commenced in late January 2023, including an upgraded Toucan crossing. The council's priorities for 2023-2024 were a new shared pathway in Lower Aston Hall in Deeside, and Sandycroft to Broughton, among other schemes.

Councillor Dave Hughes was reported at the time to have said: *"With these proposals we aim to improve conditions for walking and cycling by reducing traffic speeds, improving pedestrian priority and widening footways. With the addition of green infrastructure these areas will provide an attractive and safe environment, encouraging more people to walk and cycle more frequently."*

Headteacher Steven Richardson who held a Health and Wellbeing Cycling Day in July 2024 to celebrate the new route said: *"This initiative is a significant step towards ensuring our students can travel to and from school safely and I am excited to see its positive impact on our school community."*



# Active Travel to Schools

A key commitment from the Active Travel Delivery Plan is to support programmes to encourage more children and families to walk, scoot or cycle to school, supporting the development of active travel school plans for most schools.

Active travel to schools (ATS) is critically important if Welsh Government is to succeed in its ambition to make 'walking and cycling the most natural and normal way of getting about'. Not least because the school journey is often a short distance that offers solid opportunities to normalise active travel from a young age – a pursuit usually welcomed by children themselves.

However, 2023/24 active travel levels across schools in Wales betray a critical lack of coordination across government sectors, with Welsh Government failing to provide guarantees of more effective inter-departmental working in either its Llwybr Newydd strategy or its Active Travel Delivery Plan.

With the exception of a small number of pioneering schools, levels of active travel to schools in Wales remain woefully low. We must reconsider our investment priorities, focusing on areas where behaviour change is most feasible and taking into account where need is greatest. This must be based on thorough research and robust evaluations of Welsh ATS improvement activities that help identify impactful interventions, ensuring a more impressive return on investment.

Our ATS Subgroup, co-chaired by Chris Roberts and Rhiannon Letman-Wade, has spent 2023/24 developing a policy paper that will set out a more strategic approach

to the delivery of active travel to schools. The paper will be published in 2024/25. It is expected to feature proposals for a more integrated approach with a 'one stop shop' for schools, local authorities and active travel practitioners; the setting of robust targets and more effective dissemination of good practice.

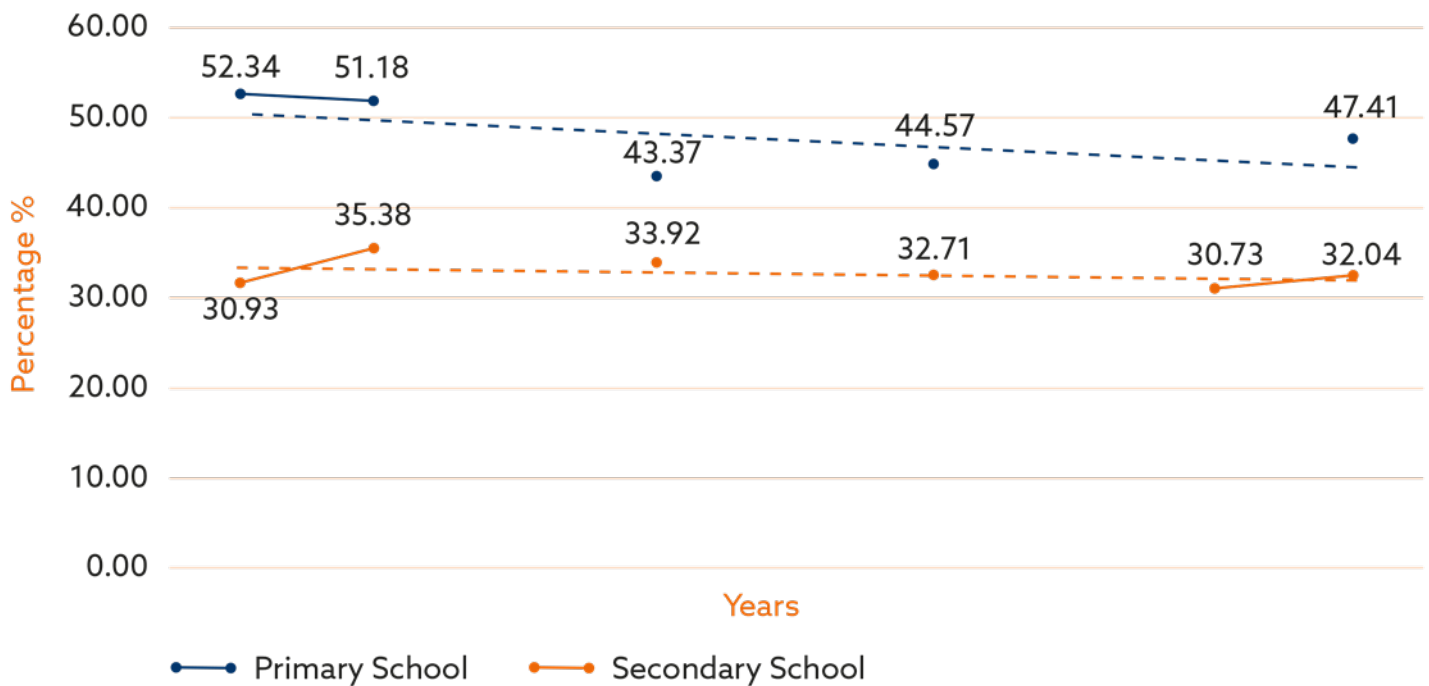
## Active Travel to School Rates

There is a dearth of data – particularly current data – to accurately measure how many children and young people travel actively to primary school. This needs to change as a matter of priority and is one of our key recommendations.

According to the [National Survey for Wales](#) there has been a steady decline in primary school children participating in ATS. Among secondary school pupils the rates have remained largely static.

Based on the most current published information, it is thought 48% of children walk, wheel or cycle to primary school, with 34% of young people walking or cycling to secondary school.

## Proportion of school children in Wales who walk to school 2013/14 - 2021/22



Source: National Survey for Wales

This data is administered as a proxy measure by asking parents about their child(ren)'s mode of travel to school, but the sample size is too small to inform planning or decisions at local level.

Public Health Wales' (PHW) new and ongoing data collection does show slightly healthier numbers of primary school children in Wales travelling actively to school – just over half, at 53% in June 2023. This data comes from the [2023 Travel to School Hands Up Survey in Wales](#), which takes place annually in primary schools across Wales.

Over 40,000 pupils in 270 primary schools took part in the most recent survey, but active travel rates in individual local authorities (LAs) range considerably: from over 72% in Cardiff to just over 23% in Ceredigion.

The veracity of this data is questionable because it does not yet constitute a representative sample, with a low response rate in most LAs.

This data set is important but will not be reliable in painting a national picture of ATS until all schools and LAs are incentivised to take part in the survey annually, as is the case in Scotland.

At secondary level, the [School Health Research Network \(SHRN\)](#) is a long-established survey that enjoys a 94% school response rate (nearly 120,000 pupils). The most recent survey in 2021, involving more than 123,000 pupils in years 7 to 11, found 35% of respondents in Wales reported walking or cycling to school.<sup>9</sup> This is a fairly static figure (35% in 2021, 35% in 2019 and 33.8% in 2017).

## Investing in Active School Travel

The [Safe Routes in Communities](#) grant is open for all LAs to make routes safer – particularly for schoolchildren. In 2023/24, only 17 local authorities applied for the grant; many chose to undertake feasibility studies into ‘school streets’: restricting vehicle access around schools during peak times.



*Following its [school streets project](#), Siân Lewis, Headteacher of Fairfield Primary School in Penarth, said: “We now have a much safer and healthier environment at the beginning and end of the school day, with the new layout and rain gardens hugely improving the local area.”*

There have been modest increases in cycle training. 22,256 children were provided with cycle training in 2023/24 across all LAs with the exception of Gwynedd, according to Welsh Government figures provided to us. Almost half received National Standard Cycle Training (NSCT) Level 1 (10,621 children) closely followed by Level 2 (9,769 children). Level 3 standard was completed by fewer than 250 children in five LAs; with Balanceability training provided in two LAs to almost 880 children, and Active Travel Training provided to 669 children to a further four LAs.<sup>10</sup>

[Sustrans Cymru](#) spent £190k of their core grant allocation in 2023/24 on Active Travel School Planning. This has allowed a toolkit to be developed and piloted with selected schools across Wales. Additionally, their Active Journeys programme report for the same year demonstrates modest positive

outcomes, delivering over 330 activities, which see participants’ usual school travel mode increase by 12% and car use decrease by 14%.

The Welsh Government also funded [Living Streets Cymru](#) by £385,000 in 2023/24 to improve walking rates – a key intervention is its WOW (Walk Once a Week) pupil-led programme. Between September 2023 and March 2024, over 1m journeys were logged by 32,000 primary school pupils. 2,039 pupils at 13 secondary schools completed a Next Steps Walking Challenge Week (with an additional 53 schools in Wales logging on as a result of separate funding from a range of LAs).

According to Living Streets, there was a 22% increase in walking and wheeling (which includes using mobility aids, such as wheelchairs or wheeled walkers) all the way to school in WOW schools taking part in this



project, and a 52% increase in active journeys to school.

At Next Steps secondary schools, 43% of pupils said that they had walked more because of the Next Steps Walking Challenge, with a 14% increase in the number of pupils who said they usually walk and wheel to school and an 18% increase for active travel.<sup>11</sup>

But Sustrans Cymru and Living Streets Cymru funded programmes will only get Wales so far, as their models reach a minority of schools across Wales. One-off events, such as Bike Week, can produce a boost in participation too, but this soon tails off, if not backed up by longer term programmes of action.

Other ATS initiatives undertaken in 2023/24 that we look forward to seeing the impact of in 2024/25, include PHW's active school travel place-based approach (PBA) pilot project,

which will test if this participatory approach to ATS can be used to identify, generate and implement new improvement activities and actions at a local level, with a focus on secondary schools.

PHW, in collaboration with Swansea University, has also been developing a tool for LAs and schools to estimate the percentage of the pupil population living within feasible active travel to school distances. The initial data analysis phase using the SAIL databank is complete, with the second phase due to start by end of 2024.

PHW has also developed and piloted an active school travel national digital marketing campaign in 2023/24 to test messaging that would help raise awareness of active school travel and its benefits among parents and grandparents of school-age children.





## Howardian Primary in Penylan

### 90% of pupils actively travel to school

Howardian Primary in Penylan is recognised as a leader in promoting sustainable transportation practices in schools across Wales and now shares its best practice resources with other schools. As a result of its collaboration with active travel charity Living Streets and Cardiff Council, nine in ten of its pupils now walk, wheel or cycle to school on a regular basis.

Helen Thomas, Active Travel Lead, said: *“At the beginning just over half (58%) of the children actively travelled to school but now it’s 90% of pupils”*. It means that almost one third of the pupils (31%) have changed how they travel to school since 2018.

This was achieved by engaging parents and pupils from nursery to year six, introducing cycle clubs, training sessions, and events like ‘Bling Your Ride’ and ‘Spring Bling’. A standout change involved the introduction of the WOW Tracker programme, which incentivises active travel by rewarding students with badges for regularly walking, wheeling or cycling to school. This was backed up by involving parents through newsletters and social media updates, with maps, event details, competitions, and student achievements. After-school sessions, where all family members could have their bicycles serviced and repaired for free on site, also proved useful.

Helen Thomas continued: *“When pupils first start, we try to encourage them to travel actively one or two days a week and work up to everyday. The school has given lots of information to parents and guardians to help them with this.”*

Source: *Nation Cymru* (June 2024)







# Everyday Active Travel

Key commitments from the Active Travel Delivery Plan in promoting everyday active travel include:

- supporting workplace travel initiatives to encourage sustainable commuting and work-related journeys
- improving access to cycles for a range of needs, including cycle loans, cycle hire schemes, and supporting access to lower cost second hand cycles
- working with Transport for Wales and local authorities to secure cycle parking storage units for residents.

We will become an active travel nation when everyone who wants to walk, wheel or cycle can do so confidently and safely. This means breaking down the barriers that deter people from travelling actively.

## Safer Roads

A key concern for many people is road safety, specifically where pedestrians, cyclists and cars mix.

In September 2023, we were pleased to see Welsh Government's introduction of the statutory speed limit on Welsh restricted roads - from 30mph to 20mph - on those roads with streetlights no more than 200 yards apart.

A scheme that might be seen as polarising, it has attracted the biggest petition in Senedd history, but preliminary results demonstrate a clear impact in creating a safer Active Travel Network for Wales. The campaign has also won several awards including the SABRE EMEA UK (Large) Campaign of the Year, EMEA Behavioural Science Award, CIPR Excellence Travel, Transport or Tourism Award, and PRCA Dare Data and Analytics Award and Public Sector Campaign Award.





**50%**

**Lower speeds**

Since the restrictions, over half of drivers in Wales have cut their speed according to a Transport for Wales (TfW) report, with the average speed down 4.3mph.



**17%**

**Fewer injuries & fatalities**

17% drop in serious road casualties at 20mph and 30mph between October 23 and March 24, compared to the same six months in 2022-23.



**20%**

**Fewer accidents**

20% drop in vehicle damage claims according to one leading insurance company, which said the 20mph restrictions were "clearly having an impact".



**NHS savings**

£3.7m in potential NHS savings according to LTT (Local Transport Today) calculations.

## Active Travel to Work

Walking and cycling produce zero emissions and are the least expensive way to get to work. Yet, after 10 years of investment in Wales, there is no evidence to suggest any significant increase in either, with numbers lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Some of the lower numbers can be attributed to the fact that, according to the 2021 Census, over a quarter of us now mainly work from home, compared to just over 5% at the 2011 Census. However, it remains that 56.5% of the Welsh workforce travel to work by car, compared with 44.5% in England.

We need to incentivise more active travel employers, and showcase the benefits that it brings, like Wales TUC who published in October 2023 a useful and comprehensive guide for workplace active travel promotion by board member Chris Roberts.

An exemplar active travel employer – recognised by Cycling UK as a cycle friendly employer – is Swansea University, which both consults and monitors its impact. Key investments include cycle safe pathways, storage and changing facilities, eight public workstations across its two campuses that offer access to free tools like bike pumps for students and the local community.

*"The storage and changing facilities have been a game changer; with free bike registration through Bike Register provided free on campus along with free lights and locks for all student cyclists you feel more confident to park your bike on campus."*

*Samuel Ross,  
Swansea University student,  
as reported in the local press*





Image of The Bike Lock's storage facilities.

Its flagship bike hire scheme, which now includes 70 e-bikes, has seen one sixth (14%) of daily commuter journeys now made by bike by students and staff. Since launching in July 2018, annual subscriptions have increased almost 300%, with annual journeys increasing from 16,000 to over 45,000.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, Nextbike, who operate the Swansea Santander Cycle Scheme, were forced to close a similar scheme in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan in January 2024, due to high levels of theft and vandalism. This is disappointing given it was the company's most successful UK scheme in terms of usage, logging two million rentals. We are glad to see that Cardiff Council are working on a new, updated scheme.

## Cycle Parking and Storage

One of the most important considerations for people thinking about cycling to work is the availability of secure, weatherproof parking for their bike, such as cycle hangars, many of which can store up to six bikes in the space ordinarily taken by one car.

We have identified local authority concerns that, in relation to the amount of cycle storage needed, planning guidance and Active Travel Act Guidance are not aligned sufficiently.

On the back of the Burns Commission, which was set up to address congestion and transport issues in south east Wales, particularly around the M4 corridor, The Burns Delivery Unit, established by the Welsh Government and resourced by TfW, provided grants to Cardiff and Newport local authorities to fund secure cycle storage.

These were awarded to The Bike Lock, in Cardiff with space for approximately 50 bicycles, and Spokesafe in Newport, in partnership with The Gap Wales, offering Wales' first 24/7 secure storage facility, with space for 38 bicycles.

The former, which was awarded Social Enterprise of the Year for Wales in 2023, has seen local businesses sign up as corporate members, as well as 30 individual members. With event space also on site, there is a full active travel package on offer, meaning people can cycle to their meeting, knowing their bike will be stored safely ready for their onward journey.

The latter, since opening in November 2022, has facilitated over 12,000 cycle journeys, with a significant spike in e-bike purchases owing to the availability of secure storage. Over half of users, when surveyed, said that they would



not have gone into the city centre without the hub (mostly due to bike theft), and an impressive 76% said they were now cycling into town more frequently. Interestingly, a quarter of users are women, all of whom report feeling safer as a result of the hub.

These are encouraging outcomes, demonstrating the usefulness of such facilities to increase the rate of cycling among current cyclists but also in fostering confidence among new cyclists.

## E-bikes are a modal shift game changer

For those who are not currently physically active, e-bikes are proving a game-changer in Wales, increasing access to green spaces while tackling poor public transport links and transport poverty.

Two successful schemes, funded by Welsh Government since 2021, are E-Move operated by Sustrans Cymru and Pedal Power's 'See Cycling Differently'. Both received repeat funding in 2023/24, which will inform future interventions.

Sustrans Cymru offered a free range of battery assisted e-bikes, including e-cargo bikes, on medium-term loan, in Rhyl, Swansea, Newtown (with links to Aberystwyth) and Barry. Over the three years, 708 e-cycle loans were made to 652 beneficiaries, saving 1,504kg of carbon dioxide emissions, with average beneficiaries reporting 65% fewer trips as car drivers and 39% fewer trips as car passengers, with 7% more trips made via an active travel mode.

Pedal Power experienced similar success, broadening the fleet available to older and disabled cyclists to include adaptive e-bikes like an e-hand trike, and free e-cycle tasters.

Sally Pierse, owner of Aberystwyth-based The Chai Bike, set up her business after borrowing an e-cargo cycle through Sustrans' E-Move project. She said: *"In today's climate crisis, we really need to be thinking about innovative ways of working and having an electric bike is such a simple way of having a business that's so sustainable. I'm trying to create links with community organisations - that's the idea behind it and that's how I'm trying to use my bike."*



Owner of The Chai Bike  
Sally Pierse, pictured  
on Aberystwyth prom

# Communications and Behaviour Change

Key commitments from the Active Travel Delivery Plan in motivating and encouraging greater uptake of active travel, include:

- further developing its Climate Action Wales communications campaign
- supporting local authorities via a Transport for Wales (TfW) promotional toolkit and DataMapWales
- providing active travel training for all ages, including through TfW's Academi Teithio Llesol
- developing a national monitoring and evaluation framework by TfW
- establishing pathfinder schemes through collaboration.

Welsh Government is looking to increase how many of us travel sustainably from an estimated 32% currently to 45% by 2040, which is why modal shift is at the very heart of the Llwybr Newydd transport strategy.

In this regard, we were delighted to be given access to the vital report by Board member, Professor Alan Tapp and his colleague Professor Adrian Davis, currently unpublished: 'Mode Shift from Car Use to Active Travel for Short Trips: How to Create Effective Behaviour Change in Wales. Report for Transport, Strategy and Policy, Welsh Government'.

It offers invaluable recommendations on how to deliver the ambitions of Welsh Government, and the Board agrees wholeheartedly that Wales needs multi-component packaged programmes rather than interventions done in isolation, like cycle training or active travel mapping. Effective mode shift requires a holistic approach addressing all behavioural factors simultaneously, making active travel easy, convenient, and safe. Hard measures, like congestion charging, can reduce car use even as stand-alone interventions but they

are more effective when combined with other policy measures.

Both incentives ("carrots") and deterrents ("sticks") are needed for significant mode shifts. We need to see evidence across Wales that rebalances the benefits of active travel versus car use to make active travel the preferred choice. While local measures promoting active travel have value, they won't significantly shift behaviour without accompanying deterrents like parking restrictions or low traffic neighbourhoods. Implementing these "stick" measures is challenging due to public resistance, requiring strategic, incremental approaches and thorough public engagement.

This suggests the need for a more comprehensive approach than what is in place currently.

In Cardiff alone, 63.7m journeys of up to three miles are estimated to be driven each year.

[\*Walking and Cycling Index 2023\*](#)

Climate Action Wales is the Welsh Government's public facing campaign focused on engaging people in action necessary to tackle climate change.

In September 2023, it launched a national local advertising campaign to build knowledge of climate behaviours, including travel. It does this through powerful storytelling, using active travel case studies like Pedal Power, Swansea University's bike hire scheme and Fflecsi bus in Blaenau Gwent. Active travel behaviours feature in the national campaign across TV, radio, out of home, digital and social channels.

This campaign is based on research to help understand the attitudes, barriers and motivations to action on climate change from the Net Zero Wales Plan, conducted in autumn 2022.

It revealed that most people recognise the benefits of active travel, such as walking and cycling, but various barriers often exist for them to change their behaviour, including perception that their typical journey is too long to walk or cycle (selected by one in three people), it is inconvenient or they do not own a bike.

The campaign messages are therefore rooted in what people are currently ready to hear about climate change actions. They are then split into 'asks' and 'warm ups' based on people's readiness to act, like driving less and cycling more to switching to an electric vehicle and flying less.

Arguably, the behaviour change sought from the 'Green Travel Choices' element of the campaign may lack the ambition needed to deliver the modal shift targets set out by Welsh Government.

TfW also worked behind the scenes to develop a promotional toolkit for use by local authorities (LAs) to help encourage behaviour change, which was published in July 2024. This involved significant collaborative efforts by WLGA and Sustrans also.





## Accurate Mapping

Active Travel Network maps were last published in January 2023. We note the publication of the [Regional Transport Planning Guidance](#), to help ensure we have an accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system.

Some concerns have been expressed to us that there are insufficient staff numbers at DataMapWales to accommodate LAs' annual mapping reports that update the maps.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

It is not possible to directly compare active travel rates between when the Active Travel Act was passed (in 2013) and now, as data collection methods and sample sizes have changed. Current data collation is often inconsistent and not generalisable (not applicable beyond the specific environment in which the intervention took place).<sup>13</sup>

There are real concerns around the paucity of data and monitoring systems. For this annual report alone, data from LAs regarding 2022/2023 projects proved inconsistent with 2023/2024 project data not finalised.

Welsh Government has finally agreed to develop a stand-alone National Travel Survey, to better understand active travel behaviour, such as people's post-pandemic travel patterns or how frequently people walk or cycle compared with other forms of transport. This is welcome, though a long time coming. Wales has been without a survey since 2012, with Welsh Government promising its development since 2019.

We also note pedestrian and cycle counters being installed by some LAs with TfW developing guidance and delivering training on monitoring and evaluation to increase the consistency of data collection. TfW has also been working with Welsh Government to produce a National Active Travel Monitoring Framework due to be published in 2024/25.

There are also further efforts to improve data collation, funded by the Wales Innovation Centre. The [Wales Active Travel ReseArch Consortium \(ATLAS\)](#) is a partnership developing research across six universities that would offer evidence-based modal shift to active travel in Wales.





## Wales Climate Week

Wales Climate Week is held in November and complements the public-facing engagement behaviour change programme, Climate Action Wales. It serves as a platform for discussions and collaborations across various sectors, including public bodies, businesses, environmental organisations, and community groups. Both are interconnected components of Wales' broader strategy to combat climate change and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Wales Climate Week 2023 included a virtual conference over five days between 4-8 December to coincide with COP28. Over 4,400 viewers watched the 28 sessions, hosted by 30 chairs and 95 speakers, all charged with exploring the question: "How do we tackle climate change in a fair way?" – with a range of sessions featuring different active travel projects and schemes across Wales.

The week coincided with the publication of a Welsh Government consultation on a new 'Just Transition Framework' and examined the disproportionate impacts of climate change on different people, groups and places, and explored how we can ensure that benefits associated with climate policies, including active travel, are distributed fairly across society.

# Our Active Travel Board

**In 2023 the Active Travel Board was reformed to provide independent challenge and scrutiny to Welsh Government and all those bodies delivering active travel in Wales. This reform was in direct response to a recommendation from the Cross-Party Group on Active Travel.**

The core of the independent Board is the Chair (Dr Dafydd Trystan) and between six and eight independent members. Following a wide-ranging recruitment exercise the following were appointed:

- Gwenda Owen
- Shayoni Lynn
- Richard Brunstrom
- Roisin Willmott
- Rhiannon Letman-Wade (Deputy Chair)
- Kirsty James
- Alan Tapp
- Chris Roberts (nominee of the Cross-Party Group on Active Travel).

Local Authorities as key delivery partners are represented on the Board on a regional basis:

- Merthyr Tydfil CBC (Alun Evans)
- Isle of Anglesey County Council (Huw Percy)
- Flintshire County Council (Richard Flood)
- Neath Port Talbot Council (David Griffiths)
- City and County of Swansea (Stuart Davies)
- Ceredigion County Council (Ann Elias)

along with a nominated representative from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) (Kaarina Ruta).

Three representatives are appointed to the Board from key delivery partners – Transport for Wales (Geoff Ogden and Matthew Gilbert); Public Health Wales (Julie Bishop and Paul Pilkington); and Transform Cymru, with Sustrans Cymru (Christine Boston) and Living Streets Cymru (Ruth Billingham) sharing that role, on behalf of the Third Sector.

During 2023/24 the Secretariat for the Board was provided by the Design Commission for Wales.

The Board met six times during 2023/24 and scrutinised the:

- Welsh Government (Active Travel Delivery Plan; Active Travel Maps and processes)
- Transport for Wales (Active Travel Fund)
- Public Health Wales (Active Travel to Schools)
- Sustrans Cymru (its publicly funded work).



These sessions were an opportunity to have a frank discussion, including robust assessment of the clarity and relevance of submitted materials, the effectiveness of expenditure and the specificity of performance targets. For example, Welsh Government were asked to better explain their definition of a 'trusted partner', provide detailed information on the grant decision methodology and be more accountable and transparent in their own evaluation processes. Following each scrutiny session, where applicable, advice was offered to organisations, which was published together with any response.

The Board also held discursive sessions on the TfW Prioritisation Tool; the leadership and capabilities of local authorities in Wales; and the work of the police on supporting active travel, antisocial behaviour and bike theft. The latter led to a formal invitation by Welsh Government for the Board to input into a new Road Safety Strategy consultation.

The Active Travel to Schools (ATS) Subgroup met regularly during the year under the Co-Chairship of Rhiannon Letman-Wade and

Chris Roberts. Having reviewed the barriers and challenges to active travel to schools throughout 2023/24, the Group resolved to identify a fresh approach and better co-ordination to promote ATS in a brand-new strategy, to be published in 2024/25.

The Board also agreed to a programme of visits to local authorities, the first such visit was undertaken to Saundersfoot in Pembrokeshire to discuss active travel plans around the town and the challenges facing Pembrokeshire County Council in dealing with landslips on the route from the town along the coast.

The Board also resolved to restore the Inclusive Active Travel Subgroup during 2024/25, owing to Sustrans' previous work on barriers and in keeping with National Equality Objectives 2024-2028. Unfortunately, the group was unable to meet in 2023/24 due to the lack of available secretariat support.

For more information about the work of the Board, please [visit its page](#) on the Welsh Government website.



*Board members:  
Matthew Gilbert (TfW); Paul Pilkington (PHW); Rhiannon Letman-Wade (Deputy Chair); Shayoni Lynn (Independent); Tom Wharf (TfW); Dr Dafydd Trystan (Chair); Chris Roberts (Independent); Gwenda Owen (Independent); Patrick Williams (Sustrans Cymru); and Roisin Willmott (Independent).*

## Meetings

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21 March 2024

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8 February 2024

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17 November 2023

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21 September 2023

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27 July 2023

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26 May 2023

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# Recommendations

There are pockets of good practice and success stories throughout 2023-24, and this report seeks to demonstrate what is working well and how we can all replicate good active travel interventions across Wales.

However, we are concerned that overall levels of active travel are not increasing. With adequate investment in place, we make a number of specific recommendations to take stock, as a nation, and change, where appropriate, what we're doing with the funding provided.

## Recommendations

### 1. C-SMART Objective Setting

All organisations in receipt of Welsh Government funds must be incentivised to shift away from input driven projects, refocusing each intervention on the outcomes it wishes to achieve, developing an impact report on progress against its C-SMART objectives (Specific • Measurable • Action Oriented • Realistic • Timely/ Tangible • Challenging). This requires data on modal shift, the number of kilometres in brand-new or improved infrastructure, so as to allow for meaningful evaluation that will determine the interventions that best deliver increased levels of active travel. All funding should include resources for monitoring.

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### 2. Radically improving data collation and research

Wales must radically improve its data collation and research so that reliable, granular data can be gathered, including qualitative information that demonstrates real-life benefits. Behavioural science should be embedded across all research and interventions, developing experimentation and insights that could contribute towards better targeting of interventions that would complement the work of others.

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### 3. Overcoming capacity issues

Across Wales, there are training and skills shortages in active travel promotion and delivery at local authority level, which are proving a key constraint in meaningful progress. A skills development plan is urgently needed to address gaps, led by centralised expertise on active travel, which can provide evidence-based support and training to deliver successful mode shift. The recent extension of the three yearly cycles to five years for Active Travel Network Map reviews should be made permanent.

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#### **4. Reimagining active travel funding**

While we have substantially increased funding in Wales for active travel, our distribution model needs to be redesigned, as we are not seeing an impact match with the funds provided. While continuing to invest in active travel projects in local authorities across the country, we call for a significant portion to be concentrated in one or two trial towns, or areas within cities, based on a tender process that would complete the active travel network in the area, including full integration with health and education services, and combining infrastructure investment with behaviour change and promotional activities.

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#### **5. Prioritising active travel and reducing car use**

With almost 20% of households in Wales with no access to a car, and active travel shown to boost local retail spend by 30%, the nation must lead by example and prioritise transport investment in increasing walking, wheeling and cycling for everyday short journeys. Prioritising pedestrians and cyclists in transport design, increasing the safety of pedestrians with, for example, side-road zebras, will reduce private car use and help create a truly integrated and affordable transport system across Wales.

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#### **6. Creating a supportive environment where more children can walk, wheel and cycle to school**

The Welsh Government should take a more integrated approach to supporting schools and local authorities in promoting and enabling active travel to schools, providing a 'one stop shop' where school communities can access interventions tailored to meet the specific needs of their local community.

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#### **7. Overhauling data collation in schools**

Data collation in schools must be overhauled to be cohesive and consistent, with key organisations, including local authorities, Healthy Schools and Eco Schools, to take action to increase schools' participation in the national Travel to School Hands Up Survey. This should be complemented by ESTYN extending their assessments to include active travel data.

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#### **8. Mainstreaming a cross-government and cross-sector approach**

Active travel should be promoted by Welsh Government across all of its departments and to private, public and third sectors in order to support local authorities' effective delivery. Additionally, local authorities should ensure active travel schemes meet community needs through early and comprehensive face-to-face consultation with residents, fostering greater community involvement and engagement for the success of their projects.

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#### **9. Secured by design guidance**

We need to embed place making at the heart of our design guidance for communities and the guidance aimed at increasing the security of properties should take full account of the benefits to communities of increasing active travel and ensure that its provisions do not hamper walking, wheeling and cycling for everyday journeys.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> [Helping people through the cost-of-living crisis and growing our economy: the role of walking, wheeling and cycling](#), Sustrans (2022).
- <sup>2</sup> [Active Travel Act Guidance](#), July 2021, Welsh Government (2021) Page 28.
- <sup>3</sup> England figure supplied by the Department for Transport; [source here for London figure](#); and [source here for Scotland figure](#), though Transport for Scotland announced in 2022 a funding uplift resulting in an allocation of [£58 per head](#).
- <sup>4</sup> [A mixed bag of national cycling strategies in the UK](#), B Schusta, European Cyclists' Federation (19 July 2023)
- <sup>5</sup> [New 8km stretch of A465 Heads of the Valleys road is £100m over budget and three years late](#), A Lewis & M Shipton, Wales Online (20 February 2020).
- <sup>6</sup> ['Sustainable Ways' report by the Welsh Youth Parliament's Climate and Environment Committee](#) in October 2023.
- <sup>7</sup> All figures provided by Welsh Government.
- <sup>8</sup> [Cycling and walking routes: Some councils 'not interested' in cash](#), D Deans, BBC Wales Online (13 May 2022).
- <sup>9</sup> Page N., Angel, L., Ogada, E., Young H., Murphy S. (2023) Student Health and Wellbeing in Wales: Report of the 2021/22 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey and School Health Research Network Student Health and Wellbeing Survey; Cardiff University pp.62-64.
- <sup>10</sup> All figures provided by Welsh Government.
- <sup>11</sup> All figures provided by Welsh Government.
- <sup>12</sup> [Swansea University's bike hire scheme sees a near 300% increase in users](#), Swansea Bay News (18 May 2024).
- <sup>13</sup> See 'Interventions to increase Active Travel', Public Health Wales.

## Images

All images taken from Transport for Wales Promotional Toolkit, with the exception of images supplied by:

Active Travel Board, pages 2 & 33

Sustrans Cymru, pages 20 & 21

The Bike Lock, page 26

The Chai Bike,  
Anthony Pugh Photography, page 27

Welsh Government, pages 17, 22 & 23



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