

Active Travel in Wales

December 2025



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Welsh Parliament

Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

Active Travel in Wales

December 2025



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About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddPAPA

Current Committee membership:



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Welsh Conservatives



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The following Member attended as a substitute during this inquiry.



Heledd Fychan MS
Plaid Cymru

The following Member was also a member of the Committee during this inquiry.



Natasha Asghar MS
Welsh Conservatives

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Chair's foreword

Active travel is a cornerstone of the Welsh Government's ambition to create a healthier, more sustainable Wales. Walking, wheeling, and cycling are not only environmentally responsible modes of transport; they are integral to improving public health, reducing congestion, and supporting vibrant local communities. More than a decade has passed since the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 was enacted, and while progress has been made, the pace of change has not matched the scale of the Welsh Government's aspirations.

Our inquiry drew upon the findings of the Auditor General for Wales, the work of the Active Travel Board, and the evidence presented to this Committee by a range of stakeholders. While we considered the successes that have been achieved, such as increased investment and improved infrastructure, we also noted the significant challenges that remain, including capacity constraints, the need for robust data to support effective decision making and accountability, and the importance of cultural and behavioural change. It's clear that the pace of change to date has been insufficient to meet the Welsh Government's goals.

Our visit to Slovenia provided valuable lessons on how integrated planning, strong leadership, and community engagement can accelerate progress. These insights inform our recommendations, which call for clearer national direction, multi-year funding settlements, and a renewed focus on inclusivity and behaviour change. We also emphasise the need for collaboration across all levels of government and with delivery partners, particularly communities, to ensure that active travel becomes a practical and attractive choice for all.

By transitioning to a regional approach to delivering active travel, we believe that local voices and decision-making, supported by national expertise where necessary, can be more effective in delivering change. Although this will help to mitigate some of the capacity issues faced by smaller local authorities, it is crucial these regional bodies are supported through multi-year funding settlements, with a balance between revenue and capital funding that will allow for projects large and small to be delivered as effectively as possible and for behaviour change projects to be delivered locally, as well as nationally. The role of Transport for Wales will be crucial in ensuring this is a success.

Crucially, the Committee heard compelling evidence about the barriers faced by vulnerable travellers, including disabled people and older citizens, who often encounter inaccessible routes and inadequate consultation during scheme design. If active travel is to be truly inclusive, these voices must be embedded at

the heart of planning and delivery. Our recommendations call for stronger design guidance, more meaningful engagement, and a commitment to retrofitting existing routes where necessary.

The task ahead is considerable, but with sustained commitment by the Welsh Government and partnership working, Wales can achieve its vision of becoming an active travel nation that works for everyone.

Mark Isherwood MS,

Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

Recommendations and conclusions

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government should share the outcome of its review into the operations of the Active Travel Board once it's completed with our successor Committee..... Page 44

Recommendation 2. The funding allocated through Regional Transport Plans should prioritise multi-year settlements, to provide certainty for delivery partners, with a more effective blend of capital and revenue funding. Page 57

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government and Transport for Wales should work with local authorities and/or the Corporate Joint Committees, as appropriate, to ensure that the refresh of the active travel network maps consider and identify opportunities for any smaller schemes that could help address local network gaps, that could have a considerable impact on the success of existing schemes. This should include reflecting on where routes can be made more inclusive retrospectively. Page 72

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should lead a national behaviour change programme, designed in partnership with stakeholders and delivery partners, which involves a cross-departmental approach to maximise its effectiveness. If possible, the programme should include professional support as part of the design process from experts in the field of behaviour change. Page 73

Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government should share the outcome of any review into the Newtown demonstrator town pilot with the Committee (or its successor), once it is available. Page 74

Recommendation 6. Transport for Wales should share the outcome of their review into route design guidance. Any future design guidance should ensure that a more robust approach is taken to addressing issues faced by vulnerable individuals during the design process. Transport for Wales should also reflect on their guidance around consultation with the public and should consider a wider range of approaches, in addition to more traditional methods, to access cohorts of the public that are not currently being consulted. Page 75

Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government should share the outcome of their post-implementation review of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 with the Committee at the earliest possible opportunity. Page 85

Conclusion 1. The Welsh Government must ensure that future funding allocations for transport sufficiently prioritise Active Travel, to address stakeholder concerns about the priority that will be given to active travel funding in the future.

.....Page 57

Conclusion 2. In the event that the demonstrator town pilot in Newtown is evaluated to be a success, consideration should be given to expanding the approach to all regions, to help Corporate Joint Committees discharge their functions effectively, trial new approaches and gather data on what works in their area.....Page 74

Conclusion 3. It's vitally important that long-term funding for the new National Travel Survey is protected for the long-term, to allow for meaningful comparison of active travel data in the future.Page 85

1. Introduction

1. On 19 September 2024, the Auditor General for Wales published a report on Active Travel in Wales¹, alongside a data tool² providing further information about active travel routes, national active travel rates from the National Survey for Wales, and local authority expenditure from the Active Travel Fund.

2. The Auditor General's report focussed on:

“... national level arrangements led and/or managed by the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales. We have not examined interventions by individual local authorities, although we recognise their important front-line role and reflect certain evidence about issues at a local level. Nor have we considered the part that wider public, private and third sector organisations can play to promote active travel as employers or otherwise in, for example, the case of the NHS”³.

3. The Welsh Government's Active Travel Board published its first annual report, for 2023-24, at the end of August 2024⁴. The Active Travel Board is independent of the Welsh Government and, in its own words, 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”⁵.

4. The Active Travel Board's report presents a similar picture to the Auditor General's report, with the foreword to the report stating:

“Our report presents a mixed picture. We report on significant progress in terms of investment in active travel infrastructure and support for

¹ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024

² Audit Wales, [Active Travel: Data Tool](#), September 2024

³ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 6

⁴ Active Travel Board, [Active Travel in Wales Annual Report 2023-24](#), 30 August 2024

⁵ Active Travel Board, [Active Travel in Wales Annual Report 2023-24](#), 30 August 2024, page 4

*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”⁶.

5. The Board’s report assesses that, at the current rate of progress, it would take almost 50 years, until 2073, to complete all of the routes currently mapped as potential future routes in their active travel network maps, concluding that the Welsh Government will need to demonstrate “the stamina and commitment to get the job done”⁷.

6. The Active Travel Board’ report makes nine recommendations to the Welsh Government, albeit no response has been published (to our knowledge). The recommendations cover matters relating to:

- monitoring and evaluation;
- capacity issues in local authorities;
- reimagining active travel funding (calling for a significant portion to be concentrated in one or two trial towns or areas within cities to complete the active travel network in the area);
- prioritisation of pedestrians and cyclists in transport design;
- enabling active travel in schools; and

⁶ Active Travel Board, [Active Travel in Wales Annual Report 2023-24](#), 30 August 2024, page 3

⁷ Active Travel Board, [Active Travel in Wales Annual Report 2023-24](#), 30 August 2024, page 13

- collecting more cohesive and consistent data for those settings, mainstreaming a cross-government approach, and embedding place making at the heart of certain relevant guidance.

7. This Committee's report reflects on many of these themes.

What is Active Travel?

8. Essentially, Active Travel describes walking and cycling, possibly combined with public transport, for everyday journeys. This can include to or from a workplace or education setting, or to access leisure, health or any other services or facilities⁸.

9. This definition is defined by the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 ("the Act"), as well as its supporting guidance. This Act will be considered in further detail later in this report.

10. The Welsh Government is responsible for active travel policy, with delivery responsibilities also resting with Transport for Wales (TfW), local authorities and the third sector, including Sustrans⁹¹⁰.

11. Active travel for these purposes are differentiated from walking or cycling solely for leisure, with active travel also including journeys by foot, wheelchair, pedal cycles, and adapted cycles.

12. Various organisations are involved in the core delivery arrangements. Ultimately though, it is the Welsh Government that introduced the Act and leads on policy and funding.

13. The Welsh Government is increasingly looking to TfW to take a lead, including by managing the Active Travel Fund on its behalf. Wider public, private and third sector organisations can also play a role to promote active travel.

The Act, other initiatives and scrutiny to date

14. The Act was introduced in 2013 with the aim of increasing participation in active travel. It sets key duties for Welsh Government Ministers and Local Authorities, which are summarised in Appendix 2 of the Auditor General for Wales'

⁸ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 5

⁹ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 5

¹⁰ Sustrans has rebranded as Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, however for ease of reference the name of the organisation at the time of evidence-gathering is used in this report.

report¹¹. There are also additional active travel duties set out in the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024 in relation to air pollution.

15. The Senedd's (then) Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee conducted post-legislative scrutiny of the Act in June 2018, with their report concluding:

“... the desire to deliver step change in this area has not diminished, but a lack of leadership, funding and ambition have contributed to the poor outcome to date. This has been compounded by a skills gaps and a so far missed opportunity to foster culture and behavioural change.

The Act was never going to change Wales overnight, but there are lessons to be learnt about delivery to date”¹².

16. As part of their strategy for the future of transport in Wales, the Welsh Government launched the Llwybr Newydd transport strategy in 2021¹³, which described pursuing a “modal shift” towards active travel and more sustainable transport more generally as being “at the heart of Llwybr Newydd”¹⁴.

17. The strategy set targets for the use of public transport, walking and cycling, set at 45% of journeys by 2040, an increase of 13 percentage points based on the estimated levels in 2021¹⁵.

18. A report¹⁶ from the Senedd's Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act in June 2022 concluded:

“The Active Travel Act has so much to offer Wales as a nation, and the individual citizens of Wales. But we have not realised its full potential. Far from it”.

¹¹ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 52

¹² Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee, [Post Legislative Scrutiny of the Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013](#), June 2018

¹³ Welsh Government, [Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#), March 2021

¹⁴ Welsh Government, [Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#), March 2021, page 48

¹⁵ Welsh Government, [Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#), March 2021, page 48

¹⁶ Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act, [Review of the Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013](#), June 2022

- 19.** It went on to say:

"Unfortunately, these ambitions have yet to be realised. Levels of active travel are at best static. Active travel is still not seen as an integral component of our transport system, just something that is 'nice to have', promoted by advocates but overlooked by the mainstream".

Auditor General's overall conclusions

- 20.** The Auditor General's report concluded:

"Despite increased spending through its Active Travel Fund and a new, wide-ranging, delivery plan, the Welsh Government remains a long way from achieving the step change in active travel intended through the Act. And approaches to monitoring and evaluation do not currently go far enough to enable robust tracking of progress or an overall assessment of value for money"¹⁷.

- 21.** In commenting on the report, the Auditor General stated:

"The Welsh Government needs to reflect on why, in over a decade, the Active Travel (Wales) Act and the arrangements to support delivery have not yet had the desired impact. Various factors influence active travel behaviour across a range of policy areas.

The importance of being able to put value for money to the test through strengthened monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, reflects a recurring theme from my wider audit work. Without better supporting evidence, the risk is that doing more of the same, including in how funding is prioritised, may simply produce the same results"¹⁸.

- 22.** The Auditor General's report made 10 recommendations, directed either to the Welsh Government, TfW or both¹⁹. The recommendations will be considered in further detail in the relevant sections later in this report.

¹⁷ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 6

¹⁸ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 9

¹⁹ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, pages 11-13

Welsh Government response

- 23.** The Welsh Government accepted all of the Auditor General's recommendations²⁰. The response reflected on progress since the Act, explaining:

"We began this journey from a standing start and the early years after the making of the Act were focused on creating the foundations for the improvements we need to see. Since 2018 Welsh Ministers have stepped up investment in infrastructure and your report highlights that we have invested £218 million through the Active Travel Fund in local authority-led schemes across Wales. Whilst this is a significant level of funding that we are proud of, it means that the Welsh Government has so far invested just under £70 per person over the six-year period of the fund. Connecting the limited patchwork of existing infrastructure into a coherent network that serves people's travel needs takes time and it would be unrealistic to expect this level of funding to have already resulted in far-reaching transformation of travel choices".

- 24.** The response describes efforts in recent years to "strengthen the approach to delivery of active travel schemes and interventions at the national and the local level", through building in-house resource and expertise within TfW. In turn, they note that they are now providing support for local authorities and Corporate Joint Committees, explaining their support "ranges from detailed advice on schemes throughout their development stages, to the development of an evidence-based prioritisation tool, the roll-out of training programmes and the development of a promotional toolkit".

- 25.** On the subject of data collection, the response explains:

"We recognise that the lack of data affects not just our ability to measure the impact of our active travel policy, but of our transport policy and programmes generally. To address this, we have been working on the development of a National Travel Survey for a number of years, and are currently running the second pilot survey. Data from the new survey will be a key building block in our monitoring of active travel as well as other modes. Our National Monitoring Framework for

²⁰ Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales, 7 November 2024

active travel will draw on this and a wide range of other data sources, and be complemented by efforts to ensure monitoring at the local level becomes more consistent".

26. The Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport ("the Director General") explains that the recommendations made will be progressed alongside the actions outlined in the Welsh Government's Active Travel Delivery Plan, published in March 2024²¹.

27. Again, the Welsh Government's responses to individual recommendations will be considered in further detail in the relevant sections of this report.

²¹ Welsh Government, [Active travel delivery plan 2024 to 2027](#), 14 March 2024

2. Visit to Slovenia

28. The Committee agreed to undertake a visit to another country, to better understand their approach to active travel measures and to understand the benefits and disadvantages of their approach. Following consultation with witnesses who had appeared before the Committee, it was agreed that the Committee would visit Ljubljana in Slovenia for this purpose.

29. Slovenia was considered to be appropriate because of its similar population size to Wales, similar GDP per capita, as well as its mixed topography. Furthermore, Ljubljana has taken radical measures to become one of Europe's most pedestrian and cyclist-friendly cities, with car traffic restricted in the city centre, extensive cycling infrastructure developed and several public bicycle-sharing schemes put in place. These initiatives formed part of the city authorities' Vision of Ljubljana 2025 plan²², meaning that the Committee's visit was especially timely.

30. As part of the visit, the Committee wanted to better understand how initiatives were spearheaded at a national, regional and local level. Accordingly, the Committee's Chair met with representatives from the National Assembly of Slovenia's Committee on Infrastructure, Environment and Spatial Planning, the Regional Development Agency of the Ljubljana Urban Region, the Institute for Spatial Policy and with the Municipality of Kamnik on 8 May 2025.

National Assembly of Slovenia

31. We heard from the Chair of the Infrastructure, Environment and Spatial Planning Committee, Tomaž Lah MP, and another member of the Committee, Miha Lamut MP, along with officials. The politicians represent the Freedom Movement party, the ruling party in Slovenia.

32. The Committee heard that Active Travel had been promoted as a key goal for Slovenia, which were driven through by the aims and funding provided by the European Cohesion Programmes from 2014, with funding from European Structural and Investment Funds. This led to national legislation in 2022 that formally recognised the role of Active Travel, which mandated that all municipalities in Slovenia (of any size) must have strategies that include active

²² City of Ljubljana, [Vision of Ljubljana 2025](#)

travel projects at their heart. Often, these projects can be supported by national funding.

33. They explained that significant funding through European investment came in 2014-15, with approximately €160m (according to their research) being invested in national cycling infrastructure during this period. As of 2025, much of their investment in cycling paths has come to an end, albeit they have now more than doubled their investment at a national and local level, thanks to the investment through EU funds during the years since 2014.

34. Slovenia has established a new national cycling network and managing bodies to maintain them. They explained that the majority of the focus had been on putting in place infrastructure around schools, high-density areas and public transport hubs, for example, which served to link surrounding communities. Most of their cycling paths are ones that link cities and suburbs, separated mainly from the main road.

35. They went on to describe softer measures being adopted to increase participation, including national training programmes for transport professionals as well as national campaigns promoting things such as cycling to work or school. A prominent recent campaign had been the so called “less than 2” campaign, which sought to encourage Slovenians to consider active travel instead of the car when completing journeys of less than 2km.

36. They described spatial planning as also being a cornerstone philosophy in their approach, with significant investment in urban infrastructure, particularly in Ljubljana. This included initiatives to add floor marking to improve safety and accessibility, as well as to boost the attractiveness of walking in the city. They've also focussed on redirecting traffic away from pedestrian routes where possible.

37. When describing their Committee approach, they described their role as looking at policy approaches holistically, ensuring that Active Travel policy led to health, economic and environmental benefits.

38. The national direction is spearheaded by the Ministry for Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy, who they described as taking a holistic view on implementing active travel initiatives. There's a state public transport policy, national guidelines around walking and a forthcoming national cycling plan.

39. However, municipalities in Slovenia also have significant local autonomy to make decisions and develop policies too, with national oversight from the Ministry. The evidence from the Municipality of Kamnik is summarised below, however it's to be noted that there are 212 municipalities in Slovenia, with varying

resources at each of them. This figure has increased significantly from around 60 in 1990 to the present figure, which has been in place since 2011.

40. They also noted the advantage of being involved in two pan-nation European active travel networks, including EuroVelo and the Danube network.

Ljubljana Development Agency

41. The Regional Development Agency of Urban Area (“the Ljubljana Regional Development Agency”) is a development agency operating across the region of Ljubljana. The Committee met with the Deputy Directors for Development, Matej Gojčič and Liljana Drevenšek.

42. They are independent of government, though legislation (The Balanced Regional Development Act) has designated them as the development agency for their area, tasked with:

- Preparing, managing and consulting on projects;
- Preparing the Regional Development Programme;
- Developing agreements on the region’s development;
- Providing professional support to regional bodies;
- Implementing financial schemes to assist in implementation;
- Transferring knowledge between bodies;
- Promoting the region.

43. They operate in the inner city of Ljubljana but also beyond as part of their regional remit, with a mix of rural and urban areas. Of the area they are responsible for, 11.5% is urban, 58% forests, 24.5% farmland and 12.3% protected areas. The Ljubljana area is home to 26.4% of Slovenia’s entire population, along with 26.3% of all motor vehicles.

44. The Development Agency works with municipalities to develop Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans. The Slovenian Government has mandated the need for various plans at a national, regional and municipality-level, with the Agency responsible for the Ljubljana region’s plans. Increasing the amount of journeys undertaken by walking or cycling is a key element of these plans. Having these plans is a condition of accessing European funds and the Agency uses its expertise to support municipalities lacking the resources to develop their own.

45. They describe a collapse in the use of public transport since independence, with a major increase in car use as a result. The problems in Ljubljana are acute, with congestion prevalent.

46. They explained that the position with EU funding is likely to change in the coming years, with funding likely to decrease and national funding having to increase to meet the demand.

47. In Ljubljana, a Regional Development Council operates with 25 mayors from municipalities around the region as well as local NGOs and 25 economic representatives. They're also in the process of developing a Regional Mobility Centre, funded up to 2029 through European funding, with the intention of promoting the use of active mobility with municipalities.

48. We heard about the challenges faced by the municipalities in implementing active travel measures, with approximately 112 of the 212 municipalities having less than 5,000 residents. These smaller municipalities also face demographic challenges, which impede the ability to institute meaningful active travel reform.

49. In relation to involving stakeholders with disabilities in the design of active travel routes in their areas, they explain that the role isn't formal however there is engagement.

50. They explained that a key effort in mitigating congestion problems was a new Park and Ride initiative around Ljubljana, with 23 new locations around 16 municipalities. This initiative was partnered with new cycling lanes, to allow commuters to split their journey between cars and active travel, as well as public transport.

51. Other positive initiatives include their bicycles for hire scheme, *Bicikelj*, as well as the inner-city *Kavalir* electric car system which offers free journeys by car to those who need them, in the pedestrianised city centre. They have employed the same electric bicycle system as in Paris and, despite the difference in size between the two cities, there are more users of the system in Ljubljana. The scheme offers 30-minute rides for free, rising to 45 minutes if travelling from a neighbouring area. There is also a private e-bicycle service, *Nomago*, with the model to be expanded to a further 21 municipalities in the near future.

52. The most significant development in Ljubljana was the pedestrianisation of the city centre, which faced fierce initial opposition. The central 3 bridges were initially pedestrianised, with ongoing pedestrianisation ongoing to this day. Much of the city's traffic now utilises a ring road around the city, meaning that cars no longer transit through the city.

53. The Slovenian Government is now pressing ahead with its own integrated transport body, *DUJPP*, which will have significant power over public transport and active travel routes around the country. The establishment of this body is being funded by the national government through the national budget, revenue from additional fuel duty and an environmental fund collected from taxation on emissions.

54. In response to questions about behaviour change, they explained that the focus of their Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans is to provide incentives rather than framing things more negatively. Each document includes detailed action plans, setting out what needs to be done, the cost of doing it, how it's being funded as well as information about monitoring and reporting.

Municipality of Kamnik and the PopUp Urban Spaces initiative

55. The Committee met with the Mayor of Kamnik, Matej Slapar, along with officials from the Municipality's infrastructure division. They were joined by officials from the Institute of Spatial Policies, who have worked with the municipality as part of an initiative titled *PopUp Urban Spaces*, which aims to facilitate a "shift towards active forms of mobility by changing residents' attitude and travel behaviour through the use of green, low-cost tactical urbanism and placemaking solutions"²³.

56. Kamnik is one of the largest municipalities in the nation, with around 30,000 inhabitants making it the 15th largest in the country. It was previously a hub for many larger industries, but this has now largely ceased following independence. Its proximity to Ljubljana makes it an attractive commuting town, however it sits amongst extensive forests and mountains.

57. The municipality is responsible for managing local affairs and delivering services, including on active travel. The municipality's Spatial Planning and Environment agency works closely with the Ljubljana Regional Development Agency, however they are responsible for delivering the local interventions.

58. The municipality works closely to a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan of their own, which is due to be updated shortly to a second iteration. The city's river is a focal point of the plan, with bicycle paths and footpaths running alongside it creating a belt through the municipality, spanning both urban and rural areas. The Committee heard about some of the recent developments in the

²³ Institute for Spatial Policy, *Pop Up Urban Spaces – Facilitating shift towards active forms of mobility with the use of tactical urbanism*

municipality, including a new town square, an extensive cycle network along the river and an innovative bicycle hire scheme.

PopUp Urban Spaces and the Institute for Spatial Policy ('IPOP')

59. The municipality has partnered with a Slovenian NGO, IPOP, who are experts in sustainable mobility, placemaking and in improving access for pedestrians and cyclists. IPOP and the municipality have teamed up to develop the international PopUp Urban Spaces project, funded through European money.

60. IPOP were described as a “knowledge partner” in the project, offering know-how to smaller places to implement some of these interventions. They help to provide tool-kits for places, help them to scale up results and then mainstream the results as part of final conclusions.

61. The PopUp Urban Spaces project aims to develop multiple small local projects and changes, described as “tactical urbanism”, to facilitate a wider shift in behaviour. By adopting a philosophy titled *Open Streets*, they aim to employ short-term measures to test changes to roads to make them more walkable and accessible. The aim of this approach is to test out new layouts whilst minimising the risk of any local or political backlash.

62. IPOP have helped the municipality develop programmes and then help the municipality to co-finance them. Their projects include extensive local consultation, through debates, questionnaires and local engagement. They strive to do this through traditional as well as informal measures, including street meetings, to access as wide a range of stakeholder as possible. This engagement is designed to secure local support for plans and provide political cover for local politicians.

63. On engagement, they described efforts to speak to the “silent majority”, who tend to be more accepting of changes than a louder minority who are more likely to participate in more formal community debates or meetings. They have held informal local polls on proposed changes, with informal voting boxes at local events or community sites. They employ low cost advertising campaigns at a local level to encourage participation and to share key messages about using active travel instead of the car, emphasising that often the simplest measures can be the most effective.

64. They noted that even controversial issues can be overcome by communicating regularly and consistently, making the changes gradually and being willing to change approach in the event of significant genuine concerns.

65. One of the elements of the project is *School Street*, which hopes to limit the amount of school runs conducted in the municipality by motor vehicle. The project has piloted closing streets during the morning rush-hour, as well as redesigning roads to be more pedestrian friendly, with redesign costs limited to between €5,000 and €10,000. As part of this project, they strive to collect data to justify the changes they are making, with an increase of 19% in active travel to school during the life of the project.

66. They've described piloting changes to the road that have proven to be unsuccessful, with some abandoned due to a lack of local support. However, by keeping costs low and the changes initially temporary, this hasn't caused significant problems and has improved their approach.

67. Other interventions in Kamnik include the closure of streets in the town to form a temporary "local square" as part of a local festival. Because of the success of this temporary measure, this approach has now become permanent, creating a new square in place of a roundabout that sat in the centre of town. During the same festival, a pilot programme for bicycle rental was also found to be highly successful, which led to the permanent offering currently in place.

68. IPOP explained that their approach is to acknowledge that cars will still form a crucial part of any local travel plan, particularly in an area as rural as Kamnik. However, their approach is driven by how the two can co-exist effectively. When looking at the future, they considered that on-demand vehicle transport for those who require it would be highly important, along with car sharing schemes.

Our view

69. The visit proved to be highly valuable, with several lessons to be learned about Slovenia's approach at a national, regional and local level.

70. At a local level, it was heartening to see how effectively local authorities could work with experienced and specialist NGOs to provide additional expertise, particularly in areas where this is in short supply. The witnesses told the Committee that this was possible given the relative size of Slovenia and Kamnik's proximity to Ljubljana, with its concentration of national expertise and resources.

71. Whilst there may be challenges in some areas of Wales, we feel that it's certainly possible for this model to be taken forward in Wales. In Slovenia, we saw the benefits of local action blended with regional delivery bodies, alongside national expertise and support. Whilst there were challenges in Slovenia, this

future model for Wales, with the increasing role of TfW, could be highly beneficial given the significant capacity constraints at a local government level.

72. The Committee will reflect on these lessons from Slovenia at relevant sections of the report.

3. Strategy and leadership

Targets and strategies

73. The Auditor General's report highlighted two key Welsh Government targets, namely:

- 45% of journeys to be by public transport, walking and cycling by 2040;
- Increasing the trip mode share of active travel to 35% by 2040.

74. The first target comes from *Llwybr Newydd*²⁴, the Welsh Government's transport strategy, whilst the second was set out in 2021 as part of the Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2²⁵, for 2021-25. The latter target includes an interim target of 33% by 2030, from a 27% baseline.

75. In his report, the Auditor General concludes that these targets had been set without Wales specific data to establish the baseline position and that it was uncertain whether these were achievable targets, as a consequence²⁶. The Welsh Government has committed to developing new active travel related targets once it has a more robust baseline position from a new National Travel Survey²⁷. The Welsh Government's commitment on target setting forms a part of their new Active Travel Delivery Plan for 2024 to 2027²⁸ ("the Plan").

76. Recommendation 1 of the Auditor General's report said that the Welsh Government should articulate a set of long-term active travel indicators and targets, with delivery milestones. It also suggested that these should include coverage of wider outcomes than just active travel rates²⁹.

77. The Welsh Government's response accepted the recommendation and committed to action in this area, after the new National Travel Survey Data is available³⁰, and also notes that a working draft national monitoring framework has been put in place.

²⁴ Welsh Government, *Llwybr Newydd: the Wales transport strategy 2021*, March 2021

²⁵ Welsh Government, *Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021 to 2025)*, October 2021

²⁶ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 7

²⁷ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 15

²⁸ Welsh Government, *Active Travel Delivery Plan 2024 to 2027*, March 2024

²⁹ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 11

³⁰ Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales, 7 November 2024

78. The Auditor General's report described the Plan as "wide-ranging", noting that it reflected the conclusions of the Cross Party Group on Active Travel's conclusions in their 2022 report.

79. However, the Plan includes outstanding actions from the previous 2016 plan, including "actions around targets and monitoring and development of toolkits for active travel promotion and engagement"³¹. The Auditor General goes on to say:

"This raises questions over the pace of change to date. It is also difficult to determine what success would look like against some actions. The absence of milestones and measures of success makes it more difficult for the Welsh Government and other stakeholders to be held to account for progress".

80. He also states:

"The plan does not include information about the resources needed to support delivery. While these may be subject to change, the Welsh Government considers that the plan reflects what is affordable and achievable within current capacity and budget expectations. The plan recognises the importance of integration with wider policies and programmes and that more needs to be done in that regard. However, its main focus is on actions that will be taken by the Welsh Government's transport teams and Transport for Wales".

81. TfW were "heavily engaged in conversations with Welsh Government around the plan", explaining that they would "provide the technical expertise that feeds into that"³². Team members from TfW were involved in drafting the plan, in conjunction with the Welsh Government³³. On the issue of expertise and funding, the Chief Executive of TfW explained:

"I think we have the funding necessary and agreed, and we've been working very hard to try and build the expertise necessary to deliver in this space. One of the difficulties in building the expertise is that the expertise is actually quite thin on the ground in the UK because, traditionally, it's been an area of engineering and transport that has

³¹ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 16

³² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 35

³³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 37

*not attracted as many people as more traditional forms of transport planning and engineering, I think it's probably fair to say*³⁴.

82. When asked to reflect on engagement with stakeholders around the Active Travel Delivery Plan, the Deputy Chair of the Active Travel Board explained:

*... as a board, we would like it to go further, but we do think, initially, it is a good start in order to make sure that there is a strategy behind what we're looking to do in terms of active travel in Wales. We do discuss in meetings how the plan is being implemented and its success. We do know that, with the political will and the right amount of funding, active travel can go further in Wales*³⁵.

83. She went on to state that delivery of active travel initiatives needs to be on a cross-department basis:

*I think it's really important to make sure that we're not working in silos. Like we've said already, people are making journeys that could be multimodal, so it's not just about walking to the shop, it could be walking to school, or it could be getting on a train to get to work. It's about where we live, it's about the communities that we live in. So, it's not just about transport specifically, it's also about how do we work with planning more effectively, to ensure that cycling and walking routes are better within new developments. How do we work with education to ensure that we are making sure that routes to schools are better, or that there are better options?*³⁶.

84. The Active Travel Board is monitoring progress against the plan, with two sub-groups focussing on inclusivity and active travel to school specifically³⁷. Local authority representatives expressed support for the plan, with the representative from Cardiff Council stating:

I think it's focusing on many of the right things—training and development, support for monitoring—and it's making a definite attempt to try and link up policy areas, so active travel isn't just trying

³⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 36

³⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 41

³⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 43

³⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 45

*to work alone. It's not just a transport issue, it's being picked up by other policy areas: health, education et cetera*³⁸.

85. However, he went on to state that there were capacity issues which made delivering its aims difficult³⁹. The WLGA told the Committee that the plan's focus on linking to different transport modes was "key to making active travel work"⁴⁰.

86. In a written response to the Committee's consultation, Lee Waters MS (the former Deputy Minister for Climate Change) told the Committee that it was "not clear if the Welsh Government is still committed to implementing the active travel delivery plan", noting that it was not mentioned in the Cabinet Secretary's Written Statement on '*Promoting walking, wheeling and cycling*'⁴¹ and that there was no reference to it in the guidance for Corporate Joint Committees drafting Regional Transport Plans⁴².

87. When asked to evaluate the Welsh Government's progress to date against the delivery plan, the Director General used the phrase "useful progress", describing active travel as being a significant part of the *Llwybr Newydd* strategy, with the Cabinet Secretary treating active travel as a priority⁴³. He described the Welsh Government's actions during the initial period after the enactment of the Act as "establishing our understanding of the networks that operate", going on to say:

*"... it's fair to say that quite a lot of what was going on in respect of what we now think of as active travelling was single chunks of either road or path, but cycling or walking predominantly, but not so much about networks that connected people with work, with town centres, with schools or other significant places"*⁴⁴.

88. He describes progress on building and better understanding their data pool, on prioritisation of routes, on the promotion of active travel and in improving

³⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 34

³⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 34

⁴⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 40

⁴¹ Welsh Government, [Written Statement: Promoting walking, wheeling and cycling](#), 31 January 2025

⁴² Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, Active Travel in Wales: [Consultation Responses](#), May 2025

⁴³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 13

⁴⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 14

capacity at TfW⁴⁵. However, he acknowledges that their work is in its infancy, acknowledging the shift in delivery to a regional model.

Wider policy integration and stakeholder involvement

89. The Auditor General's report highlights examples where active travel considerations have been recognised generally in wider policy and programme development, including around planning policy, spending on school and college buildings, healthy living and remote working. However, when it comes to practical transport and wider development planning, or routine maintenance of the highways, it cites feedback suggesting that not enough consideration is being given to active travel in all cases. It also highlights tensions locally around support for active travel interventions and variation in the extent to which local authorities are prioritising active travel and related investment⁴⁶.

90. The Auditor General's report also concluded that the active travel agenda was "complicated by the involvement of multiple stakeholders and some lack of clarity around responsibilities amid changing remits", going on to say:

"We heard that the delivery landscape is crowded, with stakeholders commenting on some lack of clarity over responsibilities. The Cross-Party Group commented on widespread praise for the support from Transport for Wales to local authorities. But it also noted that some local authorities felt that Transport for Wales's role in administering the Active Travel Fund has added complexity. Meanwhile, Corporate Joint Committees' regional transport planning functions mean they will have an increasing role in determining priorities, including in respect of strategic cross-boundary active travel routes"⁴⁷.

91. In particular, the report emphasised that behaviour change was an area where stakeholders felt there was a lack of clarity⁴⁸, stating:

"The Welsh Government has remitted some work on behaviour change for modal shift to Transport for Wales. The Cross-Party Group

⁴⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 16

⁴⁶ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, pages 18-19

⁴⁷ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 19

⁴⁸ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 20

called for a structure to deliver professionally designed behaviour change interventions for active travel and a centre of expertise".

92. The Deputy Chair of the Active Travel Board concurred that the delivery landscape was crowded, telling the Committee that a member of the public may not understand who's responsible for progressing the active travel agenda and how to participate⁴⁹.

93. When asked whether the regional working arrangement through the Corporate Joint Committees are "mature enough to support the changes"⁵⁰, the Welsh Government's Director of Economic Infrastructure told the Committee that he was more positive than he would've been in the recent past, with the development of the regional transport plans "going reasonably well" and with the support of TfW⁵¹. He described the change as "very major", describing 2026-27 as a "transitional year". He went on to say:

"This is not a big-bang approach in all administrative respects, and it's a careful balance between enhancing the democratic accountability of regional government with providing sufficient checks and balances, both on adherence to national targets, but also to the general high standards we've set with expenditure of public money, for example in relation to audit, for example in relation to monitoring and evaluation"⁵².

Active Travel Board scrutiny

94. The Auditor General's report acknowledges the role of the Active Travel Board, established in 2014, to "advise on activity and support the uptake of active travel"⁵³. The board was restructured in May 2023 following recommendations from the Cross Party Group, which has included the addition of independent members. However, the report notes:

"... some stakeholders told us it is still difficult for the Board to effectively scrutinise all delivery partners as there is no formal accountability relationship. While the Board includes local

⁴⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 125

⁵⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, page 124

⁵¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, page 126

⁵² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, page 126

⁵³ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 20

government representatives, we also heard some concerns around the flow of information to and from the Board".

95. When asked to reflect on the role of the Active Travel Board, given that there is no formal accountability relationship between them and delivery bodies, the Deputy Chair of the Board explained:

"We ensure that we do some scrutiny sessions with different bodies, to make sure that they are adhering to the agenda of active travel in Wales. We've got a totally independent board, and that board has obviously done its first annual report, but what we have done as well is created these sub-groups to ensure that there are specific areas that we are feeding into..."

Our messaging in scrutiny has also been a lot stronger. We've got people from all over, and different fields, that have got expertise across different landscapes, so that's proving to be really effective"⁵⁴.

96. During evidence gathering, issues around secretarial support for the activities of the Board were noted, however the Deputy Chair noted that these have now largely passed, with support described as being "really good"⁵⁵. The representative from Living Streets , stated:

"... I would say that it has changed significantly. There does seem to be a lot more scrutiny, the outputs of the board seem much clearer and there seems to be much more of a plan. It does seem like it's a more effective board".

97. Whilst it's acknowledged that the Board can only make recommendations to the Welsh Government, the Deputy Chair was positive about the engagement with them to date and explained that all of the recommendations made in their report had been taken forward⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraphs 58-59

⁵⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraphs 63-64

⁵⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 82

98. TfW described the scrutiny from the Board as adding “technical challenge and a bit of pressure on organisations to ensure that they up their game”⁵⁷, with sessions with the Board described as “challenging and constructive”⁵⁸. They went on to say:

“I think you’ve only got to look at their last annual report and see the quality and depth of understanding and the challenges that they set forward, and there’s constructive criticism that they’ll give and helps us make sure that we’re doing the right things”⁵⁹.

99. On the Board’s scrutiny of TfW directly, they have previously participated in a session scrutinising their management of the Active Travel Fund⁶⁰.

100. The WLGA told the Committee that the role of the Active Travel Board could have been “better clarified”, however it’s acknowledged that they have highlighted the need for better data and that they could perform a scrutiny role, looking at the work of the Welsh Government and local delivery partners⁶¹. Cardiff Council remarked that it was unclear who the board was scrutinising and, depending on the depth of their scrutiny role, that there needed to be consideration about the level of technical administrative support it needed to facilitate that⁶².

101. Isle of Anglesey County Council agreed that the board’s role could be better clarified as this would “help facilitate the linkages between local authorities and the board themselves”⁶³. Powys County Council talked about the need for a more local approach, saying:

“I think it’s that role around understanding that there are 22 local authorities and four corporate joint committees. And sometimes we’ll have a slightly competing set of priorities against national and local agendas, and it’s that role to understand why we’ve got a specific—not necessarily difference of opinion, but there might be a different need, which may sit outside of what the national priorities are. And it’s how

⁵⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 51

⁵⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 52

⁵⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 52

⁶⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 55

⁶¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 60

⁶² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 66

⁶³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 62

*"we get that level of understanding to help us with things like departures from standards... in rural areas"*⁶⁴.

102. The Active Travel Delivery Plan includes a commitment to review the operation of the Active Travel Board in 2026, which is reiterated in the new Annual Report (discussed below)⁶⁵⁶⁶.

Capacity

103. The Auditor General's report also touches on capacity constraints, with a small internal team within Welsh Government, albeit with building capacity at TfW.

104. The report explains TfW's remit in further detail, stating that it now includes:

*"... maximising modal shift, delivering a fully integrated transport system, nurturing a multimodal culture, and encouraging and supporting people to consider sustainable modes as their default option. It administers the Active Travel Fund and provides technical support and guidance to local authorities. It also provides support to the Welsh Government on active travel policy, reviewing network maps, and developing a monitoring framework"*⁶⁷.

105. It notes that TfW has now contracted with Sustrans to develop its own internal capacity and expertise.

106. The report acknowledges the capacity constraints at a local government level, describing it as a "key barrier to the ability to plan, implement and monitor active travel schemes"⁶⁸. There is significant variation in the capacity and skills of local authority teams, due "in part from differing levels of support for active travel". Some of these issues have been exacerbated by local authority staff joining the expanded TfW team, with local authorities "relying more on external contractors at additional cost".

107. Sustrans Cymru explained to the Committee the scale of the problem facing local authorities, stating:

⁶⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 64

⁶⁵ Welsh Government, [Active travel delivery plan 2024 to 2027](#), page 11

⁶⁶ Welsh Government, Walking, wheeling and cycling annual report 2024-25

⁶⁷ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 21

⁶⁸ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 21

"I think it's a massive problem, the resourcing that local authorities have. We've mentioned funding and the revenue/capital funding split, but it's also skills shortages as well, and it's not just in active travel, it's in lots of industries in Wales, and it's especially impactful on rural Wales. I'm aware of one rural local authority in north Wales, I was speaking to the manager just last year, and he actually did have revenue funding to employ I think it was four or maybe five people in his team. He only had one who was local, if you like, and lived in the local authority; the other was a remote worker in a city in England, and he couldn't hire people with the skills to fill the other vacancies. So, there's a skills issue as well as a funding issue, really, to make sure that local authorities are well resourced and can deliver decent schemes"⁶⁹.

108. When asked whether the Welsh Government could help address the skills shortage, they told the Committee that this had already begun through Transport for Wales, with a team within TfW who can be “subcontracted by local authorities to help them deliver schemes”⁷⁰. They also noted that an academy had been established to upskill local authority officers. However, the team itself is in its infancy and therefore their impact will need to be considered with time.

109. The WLGA expanded on the constraints facing councils, describing the limitations as being “very real in smaller local authorities”, before explaining:

"In many authorities, there's maybe just one person that is responsible for active travel, and not only for active travel but other transport matters as well. Obviously, in bigger authorities, there can be active travel teams, where you have several people delivering. So, that is, I think, one of the biggest challenges. But, of course, there's also different political leadership in the different local authorities, and different priorities for those local authorities, so that will obviously also have an impact"⁷¹.

110. The representative from the Isle of Anglesey County Council told the Committee that there had been progress in this area in recent years, attributable

⁶⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 166

⁷⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 168

⁷¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 30

to “the climate emergency and the drive towards net zero and decarbonisation”⁷². However, he described the challenge for a rural authority in delivering active travel because of the distances between destinations and the landscape in general.

111. Powys County Council’s representative told the Committee that their active travel team comprised of “quite junior officers”, who were “driven by a passion for the subject rather than any sort of career aspirations”⁷³. As such, he remarked that consideration needed to be given to how a career path is developed for people in this area, to ensure that the expertise is built within the teams. The WLGA acknowledged the problem but noted that this was largely because authorities “don’t have certainty of funding for several years”⁷⁴.

112. On sharing good practice, the representative for the WLGA explained that this was now a role for Transport for Wales (covered below), with the organisation supporting this where possible, albeit without an official role⁷⁵.

113. In relation to the use of external consultants, the picture was mixed across Wales and depended largely on the in-house capacity at a local authority. Whilst the representative from Cardiff Council remarked that they applied an approach where consultants were used for specialist work, where the in-house expertise was not present⁷⁶, the representative from Isle of Anglesey County Council described a far bigger reliance on external support, with significant cost implications from an already constrained budget⁷⁷. The latter went on to explain:

“... because the funding is only on an annual basis, and not certain for the following year, it’s very difficult for us to appoint staff of high quality and experience, to be appointed for that 12-month role, which is not certain to continue thereafter. So, attracting staff is an issue, which is causing capacity constraint; then, obviously, you depend more on consultancy to help you to develop the schemes in a way. So, it’s a vicious cycle, really”⁷⁸.

114. Transport for Wales acknowledged the constraints facing local authorities in their evidence, acknowledging that a more regional approach in the future “should allow for people to pool the expertise that is available within the region”,

⁷² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 32

⁷³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 69

⁷⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 72

⁷⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 71

⁷⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 74

⁷⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 77

⁷⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 78

with all regions noted as having good expertise if pooled⁷⁹. On the role of TfW in mitigating those gaps locally, they explain:

“... that is why Transport for Wales is building up its own expertise and reaching out and trying to partner with local government, certainly not police local government. So, in my view, we ought to be seen as the first place people want to go to get expertise and to get help to deliver schemes, and the help that we can give goes as far as helping to design schemes now... the thing that I think is probably most interesting in that space is that we have started, in effect, a professional development school or academy for developing the expertise of officers right across Wales”⁸⁰.

Collaboration and support from Transport for Wales

115. Asked to describe their role in the crowded landscape of active travel delivery, the Chief Executive of Transport for Wales split their involvement into three phases:

- Previously, he described their involvement as being “mechanistic”, ensuring that “money was paid out to local government in a safe and efficient way for local government to deliver their schemes”⁸¹;
- He described the second phase as “a challenge to Transport for Wales to encourage and, to some extent, police Wales to up its game on active travel”, and particularly around “expertise and design”⁸²;
- The present and future is focussed on “working in partnership with local authorities, trying to share expertise, upskill people, provide technical services to local authorities” and enabling “local authorities to share technical skills amongst themselves”⁸³.

116. Looking towards the future, he noted:

“... with the de-hypothecation of individual transport funds to local government—so, in the future, there will not be an active travel fund as

⁷⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 110

⁸⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 111

⁸¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 40

⁸² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 41

⁸³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 42

*such; it will be transport funding for a corporate joint committee—it has to be Transport for Wales working in partnership with and helping local authorities, and groups of local authorities, to design schemes, and, I would emphasise, to monitor schemes and learn from the monitoring evaluation over time*⁸⁴.

117. On objectives for TfW in this area, the Chief Transport Planning and Development Officer described them as:

- i. Providing “strategic oversight of the active travel delivery plan and how that fits into the wider piece alongside things like the national transport delivery plan”⁸⁵;
- ii. Development of active travel and design hubs, with the capability to help with “design reviews, and supporting on design of more challenging infrastructure”⁸⁶;
- iii. Developing metrics to “demonstrate the benefit of active travel”, in response to the Auditor General’s conclusions⁸⁷; and
- iv. “Demonstrating and encouraging the behaviour change that’ll be required to increase usage of sustainable transport”⁸⁸.

118. When asked to reflect on how their role will evolve with the onset of regional transport plans and increased involvement from Corporate Joint Committees, the Chief Executive of TfW explained their role would be to provide:

“... technical expertise and the technical know-how to local and to regional government, who will then put their political leadership and their political priorities over the top of it, to create a long-term plan that we then all work together to fund and to deliver. That’s what we’re doing on regional transport plans now”⁸⁹.

⁸⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 42

⁸⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 44

⁸⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 44

⁸⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 44

⁸⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 45

⁸⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 100

119. He noted that TfW have teams working regionally, with engagement between them where necessary, to ensure that cross-border challenges identified by the Committee in question are mitigated as much as possible⁹⁰.

120. The Welsh Government's Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport told the Committee that TfW had “been on an incredible journey over the last few years”, acknowledging their initial remit was highly focussed on rail. He went on to say:

“... active travel is a very significant component now of what Transport for Wales are trying to do as part of their move towards a seamless and integrated approach to transport across Wales... when we think about public transport, pretty well every public transport journey will either begin or end, and possibly both, with some components of active travel, so this is hugely important.

They've increased their capacity as an organisation now to around about 20 people within the organisation working directly on active travel, but then others come and go into the mix as required in respect of providing particular bits of advice. And we feel that that relationship with TfW is working extremely well, and we're very grateful to the TfW board and executive for everything they've done in this area, and we feel that that is making a very significant contribution in their work, in turn, with local authorities”⁹¹.

121. The Welsh Government's Director for Economic Infrastructure explained that TfW were “on a journey to go from a rail franchise overseer... to, in effect, a multimodal transport authority”⁹². He described strengthening TfW to allow them to provide support to central government, the Welsh Government and local government, involving both the authorities and the Corporate Joint Committees⁹³. When asked about how the Welsh Government scrutinised the work of TfW, he explained:

“I generally say that we adopt a partnership and scrutiny approach in parallel. We don't see those as mutually exclusive terms. We think

⁹⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 104

⁹¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraphs 25-26

⁹² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 27

⁹³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 29

that the relationship works best when we do both of those in tandem”⁹⁴.

122. To facilitate the move to a regional approach, the Welsh Government confirmed that Transport for Wales is building regional teams in addition to their core active travel, who are presently supporting the Corporate Joint Committees in the development of their regional transport plans, alongside their work with local authorities⁹⁵. The intention is for those teams to be multimodal, to allow for better integration between active travel, public transport and car journeys.

Stakeholder perspective

123. When asked to reflect on Transport for Wales’ impact, the Deputy Chair of the Active Travel Board told the Committee:

“I think they’ve been really effective in ensuring there’s consistency across local authorities and the way they’re reporting the amount of funding that they’re having, and the monitoring and evaluation of that...

... I think they are effective in their role. There’s always room for improvement everywhere, but I think, actually, where we are in Wales right now has a lot to do with what they’ve put in place to monitor and evaluate local authorities, and the support they give in order to help them select the best routes for funding”⁹⁶.

124. Sustrans Cymru expanded on this, stating:

“... at a macro level or policy level it makes so much sense that Transport for Wales have a growing responsibility for active travel. Every public transport journey starts with a walk or sometimes a cycle to access the bus stop or the train station, at both ends as well... I think it was only a year or two ago that the Minister at the time increased the importance of active travel in the remit for TfW... they’ve hired, they’ve got more capacity, more expertise from a range of people that they’ve hired, and we see them making a bigger impact.

⁹⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 30

⁹⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 135

⁹⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraphs 36-37

*But I think, organisationally, they're still very dominated by, I would say, train*⁹⁷.

125. Many of the local authority representatives, including from Cardiff Council⁹⁸ and the Isle of Anglesey County Council⁹⁹, described the positive improvements in engagement and support from Transport for Wales. However, they also acknowledged that this support was still in the development stage, with Cardiff Council telling the Committee:

*... it's only really recently that there have been concerted efforts to bring together a team that's focusing solely on active travel. In recent years, the grants administration has passed to them, and, after some teething issues, I would say they're really on top of that process now. So, they're managing programmes for the main applications, for the big schemes, and also they're managing the funding through the core allocation, which has been an absolutely fantastic resource for local authorities, to do small things as well as the bigger things*¹⁰⁰.

126. He went on to describe Transport for Wales' team as being "key to providing the support that local authorities need to deliver what the Act aspires to achieve"¹⁰¹. The WLGA representative told the Committee that the relationship was "very good", with examples of this being an active travel officers group meeting held by TfW to allow local authorities to "share best practice", the development of the promotional toolkit, the prioritisation tool for routes and the work on monitoring and evaluation¹⁰².

127. Despite this, the representative from Powys County Council did describe some of the processes as "slightly over-bureaucratic", explaining:

... when we've got very small active travel teams, it can take quite a lot of their time to get the extensive detailed design in before we can get funding, and, if that funding is not approved, it's a waste of resource, but it does take away a fair amount of officer time, so maybe a consideration around the over-bureaucracy. I understand it,

⁹⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 39

⁹⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 27

⁹⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 32

¹⁰⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 44

¹⁰¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 44

¹⁰² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 56

but whether we could streamline some of the processes would be helpful”¹⁰³.

128. Isle of Anglesey County Council described the grant funding arrangements as being “very effective in the last couple of years”, with “teething issues” overcome, stating:

“I think the system is very effective and clear in terms of operating that grant on behalf of Welsh Government and that we understand what forms are required and so forth. I think that’s well established now and I think now they’re starting to get to the next stage of their leadership, in a way, in terms of improving on engagement and communication channels with the local authorities, and they’re in the process of developing the active travel guidance notes, which will help to formalise processes in the pre-scheme development activities”¹⁰⁴.

129. They described the development of active travel guidance notes as helping to “harness the relationship between local authorities and TfW to explain why we’re designing something at that level, and then for them to understand the rationale for that”¹⁰⁵. However, it was acknowledged that the role of the Corporate Joint Committees and the regional transport plans may change things, with the role of TfW in coordinating that described as “integral”.

Our view

National strategies and direction

130. The Committee agrees with the Auditor General that often national commitments and strategies have not been borne out in local decision-making. We believe this is primarily because of the imbalance in resources, capacity and expertise amongst local authorities across Wales. The Auditor General also identified issues around community resistance to active travel issues.

131. This, similarly, was an issue in Slovenia with the country split across 212 municipalities, each with their own characteristics and challenges. Whilst we were fortunate to visit a municipality with sufficient resources, as well as access to

¹⁰³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 46

¹⁰⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 52

¹⁰⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 52

expert support, the picture across Slovenia is more inconsistent. It was clear that a regional approach, through bodies like the Ljubljana Development Agency, was attempting to mitigate these problems and the Committee concurs that this is the best approach for Wales.

132. It's crucial that the Welsh Government now focusses on delivering, alongside partners and stakeholder, the aims and ambitions of the Active Travel Delivery Plan.

133. The Committee hopes that the increased role for Transport for Wales in active travel, which is discussed below, should go some distance in tying together national programmes and expertise, given their increasing role as a coordinator and facilitator of active travel delivery around Wales. This should only be further increased through a more regional approach to delivery, which will hopefully eliminate the stark differences in resources between local authorities that pose so many issues presently. The Committee (and its successor) will remain interested in how these issues are addressed in the future, with a new delivery approach in Wales.

Capacity and the role of Transport for Wales

134. It was heartening to hear the positive reflections from local authorities about the increase in support from Transport for Wales, who are continuing to develop their capacity and expertise in this field. The Committee heard in Slovenia about the benefit of having external partners providing support for under-resourced local authorities, who needed the know-how and resources to deliver interventions in their area.

135. The Committee believes that a regional approach, with Transport for Wales providing a supporting role for Corporate Joint Committees, local authorities and delivery partners could work effectively, addressing the very real concerns about capacity in parts of Wales. Indeed, it is good to hear that Transport for Wales are already pre-empting this shift in approach by establishing regional teams who are already working on the Regional Transport Plans that will inform and guide this regional approach.

136. Evidence from local authority partners that explained it was difficult to find suitably experienced and knowledgeable staff to deliver active travel work, even with the budget available to do so, showed that there needs to be a bigger solution to address these problems.

137. It's clear that Transport for Wales' role will continue to develop and that there will need to be robust scrutiny of this through colleagues at the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee (and its successor) to ensure that it continues to drive improvement and meet the challenges of the future.

The Active Travel Board

138. It's clear to the Committee that the Active Travel Board has a role to play in shaping Wales' approach in the future, with the restructure of the Board seemingly leading to positive development in its operations and functions. Whilst it lacks a formal scrutiny relationship at present, it was good to hear that the Welsh Government has, to date, taken its recommendations and advice seriously and we encourage this collaboration to continue, as it could be a vital additional resource for Government long into the future. However, it's important that this spirit continues into the future and it will be interesting to see the outcome of the forthcoming review into the Board, to take place in 2026.

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government should share the outcome of its review into the operations of the Active Travel Board once it's completed with our successor Committee.

4. Investment

Overall picture

139. The Auditor General's report includes a breakdown of the £65.3m that the Welsh Government allocated to active travel initiatives in 2024-25, with the Active Travel Fund accounting for £50m (or 77%) of this sum¹⁰⁶. £218m had been spent by local authorities from the Active Travel Fund or equivalent funds between 2018-19 and 2023-24¹⁰⁷. The second largest element of budgeted capital expenditure for 2024-25 (£6.1m) related to the Safe Routes in Communities programme¹⁰⁸. Further information on capital and revenue allocations is listed in Exhibit 3 of the report.

140. Of the schemes funded through the Active Travel Fund, 83 main infrastructure schemes were completed between 2021-22 and 2023-24, with 81 minor works schemes (of over £100,000) being completed during the same timeframe¹⁰⁹.

The Active Travel Fund

141. The Welsh Government introduced the Active Travel Fund in 2018. The Fund, as noted previously, has been administered by Transport for Wales since December 2020, however Welsh Government officials are "involved in the groups that support the governance arrangements for the Fund and Ministers approve local authority allocations"¹¹⁰. The objectives of the Fund¹¹¹ are to:

- Encourage modal shift from car to active travel in isolation or in combination with public transport.
- Improve active travel access to employment, education, and other key services.
- Increase levels of active travel.
- Connect communities.

¹⁰⁶ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 23

¹⁰⁷ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 30

¹⁰⁸ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 24

¹⁰⁹ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 32

¹¹⁰ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 29

¹¹¹ Welsh Government, *Active Travel Fund: guidance for applicants 2023 to 2024*, December 2022

142. The Auditor General's report summarises how the Fund operates, including the criteria for scheme assessment, for which "infrastructure quality" receives the highest weighting (27%) with match funding the smallest component (3%)¹¹².

143. The Fund includes a core allocation (minimum of £500,000 per local authority allocated on a formula basis and including support for scheme development and minor works) and competitive bidding for the main allocation that supports larger and "package" schemes. For 2024-25, the £50 million overall allocation comprised £15 million core and £35 million main funding. Local authorities could make up to four main scheme applications. They could also make eight scheme development applications. There was no limit on the number of minor works applications¹¹³.

144. Expenditure by local authorities from the Active Travel Fund, or equivalent expenditure (from legacy funding streams), increased from £20 million to £46 million between 2018-19 and 2023-24¹¹⁴. The highest annual expenditure during that period was in 2021-22, at £49.4 million, when there was an additional in-year allocation (although that was still not spent in full at the time)¹¹⁵. In real terms, the allocation in 2024-25 is below the 2021-22 expenditure.

145. The Audit Wales data tool, accompanying the report, sets out expenditure by local authority for the period between 2021-22 and 2023-24 and the budget allocations for 2024-25, summarising cash totals without adjusting for population¹¹⁶. The data tool shows expenditure of £141.7m between 2021-22 to 2023-24, ranging from £20.7m in Cardiff, to £1.5m in Wrexham.

146. On match funding, the Auditor General explained:

"Some local authorities also contribute match funding to schemes, whether in direct financial contributions and/or the value of staff time. However, more often than not over the past two funding rounds, bids have not identified match funding. The match funding across all bids in those rounds amounted to less than 5% of the Active Travel Fund monies bid for. Figures for individual schemes include examples in the 10-20% range. One bid for 2024-25 was for a scheme where the

¹¹² Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 29

¹¹³ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 28

¹¹⁴ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 30

¹¹⁵ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 32

¹¹⁶ Audit Wales, [Active Travel Data Tool](#), September 2024

match funding identified was around double that of the Active Travel Fund support bid for”¹¹⁷.

147. On the subject of underspends, the report also noted:

“We heard that processes for understanding and managing underspends have improved in recent years, supporting opportunities for re-allocation to other active travel initiatives. Nevertheless, Active Travel Fund expenditure by local authorities has been less than that allocated. Over the last five years the annual underspend has ranged from £2 million to £9 million”¹¹⁸.

148. Recommendation 8 of the report called for a longer-term, multi-year, funding strategy for active travel funding and for the Welsh Government to reflect on the overall balance between capital funding for infrastructure, including the split between core and scheme specific funding for the Active Travel Fund, and revenue funding for other activities such as behaviour change initiatives¹¹⁹.

149. In their response, the Welsh Government accepted the recommendation with a completion date of Spring 2026, stating:

“We are working with Corporate Joint Committees to develop their statutory Regional Transport Plans, with accompanying five-year Delivery Plans. Our funding strategy is to allocate capital and revenue funding to these plans from 2026-27, instead of through separate grant schemes such as the Active Travel Fund. We will set out how active travel investment at regional and national levels is resourced as part of this process. Funding allocations for future years will be indicative where this is necessary to comply with Welsh Government and Senedd budget procedures”¹²⁰.

150. When asked about the impact of the Active Travel Fund, Sustrans Cymru told the Committee:

¹¹⁷ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 32

¹¹⁸ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 32

¹¹⁹ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 13

¹²⁰ Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales, 7 November 2024

"Sustrans Cymru is an organisation that.. had campaigned for funding of around about £20 per person. It has gone over that now; in the last financial year, it was around about £23 per person. But we've been outpaced, I would say, by other places. So, you mentioned the UK; in Scotland, the Scottish Government had a target of £56 per person—well over double the Welsh funding. They haven't met it, but they're still on £35 per person at the moment"¹²¹.

151. Sustrans Cymru also commented on how annual funding awards can create problems delivering large-scale multi-year projects¹²². The Deputy Chair of the Active Travel Board expanded on this point, stating:

"... it would be a lot better if there was multi-year funding for local authorities, so then they've got a pipeline of schemes that they're able to complete over years instead of just one funding year, and it makes them look at a long-term strategy rather than short-term wins"¹²³.

152. When asked about the Board's estimation, as previously noted in this report, that it will take until 2073 to complete all of the routes currently mapped as potential future routes in current active travel network maps, the Deputy Chair attributed this to the current levels of funding¹²⁴. However, when asked about the current balance of capital and revenue expenditure, she also explained that:

"I don't think there's enough revenue spend in Wales generally. It would be a lot better if we could get a lot more revenue in, because that means we could increase the capability of officers in Wales and employ more people in this space, to be able to reach our goals, et cetera. We know already that there are constraints within local authorities, that they just don't have the people to be able to deliver these programmes, but if they were to have the people, that revenue spend, then things would increase dramatically"¹²⁵.

¹²¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, p9

¹²² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, p19

¹²³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, p23

¹²⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, p88

¹²⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, p94

153. The representative from Sustrans Cymru expanded on this, explaining:

"I mentioned the figure per person of £23 before, and only 44p of that is revenue; most of it is capital. And that's just not the same in other parts of the transport world. So, buses and trains have a higher proportion of revenue spending to keep the show on the road. Something that we noticed, especially at a local authority level, is that they've got relatively good access to capital funding now to do new schemes, as we've been talking about, better than in previous years, but it's difficult for them from what are tight local authority budgets to match that with the expertise, the officers to be able to deliver good schemes, because they do struggle to fund it on an annual basis"¹²⁶.

154. In their consultation response, the Cross-Party Group on Active Travel raised concerns about the potential impact of a new regional approach on funding for active travel, noting that ring-fenced funding for active travel will end, meaning that walking and cycling will need to "compete with other transport modes for what funding is available with no guarantee of future investment"¹²⁷.

Local authority perspective

155. As noted earlier in the report, local authority representatives were positive about the grant administration role of Transport for Wales, after initial "teething problems"¹²⁸. One area of particular interest for local authorities was the limit per authority of one application for the competitive part of the Active Travel Fund, introduced for 2025-26 by the Welsh Government and therefore not reflected in the Auditor General's report.

156. From their perspective, the representative from Cardiff Council explained:

"I think it has been working very well, and particularly since we saw a considerable boost to active travel funding from 2019-20 onwards... the quantum of funding, that additional funding, has been very beneficial, but I think the way funding is structured has also been very helpful, so there's been funding for up to... four main applications until

¹²⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 106

¹²⁷ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, Active Travel in Wales: [Consultation Responses](#), May 2025

¹²⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 94

*this year. But also, we at Cardiff have found extremely useful the core allocation, where you have a delegated amount that is set aside for pre-delivery of schemes, design and development of schemes, and also smaller schemes that can be delivered at a lower cost and quickly*¹²⁹.

157. He went on to describe the ability to use the funding to “pump-prime” their largest schemes, meaning that they have a “continuous pipeline of bigger ticket items coming through for funding”¹³⁰. He described flexibility in moving the funding within their core allocation, allowing to be redeployed to other projects where needed, as well as allowing the funding to be spread more evenly, rather than into one big project that may only affect one or two wards within the authority.

158. The assessment from Powys County Council was less positive, describing the challenge of having 11 active town centres within the authority, compared to the far more integrated position in Cardiff, meaning they are limited in the impact they can have across the authority¹³¹. They are now in a position where they can only apply for one large scheme a year, meaning that it will take “11 years to make any sort of impact across Powys”, going on to say:

*“I think there are challenges around how we get that core funding and how we can start to make a proper impact. We’d love to be doing some of the stuff that Cardiff has been doing. It’s not always appropriate. We can do the same interventions, but we need to take a slightly different approach, and one of the things that is constraining us is around how we’re core funded”*¹³².

159. The representative from Isle of Anglesey County Council shared those concerns, particularly around the limit of one application per authority per year. He stated:

“In terms of the reduction to one bid this year, our main concern was the fact that we were notified only a couple of months beforehand that there was a change in the number of bids, because it usually had been three or four bids per annum, then you only had two

¹²⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, p95

¹³⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, p95

¹³¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, p101

¹³² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, p102

months' notification that it was going down to one this year. Our work programme was geared up to put multiple bids in..."¹³³.

160. On the proportion of core funding and funding for competitive bids from the fund, he called for a reimagining of "how distribution works between all local authorities and that percentage between the core and the main bids", explaining:

"Our recommendation would be to increase the core allocation per local authority to a higher value in order to tackle more challenging scenarios locally and to deliver more on the ground as well as developing the WelTAGs, and then reduce the main bid allocation for your truly transformational schemes"¹³⁴.

161. The WLGA agreed that the split between revenue and capital funding was "not quite right", explaining that there was "never enough revenue to do all the promotional work" around engagement, and so on¹³⁵.

TfW's role and reflections

162. On the split between capital and revenue funding, the Chief Executive of Transport for Wales told the Committee:

"... there is reasonably good evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of revenue support in this area, but that it has been consistently very difficult to argue for any significant revenue spend in this area, and it's over more than a decade that that has been the case. If you were to ask me what do I mean by revenue support, typically it's around behaviour change schemes, explaining to people, persuading people that they can use both public transport and active travel. I don't know whether I would argue for spending less on capital to spend more on revenue, but I would certainly argue that if money could be found... I would certainly argue that that is something that we should try to do. I don't think there's any pushback from Government on that; I just think it's the difficulty of finding the funding"¹³⁶.

¹³³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, p105

¹³⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 106

¹³⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 112

¹³⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 94

163. They acknowledge the feeling at a local authority level that increased revenue funding would help them to resource the “delivery of active travel”, as well as to facilitate behaviour change interventions¹³⁷.

164. The Chief Executive of Transport for Wales confirmed they were a part of the decision to limit authorities to one main active travel bid for 2025-26, explaining that this was down to the funding allocation for active travel schemes nationally, as well as a “wish to target schemes on more shorter distance routes”¹³⁸. He described criticism from local government about the short notice of this change as “legitimate”, acknowledging that authorities may have spent time on multiple bids unnecessarily¹³⁹.

165. On the split between core and main funding, they described the balance as generally working well, stating:

“I think that £15 million fund in the past that’s been available for core allocations has been welcomed by local authorities, to give them a degree of certainty in terms of what might be possible for scheme development and those minor works, as we’ve said, although we do recognise that some local authority colleagues are definitely of the view that they would welcome further core funding to enable them to be more ambitious in some respects”¹⁴⁰.

166. They also discussed the inability to provide multi-year funding settlement, with efforts to mitigate this through a co-developed plan, between local authorities, TfW and Welsh Government¹⁴¹. They described this plan as helping with “recruitment, skills building, supply chain engagement, et cetera”.

Welsh Government’s evidence

167. The Welsh Government’s Director of Economic Infrastructure acknowledged in evidence that the lack of revenue funding was a “particular constraint at the moment”, explaining that they have been forced to make “hard choices” and that the position will be kept under review¹⁴².

¹³⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 96

¹³⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraphs 70-71

¹³⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 71

¹⁴⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 78

¹⁴¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 80

¹⁴² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 19

168. When asked about what the Welsh Government would do with more funding for active travel, the Director General told the Committee they would focus on capital expenditure, explaining that they could “make the most headway” by combining infrastructure development with work on behaviour change. He explained:

“... you’re combining pots of money and you’re combining investments both for the capital and revenue context into achieving those ends. So, there’s definitely more that we could do. We could do more in terms of infrastructure. We could do more in terms of promoting and training. We are doing what we can with the resources available to us in all of these areas, and using resources as wisely as we can”¹⁴³

169. In relation to the limit of one competitive main scheme bid for 2025-26, the Director General explained this was due to a “very significant set of budget constraints”¹⁴⁴. The Director of Economic Infrastructure expanded on this, explaining:

“... in practice, only a small number of local authorities tend to have funding for more than one main scheme, when that funding situation changed, we prioritised taking core funding to its previous levels and maintaining that, rather than putting more money into... the main schemes... this all comes back to the balance between how much you want to spend on future development, how much you want to spend on capability and minor works and how much you want to spend on the bigger-ticket capital schemes”¹⁴⁵.

170. When asked whether the system benefits larger urban authorities, as opposed to more rural authorities, the Director explained:

“I’d say that there would be something in that if it weren’t for the support that Transport for Wales provides—that’s the big new development—with the increasing in size team that is there for all local authorities, regardless of their size and capacity. And similarly, that’s why we do not, as a matter of policy, require match funding, because of the reasons you just stated, which would offer a bias”

¹⁴³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 34

¹⁴⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 76

¹⁴⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 78

*towards those larger authorities that can put money in. But you are generally right that there is a tricky balance between the expectations that we put upon the expenditure of money and the capacity of those organisations to meet those expectations*¹⁴⁶.

171. Responding to concerns from stakeholders about the priority given to active travel spending in the new regional structure, the Director General told the Committee that this concern was not being “borne out” in the plans being prepared from the regional bodies¹⁴⁷. He expanded on this, saying:

“... the fact that we’re moving away from very clearly delineated chunks of money for one strand of transport work over another is, of course, going to be a matter of concern to people who are arguing very specifically for those types of activity. But we don’t feel that that’s what’s coming through the initial work on the regional side”¹⁴⁸.

Assessment and funding framework

172. Recommendation 9 of the Auditor General’s report called for the Welsh Government to “set out minimum requirements which, if not evidenced satisfactorily, will mean that Active Travel Fund bids for main infrastructure schemes will not be approved regardless of their ranked score”, with minimum requirements including equality impact assessment¹⁴⁹.

173. In their response, the Welsh Government has marked this recommendation as “complete”, explaining:

“It was already signalled in the Active Travel Fund Guidance for 2024-25, that advance completion of a range of steps, including EqIA (Equality Impact Assessment), a Monitoring and Evaluation plan and scheme specific engagement will become a mandatory requirement from 2025-26 onwards. The new guidance sets out the requirement

¹⁴⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 104

¹⁴⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 117

¹⁴⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 119

¹⁴⁹ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 13

for an Integrated Well-being Appraisal, which includes the regulatory impact assessments, including EqIA”¹⁵⁰.

174. The Auditor General explained that, as part of its new Active Travel Delivery Plan, the Welsh Government has said that it will develop a new assessment and funding framework. As part of this, it is looking to learn from the approach taken by Active Travel England to assess local authority capability and ambition in relation to active travel¹⁵¹.

175. Recommendation 6 in the Auditor General’s report suggested the Welsh Government should use the new framework to support periodic reviews of local authorities’ capability, plans, and active travel delivery and that it should then report transparently on the outcome of those reviews. The Welsh Government’s response confirms the work underway to develop an assessment framework and for completion by spring 2026. Their response says:

“This will inform, and likely be subsumed within the development of a new funding framework for the Regional Transport Plans, as we plan to move away from individually administered sector specific local transport grant schemes. We will report transparently on the outcomes”¹⁵².

176. In their evidence to the Committee, Transport for Wales described a mixed picture in the “quality and level of detail provided in previous years for some of the applications”¹⁵³. They welcomed the Auditor General’s recommendations in this area and state that having a “fairly robust red line within the applications was the way to really encourage a shift within some local authorities”, with an improvement in the quality of applications noted by their teams¹⁵⁴.

177. The Welsh Government concurred with Transport for Wales’ assessment that there had been an improvement with “much better evidence applications”, but that it was “not perfect yet”¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁰ Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales, 7 November 2024

¹⁵¹ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 30

¹⁵² Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales, 7 November 2024

¹⁵³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 83

¹⁵⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 83

¹⁵⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 92

Potential duplication of funding and conflict of interest issues

178. The Auditor General reflects in his report on issues relating to the management of potential duplication of funding and conflict of interest issues in relation to aspects of the funding provided to Sustrans. In particular, the report reflects on the contract with Transport for Wales to support the administration of the Active Travel Fund, which includes scheme appraisal¹⁵⁶. He concludes:

"In our view it would be prudent for Transport for Wales to assess opportunities to further strengthen safeguards relating to Sustrans' involvement in the appraisal process. We also consider that, as part of this and wider risk management, both the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales should understand any work Sustrans may be involved with, or bidding for, at a local authority level that relates back to the Active Travel Fund"¹⁵⁷.

179. Recommendation 7 of the report addresses these issues¹⁵⁸. In response, the Welsh Government indicated that Transport for Wales would set out relevant safeguards in its operating procedures, initially by December 2024, in readiness for the next funding appraisal cycle and that it will keep them under review on an ongoing basis¹⁵⁹. Sustrans has also agreed to regularly update the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales on any work that they are carrying out on behalf of local authorities.

180. Transport for Wales acknowledged these concerns, but went on to explain:

"We have put additional safeguards in place for this funding round. That includes ensuring that we've not got conflicts of interest for any assessors and their roles, because it may not just be with Sustrans, it could be for all sorts of reasons. We've also asked for reports from Sustrans in terms of projects that they're working on for local authorities, and so we've triangulated the data from a number of points just to make sure we're happy with it. I'm not aware of any issues with it that have come up so far, but I have got a review later in

¹⁵⁶ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 26

¹⁵⁷ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 26

¹⁵⁸ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 2

¹⁵⁹ [Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales](#), 7 November 2024

March with our head of corporate governance to look at what's been done and whether we need to do anything further...¹⁶⁰.

Our view

181. It's clear to the Committee that the balance between capital and revenue funding has not worked effectively, with insufficient revenue funding in place to deliver behaviour change initiatives (which is discussed in further detail later in this report) and to staff local authority teams to ensure there's capacity at a local level to deliver and maintain the capital funding projects.

182. With the onset of a regional approach to active travel, there's an opportunity to address this balance through the forthcoming Regional Transport Plans, which should hopefully give more certainty for delivery partners. Given that these plans have a longer-term focus, rather than the more annual approach currently being followed, it's hoped there will be scope for agreeing multi-year funding settlements which will allow a more strategic approach to investment, both in terms of capital projects and in addressing capacity issues and supporting other revenue funded initiatives.

Conclusion 1. The Welsh Government must ensure that future funding allocations for transport sufficiently prioritise Active Travel, to address stakeholder concerns about the priority that will be given to active travel funding in the future.

Recommendation 2. The funding allocated through Regional Transport Plans should prioritise multi-year settlements, to provide certainty for delivery partners, with a more effective blend of capital and revenue funding.

¹⁶⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 87

5. Developing active travel networks, behaviour change and inclusive route development

Routes and prioritisation

183. The latest iteration of the active travel maps were published in late 2022, recording an approximate total of 1,484 miles of active travel routes¹⁶¹. The next edition is to be published by December 2026. The Auditor General's report summarises the responsibilities in this area, explaining:

"Local authorities have a duty to secure new and improved active travel routes. They must also produce maps of existing routes and related facilities, and those planned for the next 15 years. These Active Travel Network Maps are available via the DataMapWales website.

The Act requires that maps are submitted to the Welsh Ministers for approval every three years or as directed by the Welsh Ministers. The second iterations of local authority maps were not published until late 2022 following extended deadlines due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors. The period for the next review cycle has been extended to December 2026.

These duties relate to more populous 'designated localities'. The Welsh Government believes routes in these localities are likely to have greater impact. However, local authorities can develop network maps for other localities where there is high potential for use"¹⁶².

184. The report notes that while the maps provide a planning tool, it is difficult to assess network improvement simply by comparing them over time and they have "limitations as a resource for the public", in part because they only reflect a point in time position and are updated infrequently. Not all routes developed will feature as existing routes although they may be identified as planned future routes¹⁶³. The report goes on to highlight other issues, including¹⁶⁴:

¹⁶¹ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 37

¹⁶² Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 35

¹⁶³ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 37

¹⁶⁴ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 37

- To feature on the maps, existing active travel routes should meet the Welsh Government's design standards. Older active travel infrastructure that no longer meets design standards would not feature.
- Limits on what local authorities are required to include mean some routes potentially well used for active travel are not officially recorded and/or shown (this may include parts of the National Cycle Network managed by Sustrans).

185. The report also raises concerns about the “pace of development”, explaining that whilst many local authorities have identified hundreds of future routes, “the current pace of development suggests it is highly unlikely that local authorities will have implemented all planned routes within 15 years”¹⁶⁵.

186. It also described evidence that the routes being presented for funding were “not always in the best areas, or adequately connected, to facilitate modal shift”¹⁶⁶, albeit, as previously noted, Transport for Wales is now developing a prioritisation tool to help with this.

187. The report explains:

“Schemes that seek to maximise modal shift can be difficult to deliver, both in terms of time and the skills required. They can also be unpopular because they may require re-allocation of road space from private motor cars. We also heard that routes are often not well connected for door-to-door journeys, leaving gaps in the active travel network which is a key barrier for participation”¹⁶⁷.

188. As part of the Committee’s consultation, Lee Waters MS stated:

“There is little evidence that local authorities are committed to achieving modal shift. The active travel schemes that are developed in most local authorities tend to follow the path of least resistance. There is a reluctance to put forward interventions that reallocate road space away from cars to prioritise movement by active modes”¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶⁵ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 36

¹⁶⁶ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 38

¹⁶⁷ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 38

¹⁶⁸ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, Active Travel in Wales: Consultation Responses, May 2025

189. The Transport for Wales “data-led” tool aims to help prioritise routes with the maximum impact, and covers “potential for modal shift, access to services, deprivation, impact on health, and route safety”. However, the report acknowledges that its effectiveness is likely to be constrained by “limitations in available datasets”.

190. When asked to reflect on the Auditor General’s conclusions, Transport for Wales explained:

“I think we’re definitely seeing a positive shift in that direction and a greater focus on those types of schemes that are likely to have a bigger impact in terms of modal shift.. we’re definitely working with them on their use of the tool and their building of cases for change to understand how they can have schemes that are going to be in the right locations to have a greater impact in terms of that modal shift”¹⁶⁹.

191. The representative from the WLGA told the Committee that mapping remained a challenge, explaining that it was unclear whether the public knew about the maps and how they could be used¹⁷⁰. They also cautioned against being too ambitious and focus on the routes that were deliverable in the short-term, rather than long-term aspirations, which are associated with the previously mentioned 2073 timeframe outlined in the Active Travel Board’s annual report. Isle of Anglesey County Council concurred, stating:

“There needs to be more clarity on what’s deliverable in the next five years, in terms of your future routes and so forth, because the active travel network map at the moment looks quite comprehensive, but they’re only lines on a map in a way, and to deliver all of those would take 50 years or more. So, I think, there should be more focus on what are the high priority routes for the next, say, five years, for the public to understand where the future priority of that local authority exists, in a way, to add on to the existing routes. Because at the moment, it looks very comprehensive on the map, as I say, but maybe undeliverable in reality”¹⁷¹.

¹⁶⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 137

¹⁷⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 126

¹⁷¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 128

192. The Welsh Government's Head of Active Travel Policy explained how the prioritisation tool works in practice, stating:

“... it’s not a national prioritisation tool. It doesn’t give us the national top 10 or top 25. For each local authority, it works out from their network which routes are the ones that are the most likely to give that significant use and motive. So, for each local authority, we expect that they put forward the highest priority schemes, and that is something that the regional advisors and TfW go through with the local authorities when they’re preparing. They have discussions pre-application, what they should put forward or what could be put, and then that’s where the conversation around the prioritisation tool comes in”¹⁷².

193. When asked about the gaps in networks, Sustrans Cymru described it as a “never-ending puzzle” to create a “connected, continuous network”, attributing some of the challenges to a lack of multi-year funding certainty¹⁷³.

Involving stakeholders and meeting the needs of vulnerable pedestrians

194. The Committee agreed to explore the challenges faced by vulnerable pedestrians, including those with disabilities, whilst actively travelling and to examine how stakeholders participated in route development.

195. The Auditor General’s report concluded:

“... we heard concerns about skills and resources in local authorities to engage effectively, including with groups representing disabled people. Welsh Government commissioned research has also highlighted mixed views about local authority consultation. We also heard about limited resources within organisations representing people with protected characteristics to enable them to input effectively with lived experiences”¹⁷⁴.

Disability representatives’ views

¹⁷² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 87

¹⁷³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 19

¹⁷⁴ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 36

196. The Committee heard evidence from Disability Wales, the Royal National Institute of Blind People Cymru ('RNIB') and Guide Dogs Cymru, to better understand the present issues.

197. The stakeholders were consistent in their view that the additional investment into active travel in Wales in recent years have failed to create a more inclusive environment for vulnerable pedestrians, with the representative for Guide Dogs Cymru telling the Committee:

“... ideally, the money would have been spent more effectively to promote an inclusive environment for everyone, and I think there are examples of where we can see that hasn’t happened”¹⁷⁵.

198. When asked about whether the Active Travel Delivery Plan goes some way to addressing their concerns, Guide Dogs Cymru confirmed that they were not involved in devising the new plan¹⁷⁶. The RNIB expanded on this, explaining:

“I feel that the delivery plan is very vague. We haven’t been consulted... to input where parts of it could have been strengthened to support disabled people and making inclusive designs or promotions. One thing I noticed is it said that there was a design review for local authorities in 2024. I just wonder what that even looked like, because we didn’t come across that in our work, where we work with a number of local authorities... What I’d like to see more of is more of a commitment to inclusive designs and promotion and accessible information”¹⁷⁷.

199. Disability Wales told the Committee that the plan appeared to have been written without consideration for disabled people¹⁷⁸. The Committee examined how designs often didn’t meet the needs of vulnerable pedestrians, leading to expensive remediation works in the future to address problems that could’ve been addressed at the outset. This, in particular, included the use of colour, which could be applied nationally to ensure consistency and to make it easier for pedestrians to use¹⁷⁹. Issues with lighting and dropped kerbs were also noted as

¹⁷⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 204

¹⁷⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 208

¹⁷⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 209

¹⁷⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 210

¹⁷⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 242-245

being particular impediments that could be addressed more effectively during the planning stages.

200. Age Cymru, in written evidence, told the Committee:

"A lack of safe pavements can place serious restrictions on the freedom of movement and mobility of older people. Pavements that are in a state of disrepair or are obstructed can compromise the safety and independence of older people and increase the risk of falls. Increased effort is needed to ensure that pavements are well-maintained and kept free of parked cars and obstacles"¹⁸⁰.

201. They also examined in further detail the problems associated with shared spaces for pedestrians and cyclists and the lack of public seating.

202. When asked about the role of the Active Travel Board's Inclusive Active Travel sub-group, the representatives from Guide Dogs Cymru¹⁸¹ and the RNIB¹⁸² confirmed they were a part of the sub-group. The latter talked about the re-launch of the group, explaining that the group included pan-disability and more diverse organisations, representing people who face barriers in accessing active travel. On the role of the Active Travel Board more generally, she explained:

"I do think that the board takes inclusivity seriously. I feel that there is a place to really have this group make some changes... I do think there are big, important roles to be played and good opportunities coming where we can scrutinise and work with the design office and local authorities and the Welsh Government to really see inclusivity embedded in active travel"¹⁸³.

203. When asked about awareness at a local government level on the social model of disability, Guide Dogs Cymru explained:

"I think there are areas of work and public service delivery where the requirements for equality impact assessment and the public sector duty are understood, but when it comes to design and planning and

¹⁸⁰ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, Active Travel in Wales: [Consultation Responses](#), May 2025

¹⁸¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 212

¹⁸² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 213

¹⁸³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 214

*construction on the ground, there is many a slip... Even though the expectation at a higher level and a strategic level may be sound and good in terms of inclusive design and including all of our communities, it doesn't percolate down, and, often, equality impact assessments—I've seen many—are just tick-box exercises and, often, differential impact may be identified on paper but not what will be done to mitigate it*¹⁸⁴.

204. Disability Wales' representative didn't feel the social model of disability was widely understood, despite their efforts, and that a better approach from the outset in involving vulnerable pedestrians at the design stage could mitigate problems that occur later in the process, which frequently can be costly to address¹⁸⁵.

205. When reflecting on the picture nationally, the RNIB told the Committee that there are "patches of inconsistency within each local authority, and we see patches of good"¹⁸⁶.

Perspective of other stakeholders

206. Transport for Wales provided further information about how their design review process seeks to address these concerns, with a member of their design team working with an access and inclusion panel. They confirm that they are also providing advice to local authorities to limit issues, as well as liaising with external stakeholders¹⁸⁷.

207. Living Streets told the Committee about how a dropped kerb or a bollard in the wrong location can affect a journey for vulnerable pedestrians, noting that schemes needed to be better in factoring in the barriers faced by others¹⁸⁸. They went on to say:

"I think any scheme needs to have full consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and the whole community, particularly those vulnerable road users, because if a walking route or cycle route works for them, they'll work for everybody. And so it's really important that

¹⁸⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 218

¹⁸⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 220

¹⁸⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 235

¹⁸⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 131

¹⁸⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 26

we bring marginalised groups right in at the beginning of any scheme or development”¹⁸⁹.

208. When asked about the role of local authorities in involving vulnerable pedestrians in their active travel plans, the representative from Cardiff Council explained that they have a task group with sits on a scheme-by-scheme basis, which will include engagement with disability groups, particularly from organisations representing those who are visually impaired¹⁹⁰. Powys County Council described a similar approach, explaining that as part of the consultation process for a project, there “would be and should be engagement with a range of stakeholder groups, including the local access forum and the RNIB”¹⁹¹.

209. When asked for the Welsh Government’s perspective on departures from design guidance and when these may be appropriate, the Director of Economic Infrastructure emphasised that not all departures from guidance are necessarily bad, but that they need to be justified with a robust audit trail to prove they’re proportionate. He went on to explain:

“... on the one hand, we’ve discussed today how to make schemes as inclusive as possible, and that often means that you want to raise the standards, let’s say with respect to clear segregation or colour of pavement or tactile paving. On the other hand, there are some situations where, let’s say, you have an immovable object in the middle of what would be otherwise a very long active travel path. You would not want to say ‘no’ to the entire path just because the width has to narrow by an additional 30 cm at one point. What we are trying to do is bring in that sense of proportionality that we have in the other transport modes, and a lot of that comes down to the governance and the process that you put around derogations”¹⁹².

210. Lee Waters MS told the Committee that the best way to ensure active travel is accessible and inclusive is “good design and good engagement”, saying:

“Early engagement with the community and particularly groups representing the disabled is key, but is only as good as the follow-through. Equality Impact Assessments often say the right things but

¹⁸⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 4 December 2024, paragraph 28

¹⁹⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 162

¹⁹¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 164

¹⁹² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 164

are not applied well or consistently. This is another issue of capability and capacity in transport teams and is another example of why the improvements are needed to ensure compliance with the Active Travel Design Guidance across all schemes”¹⁹³.

211. He emphasised that the “debate around inclusivity can be binary”, explaining:

“For example, while many blind and partially sighted users have significant concerns about shared-use infrastructure, families of children with autism value the ability to walk and cycle side-by-side, as do users with physical disabilities who use adapted bicycles. There will be tensions between user groups, for example ‘floating bus stops’ are a good example of where there is tension, which can be mitigated but not always entirely resolved between different needs”¹⁹⁴.

212. The Cross-Party Group on Active Travel reiterated a series of recommendations it had made as part of a previous review¹⁹⁵, including:

- Equality Impact Assessments need to be overhauled and properly applied.
- Early engagement with the community and particularly groups representing the disabled is vital.
- Barriers that impede access for people using mobility aids, adapted bikes or trikes should be removed from all active travel routes in Wales.
- Active travel data should capture information about people with protected characteristics.

213. The Welsh Government confirmed that Transport for Wales’ design office and their access inclusion panel were working together to find “design solutions that work for everyone”¹⁹⁶. It was confirmed that the Active Travel Act design guidance was also being reviewed.

¹⁹³ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, Active Travel in Wales: [Consultation Responses](#), May 2025

¹⁹⁴ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, Active Travel in Wales: [Consultation Responses](#), May 2025

¹⁹⁵ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, Active Travel in Wales: [Consultation Responses](#), May 2025

¹⁹⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 164

214. The Welsh Government's new Walking, Wheeling and Cycling report for 2024-25 noted that 30 schemes during that year had delivered "new and improved dropped kerbs and tactile paving", with five schemes "focused on removing or modifying physical barriers on the walking, wheeling and cycling network"¹⁹⁷.

Behaviour change

215. The Auditor General concludes that there has been insufficient focus on "awareness raising and behaviour change", with the report noting:

"Infrastructure alone cannot generate modal shift. Although the Active Travel Fund guidance allows for promotional costs associated with the scheme, we heard consistently that capital investment in active travel must be backed up by a comprehensive approach to behaviour change. This has not been the case to date, notwithstanding a behaviour change emphasis in some of the Welsh Government's key active travel initiatives"¹⁹⁸.

216. It goes on to say:

"Stakeholders told us of the need for nationally coordinated messaging to incentivise active travel and disincentivise car use. They suggested this should involve clear, consistent, and accessible information on the benefits of active travel, with a particular focus on the people who do not currently travel actively".

217. They summarise research on behaviour change which "recommends a mix of soft and hard measures which address capability, opportunity, motivational, social, and environmental issues all at the same time"¹⁹⁹, whilst focussing on "school runs and workplace communities".

218. The Welsh Government and Transport for Wales have led on some campaigns which focus on "travel behaviour", including through Climate Action

¹⁹⁷ Welsh Government, [Written Statement: Welsh Government Walking, Wheeling and Cycling report 2024-25](#), 25 September 2025

¹⁹⁸ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 39

¹⁹⁹ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 39

Wales, whilst local authorities are also responsible for conducting their own campaigns. However, the Auditor General's report states:

“... there are concerns about the skills and resources available to support local behaviour change and about the impact that they will have without being aligned with complementary national messaging”²⁰⁰.

219. Following a commitment in the Welsh Government's 2016 Active Travel Action Plan, Transport for Wales has recently developed an “active travel promotional toolkit”²⁰¹ to help local authorities in their efforts. When asked about the in-house expertise in TfW to help with behaviour change, the Chief Executive told the Committee:

“... what we have attempted to do is to go on a journey by partnering with people who do this type of activity. We've done quite a lot of work with Public Health Wales, for example: we have seconded individuals into the organisation, and we have set up training days and training sessions, including for myself, the senior management team and the board to think about this”²⁰².

220. They described a COM-B model to behaviour change, which focusses on capability, opportunity and motivation. They described training and initiatives with local authorities that pursue this model²⁰³.

221. The WLGA told the Committee that promotion was a key element in driving behaviour change, but that this required significant effort and time, which may be a challenge given the aforementioned capacity issues at a local authority level. However, the biggest impediment to change is the integration of the routes themselves, ensuring they are safe and convenient²⁰⁴.

222. The representative from Powys County Council described their biggest challenge as persuading residents from the perception that “car is king”, with

²⁰⁰ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 39

²⁰¹ Transport for Wales, [Active travel promotional toolkit](#)

²⁰² ROP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 157

²⁰³ ROP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraphs 159-160

²⁰⁴ ROP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraphs 139-140

significant local objection when investment is made on active travel measures, instead of on the roads²⁰⁵. He explained:

“... there is this perception that the council is wasting money, because we should be spending that on improving the road, not widening the pavement. That’s a perception. There’s a lot of positive feedback as well, because this was around a school, that we’re making things safer, but there’s always, as I say... the car contingent, who may have to travel a mile and half into the town and it’s that last 500m where they’re seeing all that money spent, but they’ve had to go over umpteen potholes to get to it. It’s how we engage people in that dialogue to try and make them understand. We’re trying, but it sometimes falls on deaf ears”²⁰⁶.

223. The representatives agreed with the Active Travel Board’s call for professionally designed behaviour change interventions, with the representative from the Isle of Anglesey County Council suggesting that this should be focussed on “educating the next generation on active travel, because that’s the generation that will be using our facilities”²⁰⁷. He described facilitating a cultural shift as being “difficult”, because of the traditional dependence on cars, particularly in rural areas.

224. The Welsh Government emphasised the work being done by Transport for Wales in this area through their promotional toolkit²⁰⁸. On the role for the Welsh Government, the Director General told the Committee:

“One of the things that we’ve found... is that there are some areas where Government being actively involved in pushing a message on behaviour change works effectively, and we can also think of examples where Government’s involvement hasn’t necessarily worked. And actually, in some cases, the brand of Government involved in a behaviour change can potentially become an impediment to making that change happen. So, there’s got to be a degree of sophistication about how we do this. Some voices, some channels, are better at

²⁰⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 141

²⁰⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 143

²⁰⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 150

²⁰⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 152

*achieving behaviour change and pushing that out through a community than others*²⁰⁹.

225. The Director for Economic Infrastructure acknowledged this was an area that had been squeezed by the limited revenue funding available, as noted earlier in the report²¹⁰.

226. When asked about the Committee's experiences in Slovenia, where interventions were repeatedly tested and trialled initially, in an effort to get the maximum support, the Director General responded:

*... I think the chicken-and-egg thing is tricky. If you haven't got the infrastructure, it's quite hard to persuade people to get out of cars or come off other forms of transport, because either they don't feel safe or they don't feel that the arrangements are going to help them. On the other hand, you've got to have people willing to make use of the investment in the infrastructure as well. So, there is an element of push and pull in this in the way that you describe*²¹¹.

227. The Director of Economic Infrastructure acknowledged that it can be possible to move relatively quickly to test active travel schemes on a temporary pilot basis²¹². However, he explained that this needed to be balanced with the need for robust consultation and engagement.

Demonstrator towns

228. The Auditor General's report talked about the Welsh Government's plan for choosing a "demonstrator town" in 2024, where they would "deliver a programme of infrastructure investment alongside complementary behaviour change interventions to understand and learn from what it is possible to achieve"²¹³.

229. The WLGA were supportive of these proposals, stating:

I think it would be worthwhile to demonstrate to people that it is possible to change, and if you do all those interventions in one place and you really create networks that will take you where you want to

²⁰⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 152

²¹⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 154

²¹¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 41

²¹² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 44

²¹³ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, p39

*go, and at the same time you work with schools, you work with workplaces and you really do show people that yes, you can shift and you can change behaviour, then maybe people will start believing in it more as well, and it will become a good example. Obviously, you can learn along the way how to best engage, how to best do this, how to best work with schools, how to best work with workplaces. I think there's definitely value in it*²¹⁴.

230. Isle of Anglesey County Council agreed, though suggested having a rural example may also be beneficial too²¹⁵.

231. Transport for Wales confirmed they were involved in the demonstrator town proposals, explaining that they're focussing initially on a rural town²¹⁶.

232. The Welsh Government's Director of Economic Infrastructure told the Committee that the demonstrator town concept would be useful in learning about the role Government can play in promoting behaviour change²¹⁷. It was confirmed that Newtown in Powys had been chosen for the project, with an academic evaluation of it to be led by Bristol University. The Head of Active Travel Policy told the Committee:

*"We've already done baseline data collection, and this will be a good way of testing, in a real-life scenario, what is likely to happen when we do combine our infrastructure and behaviour change interventions in a very organised, co-ordinated way, with this strong engagement of the community"*²¹⁸.

Our view

Route prioritisation

233. The Committee concurs with the Auditor General that the pace of development is concerning, with a huge variety of potential routes identified that are simply undeliverable in the short to medium term. This, in turn, leads to confusion for the public and makes the delivery landscape more unclear. It's clear

²¹⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 152

²¹⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 22 January 2025, paragraph 153

²¹⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 6 February 2025, paragraph 168

²¹⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 155

²¹⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, 5 June 2025, paragraph 159

that emphasising modal shift should be prioritised and that the schemes that best deliver this should be prioritised above all others.

234. The Committee was concerned to hear evidence of routes not being selected in the best areas, as well as routes being insufficiently integrated to support modal shift. This means that, on occasion, positive developments are not able to have the biggest impact. We're pleased to note that Transport for Wales has observed an improvement in this area and it's hoped their prioritisation tool will assist local authorities. The Committee hopes that a move to a regional approach, as well as a change in funding structures that may allow for multi-year funding settlements, may mitigate these issues from arising in the future and encourage the adoption of schemes that might be more difficult to achieve in a single year, but that may have a greater impact.

235. However, it's possible that smaller scale interventions to join up and fill gaps in existing routes could still have a big impact. As such, the Committee considers there may be merit in Corporate Joint Committees, and the Regional Transport Plans they work to, prioritising a review of the existing networks in their area to see whether there are gaps that need to be filled, to maximise the impact of the routes already in place.

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government and Transport for Wales should work with local authorities and/or the Corporate Joint Committees, as appropriate, to ensure that the refresh of the active travel network maps consider and identify opportunities for any smaller schemes that could help address local network gaps, that could have a considerable impact on the success of existing schemes. This should include reflecting on where routes can be made more inclusive retrospectively.

Behaviour change, engagement and demonstrator towns

236. The issue of behaviour change needs to be driven at a national level, as well as local, to be as effective as possible. The Committee heard compelling evidence from the Active Travel Board about the need for a professionally designed intervention. This will require a cross-department approach that's best spearheaded through the Welsh Government, as there's a need to tie in messaging about the benefits to health, as well as educating the next generation about the benefits of active travel.

237. To date, national measures for promoting active travel appear to be standalone initiatives, but it's felt that a more coordinated long-term approach

may be more effective. Whilst Transport for Wales' promotional toolkit is a positive development, a larger national message is also needed.

238. This plan should tie in all the departments with interest in this area across the Welsh Government, the Active Travel Board, Transport for Wales and the Corporate Joint Committees, to ensure that delivery partners are invested in the message they will be working towards. The Welsh Government should reflect on how this messaging is done internationally, to ensure that best practice is being followed, with professional support to design a long-term promotional programme.

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should lead a national behaviour change programme, designed in partnership with stakeholders and delivery partners, which involves a cross-departmental approach to maximise its effectiveness. If possible, the programme should include professional support as part of the design process from experts in the field of behaviour change.

239. Whilst the Committee believes there needs to be a national message on behaviour change, the Committee also heard compelling evidence in Slovenia about trialling short-term small-scale active travel projects, which when combined with innovative local engagement was successful in winning public support for changes that initially may have proven to be unpopular. Whilst we acknowledge the need for robust consultation and engagement, it was felt that this approach of testing alterations was effective and that the engagement and consultation could happen in real-time, allowing citizens to test changes rather than expressing a view based on proposals. This local approach could work effectively alongside an overarching national active travel message.

240. This type of local engagement will only be successful if the issue of revenue funding is addressed, to ensure all local authorities have the resources to do the necessary local engagement work. However, engagement of this type could be highly effective and win public support by involving them in the design process, allow them to trial the changes and promote behaviour change as a result of their involvement.

241. The ways local authorities engage with citizens needs to be reflected on, with traditional methods of engagement more likely to get engagement from those who may have strong feelings about proposals, rather than a majority who may be neutral or broadly supportive of changes.

242. The Committee is interested by the demonstrator town concept and concurs with the Welsh Government and stakeholders that this could gather compelling

evidence about how effective various behaviour change initiatives can be. We would encourage the Welsh Government to reflect on the lessons from Slovenia, as well as other international comparisons, and consider whether some elements of these ideas could be implemented during this scheme.

243. The Committee (or its successor) would like to hear more about progress and, especially, hear about the conclusions once the initiative comes to an end. Depending on the success of the trial, it's possible that expanding this type of trial to other parts of Wales, particularly as we move into a more regional delivery approach, may be of benefit. It's possible that this type of intervention could be trialled as part of the demonstrator town initiative, as this could provide valuable evidence to all parties about the value of such an approach in driving behaviour change.

244. We believe that the demonstrator town concept could be expanded further. With the move to a regional approach to delivery, we feel it would be beneficial for there to be a demonstrator town in each region, with responsibility resting with the four Corporate Joint Committees. However, we acknowledge that there may be merit in evaluating the outcome of the concept in Newtown before committing to further trials.

Conclusion 2. In the event that the demonstrator town pilot in Newtown is evaluated to be a success, consideration should be given to expanding the approach to all regions, to help Corporate Joint Committees discharge their functions effectively, trial new approaches and gather data on what works in their area.

Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government should share the outcome of any review into the Newtown demonstrator town pilot with the Committee (or its successor), once it is available.

Meeting the needs of vulnerable individuals

245. It's clear that representatives of vulnerable individuals are dissatisfied with their involvement in the design process and more needs to be done to involve vulnerable individuals or their representatives in that process. As noted above, the Committee feels that taking a more hands-on approach to engagement could be of benefit, with more of an onus on delivery teams to go to the public, rather than expecting the public to get to them. We appreciate that there's a cost consequence to this, however the benefits could be significant, as noted above.

246. This will only be addressed by ensuring there is adequate revenue funding in place, which has been addressed earlier in the report. It's hoped that a more regional approach to delivery could ensure that there is more resource available to deliver this engagement work, which could mitigate the risk of expensive remediation works, when projects are completed that are unsuitable for cohorts of the public. By investing in this proactive approach, costs could eventually be saved in the long-term.

247. Finally, the suggested approach of trialling temporary small-scale interventions could also allow vulnerable individuals to test changes before the cost of implementing them permanently is incurred and allow feedback to have a meaningful impact on the design process.

248. It was positive to see that the Welsh Government's new Annual Report (discussed below) talked about how they were spearheading more inclusive active travel initiatives, as well as going back to address existing problems in the network. This is relevant to Recommendation 2 of this report, as remediating existing problems in the network is just as important as developing new routes.

Recommendation 6. Transport for Wales should share the outcome of their review into route design guidance. Any future design guidance should ensure that a more robust approach is taken to addressing issues faced by vulnerable individuals during the design process. Transport for Wales should also reflect on their guidance around consultation with the public and should consider a wider range of approaches, in addition to more traditional methods, to access cohorts of the public that are not currently being consulted.

6. Data, monitoring and reporting

Active travel rates and monitoring

249. The Welsh Government uses the National Survey for Wales²¹⁹ to track active travel rates for adults aged 16+ at a national level. Whilst the survey was not conducted in 2023-24, the latest results for 2024-25 have been published. Over time, the questions and the data collection practices have changed, meaning that direct year-to-year comparisons may not be possible.

250. In analysing active travel participation, the Welsh Government considers the proportion of adults who walked or cycled at least once a week. The figures for 2022-23 showed²²⁰:

- 51% of adults walked at least once a week for at least 10 minutes for active travel purposes;
- 6% of adults cycled for active travel purposes once a week.

251. The figure for walking in 2019-20 was 60%, with the Auditor General's report attributing this to "changes to everyday travel patterns due to the pandemic, including increases in home-working or online shopping", which may be a "relevant factor". It concludes:

... the figures suggest active travel rates for cycling have remained broadly static since 2017-18. Walking rates are still below pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels²²¹.

252. The Auditor General's report highlights that the "survey's sample size means it is difficult to track participation data and produce reliable statistics at a local authority level"²²².

253. The report also highlights the limitations of the National Survey for Wales data in terms of enabling the tracking of active travel participation at a local authority level and for certain protected characteristics²²³. It also explains that

²¹⁹ Welsh Government, [National Survey for Wales](#)

²²⁰ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 43

²²¹ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 41

²²² Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 43

²²³ Audit Wales, [Active Travel](#), September 2024, page 43

without data for other modes of transport, the Welsh Government is unable to track evidence of modal shift.

254. The Welsh Government and Transport for Wales are developing an “overall monitoring and evaluation framework”, however the Auditor General’s report describes this as being a “long time coming”²²⁴. The report explains that indicators as part of the framework will include:

- % of people who walk or cycle at least once a week as a means of transport;
- % of journeys by walking, cycling and public transport;
- % of schools with active travel plans; and
- kilometres of active travel infrastructure/overall length of active travel network that meets or exceeds standards.

255. A new Wales National Travel Survey is “intended to provide better data on active travel and modal shift”, with initial results to follow by “at least 2025”²²⁵. However, whilst the report acknowledges it may provide “insight into travel patterns in regions, it is not expected to provide robust annual local authority level data”.

256. Recommendation 2 of Audit Wales’ report stated:

“To support monitoring against active travel related indicators and targets, the Welsh Government should ensure it collects consistent data over time that allows long-term trend analysis and, where practical, pan-UK comparison on key measures”²²⁶.

257. In their response to this recommendation, the Welsh Government confirms:

“The National Travel Survey will replace the current method of collecting active travel data through the National Survey for Wales (NSfW) for long-term monitoring and trend analysis. It will collect data on a broader range of measures and provide more information, and

²²⁴ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 43

²²⁵ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 44

²²⁶ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 11

the active travel questions for adults will be slightly amended, whilst it will not gather school travel data for children”²²⁷.

258. The completion date for this recommendation is set for Autumn 2026, when the National Travel Survey data is expected to be available.

259. The Auditor General also made a recommendation on the new National Travel Survey itself, stating:

“As it finalises plans for a new National Travel Survey, the Welsh Government should re-appraise the costs and benefits of collecting enough data to support meaningful analysis and scrutiny of active travel rates at local authority level”²²⁸.

260. In response, the Welsh Government confirmed that, by January 2025, it would re-appraise the costs and benefits of collecting enough data to support meaningful analysis and scrutiny of active travel rates at local authority level²²⁹. It indicates that budget pressures may mitigate against this in early tranches of the National Travel Survey.

261. However, it recognises that sub-national data at either local authority and/or regional level would be of value given the increasing role of Corporate Joint Committees and their responsibility to develop and deliver Regional Transport Plans. It suggests a subnational breakdown may be possible by aggregating data across multiple years.

262. When asked to reflect on the new national framework, Transport for Wales described the new National Transport Survey as being a “key component” for them, stating that whilst it has initially been funded for three years, there would need to be a commitment to ensure that it continues long into the future²³⁰. When asked about the development of the survey, the Chief Executive told the Committee:

“I genuinely believe we’re taking a pretty robust approach to the national travel survey. We’ve been engaging with a large range of

²²⁷ Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales, 7 November 2024

²²⁸ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 11

²²⁹ Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales, 7 November 2024

²³⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 6 February 2025, paragraph 170

people, including people who use the data, but equally importantly people who have got a very strong understanding of statistics to make sure that the data is valid and can be properly used for policy making and planning purposes”²³¹.

263. They also provided further information about the indices that would be contained in the framework, including:

“length of active travel networks that meet or exceed Welsh Government standards; the percentage of the population within 400m and 800m of an active travel route; the percentage of short distances made by walking or cycling; the percentage of journeys to a railway station by walking, cycling or bus. We’ve also got a measure in there around air quality. So, it is a wide-ranging set, which will align with other things and also support... the Wales national travel survey when we get that live”²³².

264. When asked about whether the National Travel Survey will allow for local authority-level comparison, the Welsh Government’s Director for Economic Infrastructure told the Committee:

“I think the question there will be where is the sweet spot. It’s something we’d very much like to do. Once you get down to local authority level, there are some very small local authorities, and it has quite significant implications for sample size if you need statistical rigour, which I think we do, given the value-for-money challenges that we’re seeking to address. So, it may be that we reflect from a regional perspective rather than individual local authorities”²³³.

265. It was acknowledged that the survey would collect entirely new data which meant there would be no continuity in data. Whilst the funding for the survey was confirmed to be ring-fenced for a period, the Director of Economic Infrastructure emphasised that continuing this should be “very high on the list” of priorities, as each iteration will provide “even greater benefit”²³⁴.

²³¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 6 February 2025, paragraph 179

²³² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 6 February 2025, paragraph 172

²³³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 5 June 2025, paragraph 178

²³⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 5 June 2025, paragraph 180

Stakeholder perspective

266. Stakeholders providing oral evidence to the Committee concurred to the weaknesses in data in Wales, with the representative for Living Streets explaining:

“... there is some work to do in terms of monitoring and evaluation, and the national travel survey in England does have more data that is gathered, so there is a discrepancy there”²³⁵.

267. The Vice-Chair of the Active Travel Board concurred, explaining that the insufficient monitoring and data collection meant that it was hard for them to “understand how many people are using these (active travel) routes”, going on to say:

“... we know that there is an upward trajectory of active travel in pockets, but it’s how we actually capture that data, and the way we’re capturing that data at the moment just isn’t effective”²³⁶.

268. These messages were echoed by local authority representatives, with Cardiff Council telling the Committee that there was a “lack of evidence”, with the need for “greater support (for) evidence gathering at every level”²³⁷.

269. Despite the issue with data collection, representatives from the Active Travel Board, Sustrans Cymru and Living Streets reported pleasing local results which showed that increased investment was having an impact, even if the data itself remained static for a variety of reasons, not least changes to the methodology of the data collection²³⁸.

270. When asked what data local authorities would like to see included in the new National Travel Survey, the WLGA told the Committee that monitoring the rate of active travel to schools and workplaces would be a valuable metric²³⁹.

271. Isle of Anglesey County Council noted that it would be “beneficial to understand how many people use active travel routes for health and well-being

²³⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 4 December 2024, paragraph 11

²³⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 4 December 2024, paragraph 13

²³⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 22 January 2025, paragraph 34

²³⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 4 December 2024, paragraph 32 and paragraph 34

²³⁹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 22 January 2025, paragraph 168

reasons, and leisure reasons", as well as for active travel purposes²⁴⁰. Cardiff Council emphasised that the data had to allow meaningful analysis at a local authority level²⁴¹.

272. On monitoring, the representative from Cardiff Council acknowledged that they weren't monitoring the success of their projects "sufficiently well", explaining that whilst they perform scheme-level monitoring, that this was not being done consistently and that further support was required, as they are so busy with intervention²⁴². Powys County Council explained that monitoring needed to happen over a long-term period, rather than immediately after construction, given that active travel development tends to be an iterative process²⁴³.

Reporting

273. The Auditor General concluded that the Act's reporting requirements were "not being met consistently and a Welsh Government review of the operation of the Act is overdue"²⁴⁴.

274. The report explains:

"The Welsh Government has provided a template report to help local authorities discharge their annual reporting duty. The Welsh Government does not mandate its use and the Act does not include sanctions for non-compliance. There have been instances where local authorities have not submitted the required annual reports to the Welsh Government in the set timeframe. However, the Welsh Government has informed us that the position has improved over recent years"²⁴⁵.

275. It also states:

"The information provided by local authorities across these different reporting mechanisms varies considerably. Some authorities provide limited data, particularly on baseline information, which makes it

²⁴⁰ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 22 January 2025, paragraph 172

²⁴¹ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 22 January 2025, paragraph 173

²⁴² RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 22 January 2025, paragraph 178

²⁴³ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 22 January 2025, paragraph 179

²⁴⁴ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 44

²⁴⁵ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 44

difficult to ascertain the impact that investment has had on active travel rates and to monitor progress over time”.

276. Recommendation 4 of the report concludes that the new monitoring and evaluation framework should “clarify expectations around objective setting and a proportionate, but more consistent, framework for reporting benefits that extend beyond changes in active travel rates”, including on indicators such as air pollution²⁴⁶. In their response, the Welsh Government states:

“We are working on this with Transport for Wales, who have shared draft local monitoring guidance with local authorities to improve the consistency of local level data collection. This will be reviewed further once we have considered the information provided in the most recent set of scheme level Annual Performance Reports from September 2024 and the Annual Reports required under the Active Travel Act, which will be submitted in October 2024. This will include both clear expectations regarding objective setting as well as how wider benefits can be captured. The work undertaken for local active travel monitoring will inform work on the development of monitoring frameworks for the emerging Regional Transport Plans”²⁴⁷.

277. Transport for Wales has now published its updated framework.

278. Recommendation 5 suggests that, in response to more robust monitoring and evaluation, the Welsh Government “should revert to the publication of a fuller annual report on active travel”. It’s suggested that this could include evidence on active travel behaviour at a national and local level, expenditure data on active travel spending and progress towards active travel targets, amongst others²⁴⁸.

279. The Welsh Government committed to trialling the suggested format, using data from 2023-24. However, it cautions:

“... it should be noted that due to the gap in data collection for the National Survey for Wales in 23-24, there will be no updated data for active travel rates from this source, and there will be a further gap for

²⁴⁶ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 11

²⁴⁷ *Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales*, 7 November 2024

²⁴⁸ Audit Wales, *Active Travel*, September 2024, page 11

2025- 26 because NSfW (National Survey for Wales) data collection will be paused post 2024-25. Data will be available for 2024-25”²⁴⁹.

280. The report also concludes that the Welsh Government’s annual reporting has been “limited in scope” and notes that it has not completed a review of the operation of the Act within the expected timeframe²⁵⁰. At the time of the report, the previous evidence on this latter point was a statement from the then Minister for Climate Change in Plenary on 23 November 2023, who committed to a review “within five years”²⁵¹.

281. In response to Recommendation 10 of the Auditor General’s report, which called for a “comprehensive, post implementation review of the Act in line with the scope envisaged when the Act was passed”²⁵², the Welsh Government has now committed to completing a review by July 2025, with a further review to follow within five years²⁵³.

282. In relation to the reporting requirements for local authorities under the Act, the representative for Isle of Anglesey County Council described the process of completing this as getting easier, which he attributes to the work of the aforementioned active travel officers’ group, working with Transport for Wales²⁵⁴. Cardiff Council’s representative agreed, but went on to say:

“I think, currently, really, it’s a list of outputs. It’s not really giving measures of change. So, that would be the space in which, with improved monitoring, resourcing and measures in place, that reporting could be done on an annual basis. Albeit accepting that you’re not going to see massive change if you’re looking at mode share, mode split, over a 12 month period, but at least you can build up a picture over a period of time if you have that data to hand”²⁵⁵.

²⁴⁹ Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales, 7 November 2024

²⁵⁰ Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 45

²⁵¹ RoP, Plenary, 21 November 2023, paragraph 437

²⁵² Audit Wales, Active Travel, September 2024, page 11

²⁵³ Letter from the Director General for Economy, Energy and Transport Group to the Auditor General for Wales, 7 November 2024

²⁵⁴ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 22 January 2025, paragraph 194

²⁵⁵ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 22 January 2025, paragraph 196

283. The WLGA cautioned however that capacity concerns at some smaller local authorities meant they were already struggling “simply delivering and making the bids”, with the reporting requirement adding a lot of additional work²⁵⁶.

284. The Head of Active Travel Policy at the Welsh Government acknowledged that the reporting of data from local authorities was “varied”, explaining that this was down to the data they collected and how it was formatted, the timeliness of submission and the completeness of the data when it is received²⁵⁷. They went on to say:

“... we do recognise that there are huge constraints and demands on local authority officers, and reporting and monitoring feels like something that is less rewarding maybe than actually delivering schemes. So, we have some sympathy for the difficulties that they face and that we face as a result of it”²⁵⁸.

285. The Welsh Government published its Walking, Wheeling and Cycling report 2024-25 in September 2025²⁵⁹. It provided updated data about active travel use, further information about their approach to monitoring and details on some of the schemes completed during the year, including information on funding.

Our view

286. The Committee concurs with the Auditor General’s conclusions in this area and it’s abundantly clear that the data collection practices have been entirely inadequate in recent times, despite the significant expenditure on active travel interventions.

287. It’s hoped that the National Travel Survey for Wales provides a sustainable basis for data collection long into the future, as it’s vital that local authorities, regional partners and the Welsh Government are equipped with the data they need to monitor the effectiveness of active travel projects across a wide range of indices.

288. Whilst the Committee will need to wait and see how this survey performs in the near future, it’s vital that the funding for it is protected long into the future,

²⁵⁶ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 22 January 2025, paragraph 197

²⁵⁷ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 5 June 2025, paragraph 193

²⁵⁸ RoP, Public Accounts and Public Administration, 5 June 2025, paragraph 194

²⁵⁹ Welsh Government, Written Statement: Welsh Government Walking, Wheeling and Cycling report 2024- 25, 25 September 2025

otherwise it will have proven to be a waste of resources and time. This survey can only be a success if it is committed to long-term. It's hoped that our successor Committee will monitor these issues into the future, to ensure this happens.

Conclusion 3. It's vitally important that long-term funding for the new National Travel Survey is protected for the long-term, to allow for meaningful comparison of active travel data in the future.

289. The Committee is pleased to see that the Act has recently been reviewed. We ask that the Welsh Government shares this review with us, to inform any further monitoring work from the Committee in this area.

Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government should share the outcome of their post-implementation review of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 with the Committee at the earliest possible opportunity.

Annex 1 List of oral evidence sessions.

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Date	Name and Organisation
4 December 2024	<p>Rhiannon Letman-Wade, Deputy Chair Active Travel Board</p> <p>Ruth Billingham, Head of Campaigns and Public Affairs Living Streets</p> <p>Stephen Cunnah, Policy and External Affairs Manager Sustrans Cymru</p>
22 January 2025	<p>Kaarina Ruta, Transport Assistant, Welsh Local Government Association</p> <p>Matt Price, Team Leader, Active Travel and Road Safety Team Cardiff Council</p> <p>John Forsey, Head of Highways, Transport and Recycling Powys County Council</p> <p>Dylan Llewelyn Jones, Strategic and Sustainable Transport Lead, Isle of Anglesey County Council</p>
6 February 2025	<p>Kat Watkins, Access to Politics Project Officer Disability Wales</p> <p>Andrea Gordon, External Affairs Manager Guide Dogs Cymru</p> <p>Kirsty James, Policy and Campaigns Officer (Wales) RNIB Cymru</p>
5 June 2025	<p>Andrew Slade, Director General Economy, Energy and Transport Welsh Government</p> <p>Peter McDonald, Director of Economic Infrastructure Welsh Government</p> <p>Natalie Grohmann, Head of Active Travel Policy Welsh Government</p>

Annex 2 List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All Consultation responses and additional written information can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Reference	Organisation
ATW 01	Lee Waters MS
ATW 02	Active Travel Act CPG
ATW 03	Active Travel Board
ATW 04	Bevan Foundation
ATW 05	Public Health Wales
ATW 06	Children's Commissioner for Wales
ATW 07	Welsh Local Government Association
ATW 08	Royal Town Planning Institute
ATW 09	Royal Town Planning Institute
ATW 10	Cycling UK
ATW 11	Age Connects Morgannwg
ATW 12	Guide Dogs Cymru
ATW 13	Disability Wales
ATW 14	Age Cymru
ATW 15	RNIB Cymru
ATW 16	Cardiff Cycle City
ATW 17	Swansea Wheelrights
ATW 18	Beicio Bangor
ATW 19	Ramblers Cymru