

Explanatory Memorandum to the Traffic Signs (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations and General Directions 2026

This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for Transport and Digital Connectivity and is laid before Senedd Cymru in conjunction with the above subordinate legislation and in accordance with Standing Order 27.1.

Cabinet Secretary's Declaration

In my view, this Explanatory Memorandum gives a fair and reasonable view of the expected impact of the Traffic Signs (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations and General Directions 2026.

Ken Skates MS

Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport
9 February 2026

PART 1

1. Description

1.1. The Traffic Signs (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations and General Directions 2026 ("TSRGD 2026") is made by the Welsh Ministers under sections 25, 64(1), (2) and (3) and section 65(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 ("RTRA 1984").

1.2. The purpose of this Welsh Statutory Instrument is to amend the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 ("TSRGD 2016") in relation to Wales. The TSRGD 2016 sets out what traffic signs in Wales must look like, what they mean and how they may be placed and illuminated.

1.3. This Welsh Statutory Instrument amends the TSRGD 2016 so that in specified circumstances some of the requirements for zebra crossings set out within it will not apply. The Welsh Statutory Instrument permits highway authorities to omit the zig zags (controlled area) and illuminated beacons (Belisha beacons) where a zebra crossing is placed on a minor road within 5 metres of the junction with a major road, and the speed limit on both roads is 20 mph or lower.

2. Matters of special interest to the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

None.

3. Legislative background

3.1. Section 25 of the RTRA 1984 allows the relevant authority to make regulations about the precedence of vehicles and pedestrians, and about the movement of traffic (including pedestrians), at and in the vicinity of crossings. Section 64 of the RTRA 1984 provides a power for the design of traffic signs (including lines and marks on a road) to be specified through regulations made by the relevant authority. Section 65 gives power to the relevant authority to give general directions to traffic authorities about how traffic signs are placed. Such general directions shall be exercisable by statutory instrument. The Welsh Ministers are the relevant authority in relation to Wales for functions of the relevant authority under section 64 and 65.

3.2. Under section 134(11) of the RTRA 1984, a statutory instrument containing regulations made by the Welsh Ministers under sections 25 and 64 is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of Senedd Cymru.

4. Purpose and intended effect of the legislation

4.1. The purpose of this Welsh Statutory Instrument is to support highway authorities to promote safer walking and wheeling and to make our cities, towns and villages better places to live and work.

4.2. The amendments made by this Welsh Statutory Instrument will make it possible for highway authorities to install zebra crossings on minor roads right at, or within 5 metres of, the entrance of a junction with a major road (where the speed limit on both roads is 20mph or lower) — directly where pedestrians naturally want to cross. This is often where there are already dropped curbs and tactile paving, which will help people with disabilities cross the road more safely. The TSRGD 2016 does not currently allow placing a zebra crossing so close to a junction because of the space required for the controlled area.

4.3. The amendments made by this Welsh Statutory Instrument will mean it is easier to install these side road crossings, as compared to a traditional zebra crossing with illuminated Belisha beacons.

4.4. It is the Welsh Government's ambition to give greater priority to walking and wheeling and support an inclusive agenda of 'Travel for All'.

4.5. It will be mandatory for vehicles to stop to give precedence to people crossing at a side road zebra crossing in the same way as with existing zebra crossings. This will improve the safety and comfort of people walking and wheeling in built-up areas, as well as making their journeys quicker.

4.6. The intention is to support highway authorities to make walking and wheeling a more attractive option for short trips, thus enabling modal shift. This Welsh Statutory Instrument will also support the objectives of many Welsh Government strategies including Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021 and the goals set out in other legislation such as the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

5. Consultation

5.1.1. Under s.134(10) of the RTRA 1984, before making regulations under a provision of the Act (except s.103(1), s108 to s110, Schedule 4, Schedule 8 and Schedule 12), the Welsh Ministers must consult with such representative organisations as they think fit.

5.1.2. A four-week stakeholder consultation was undertaken from 17 November 2025 to 15 December 2025. All traffic authorities (including the Strategic Road Network Division for the trunk road network in Wales) and emergency services in Wales were invited to respond to a consultation on the proposed changes to the TSRGD 2016.

5.1.3. 13 responses were received by the Welsh Government in the consultation period. There were no contentious issues raised in the stakeholder consultation that the Policy team felt could not be dealt with in the accompanying guidance. There was overall agreement with the proposed amendments.

5.1.4. Details of the stakeholder consultation, including the responses received, can be made available on request.

5.2.1. Under section 65(3ZC) and 134(13) of the RTRA 1984, the Welsh Ministers are also required to consult with the Secretary of State before making this statutory instrument. The Secretary of State for Transport was consulted on 26 November 2025, and a letter of response was received from the Secretary of State (SoS) for Transport on 2 January 2026. In relation to England, the SoS confirmed that they are considering when and how to update TSRGD, including to permit side-road zebras, but no timetable has as yet been set for this.

PART 2

6. Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)

6.1 Options

6.1.1 Option One – Business as usual

It is currently not possible to install zebra crossings at the mouth of junctions on the pedestrians' desire line, due to the requirements in legislation for illuminated globes and zig-zag markings, as this would mean having to set the crossing away from the desire line. Often however, local authorities do provide dropped kerbs and tactiles at mouths of junctions, demonstrating that those locations are the preferred location for people to cross.

The Highway Code changes in 2022 reinforce pedestrian priority at side roads and codify the rule that drivers should yield to pedestrians wanting to cross at these locations. However, there was little publicity regarding the change to the Highway Code, and many drivers appear unaware and do not comply. A study¹ found 'that only 31% of drivers complied with the rule when turning from a main road into a side road where pedestrians were approaching or waiting at a junction to cross.'

Highway Code Rule 170 states drivers should give way to pedestrians when turning in or out of junctions, less than a quarter (23%) of drivers say they always do. Nearly half (48%) say they give way most of the time but alarmingly, a fifth (19%) admit they don't stop very often while 6% never do.² A study commissioned by the Department for Transport (DfT)³ found that '*Whilst most participants reported being aware of The Highway Code, half of those over 35 years old had not looked at it in the last five years.*' Of the participants interviewed for the DfT report when asked about what road safety interventions they saw as the most effective, only 14% said updating the Highway Code would be effective, yet 87% said they thought infrastructure solutions would be effective.

Almost 1 in 3 adults (29%) surveyed by YouGov⁴ have said that they have had a collision or a near miss at a side road.

Not doing anything means relying on driver courtesy and means that it is not as safe as intended.

6.1.2 Option Two - Amend the Legislation

Amending the legislation will allow highway authorities to install zebra crossings at the mouth of side road junctions, at a lower cost than traditional zebra

¹ Sarah E. O'Toole, Nicola Christie, Damian Poulter; [Driver compliance with the 2022 UK highway code rule on giving way to pedestrians at side roads: A naturalistic observation study - ScienceDirect](#), Journal of Urban Mobility, 8 (2025) 100140;

² [Report on Motoring | Motoring Insights | RAC](#)

³ [Sharing our roads safely - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ [YouGov polling commissioned by Living Streets in April 2021.](#), This hyperlink is no longer live on the Living Streets website. An archived copy of the press release was made available to Welsh Government by Living Streets, for review for this Integrated Impact Assessment.

crossings, as they do not require the use of zig zag markings and illuminated beacons which require an electrical supply. Therefore, they provide a low-cost solution, making walking and wheeling safer, more accessible and convenient, allowing people to safely cross at side roads at their desire line. Research conducted by Flower and Parkin⁵ found that ‘overall, it appears that junction enhancements have a beneficial effect on reinforcing priority. These changes in proportions of yielding have happened because behaviour of both the people crossing and drivers has changed because of the physical nature of the Marked Priority and Design Priority. The changes assist in confirming the rule of the road that turning drivers should give way to people crossing a side road.’

Transport Research Laboratory’s (TRL) report on the side road zebra trials in Cardiff found that there was a substantial and statistically significant drop (60% at Bishops and Hawthorn, and 39% at Evansfield) in the number of cases where the pedestrian went second, providing strong evidence that there was a significant increase in propensity to give way.⁶ Early findings from Westminster trials show overall driver yielding compliance rose from 30% to over 80% and pedestrian satisfaction surveys (500+ responses) found that 93% say zebras are a good idea; 72% report drivers now stop.

6.1.3 Alternative Options

It has been demonstrated that adopting a non-legislative approach has not brought the desired results, as explained above. The Highway Code only codifies what drivers should be doing anyway, but the change has not led to a significant change in driver behaviour.

6.2 Costs and Benefits

Option One – Business as usual

This is the baseline option and, as such, there are no additional costs or benefits associated with this option.

Option Two – Amend the Legislation

The monetary costs for this proposal have not been quantified, as the legislation gives highway authorities the powers to use side road crossings, it does not mandate them to do anything. It is currently unknown what the level and pace of uptake will be. The Welsh Government has committed to monitoring the use of side road zebras as part of their wider active travel infrastructure monitoring. The cost for installing and maintaining side road zebra crossings will fall on the highway authority and will either come from their own Council budget or through the Regional Transport Fund that the Corporate Joint Committees will administer going forward.

⁵ Jonathan Flower & John Parkin (2025) Effect of side road junction design enhancements and flows on priority for crossing pedestrians and cyclists, *Transportation Planning and Technology*, 48:4, 693-711, DOI: 10.1080/03081060.2024.2399625

⁶ [Side Road Zebra crossings: Road user behaviour and perceptions | GOV.WALES](#)

Comparing the cost of a simple side road crossing to a standard traditional zebra crossing is not easy, because the costs will depend on the location, design costs and traffic management. However, the upfront and ongoing cost of a side road crossing are generally believed to be lower. Some illustrative costs have been obtained from Cardiff Council following the trials in the area. The side road zebras at the three locations in Llandaff North and Whitchurch Village, had a total cost (including design, supervision, fees etc) of £30,735. By comparison, the installation of a single zebra crossing with no raised table is estimated to be £40k-£50k depending on the location and traffic management requirements and not yet including design fees. Cardiff Council estimated that the energy cost for a standard zebra crossing (2x poles, 4 lanterns) is approx. £189/ yr.

It is not possible to present an estimate for the aggravated costs as there are too many variables that are site specific, that may or may not be incurred. For example: design, resurfacing, draining, kerbing, traffic management and Traffic Regulation Order costs.

This finding that side road zebra crossings are less expensive than a traditional zebra crossing is supported by estimates from Westminster Council. Following the trials in the area, the Council's cabinet member for streets reported:

Traditional zebra crossings cost £60,000 to £120,000 each to install, due to the electrical connections required. By comparison, the "side road zebras" can be installed for £20,000 to £25,000, a "fraction of the cost", including the cost of monitoring.⁷

Enabling highway authorities to use side road crossings is expected to result in road safety improvements and, consequently, to encourage active travel. The health benefits of increased levels of walking and wheeling are well documented, with active travel associated with lower levels of obesity, diabetes and hypertension and also wider mental health and wellbeing benefits⁸. In addition to benefitting the individual, this is expected to result in avoided costs to public services. There are also potential economic benefits with evidence showing active travel can increase productivity and lead to lower levels of workplace absenteeism⁹.

Active travel can reduce household transport costs and support local economies by improving access to town centres and high streets. People walking and wheeling to high streets make more visits and spend more money per visit than other groups, supporting local businesses.¹⁰ Public attitude data indicates many residents feel "locked into" car use due to lack of alternatives, suggesting suppressed demand for viable choices.¹¹ The net economic benefit of investing

⁷ [Revealed: 'Unofficial' zebra crossings are put brakes on selfish London drivers | The Standard](#)

⁸ <https://closer.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/CLOSER-Active-Travel-Briefing-Note-June-2023.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/media/4471/4471.pdf>

¹⁰ The Pedestrian Pound (2024) Living Streets <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/policy-reports-and-research/pedestrian-pound/>

¹¹ Walk Wheel and Cycle Trust (2024). Walking and Cycling Index 2023 – UK aggregate report. <https://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/media/13416/sustrans-2023-walking-and-cycling-index-uk-aggregated-report.pdf>

in climate change mitigation, such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions from transport, on the economy have been well known for decades.¹²

The costs of installing, maintaining and communicating about these side road zebra crossings will in the long-term be outweighed by the safety benefits, the public health and wellbeing, social and economic and environmental benefits that come with greater uptake of walking and wheeling in our communities.

6.3 Competition Assessment

The competition filter test has been completed. The proposed policy change is not expected to impact on levels of competition in Wales or the competitiveness of Welsh businesses.

6.4 Post implementation review

Although, there is no proposal to review the legislation as such, as this is a minor amendment to the use of standard road markings, there might be future amendments to the TSRGD in Wales and hence an opportunity to review the application in practice of this legislative change. The Department for Transport has also committed to making similar changes at the earliest opportunity and there might be a possibility to then align legislation on zebra crossings across the UK.

The Welsh Government has committed to monitoring the use of side road zebras as part of their wider active travel infrastructure monitoring. The cost for installing and maintaining side road zebra crossings will fall on the highway authority and will either come from Welsh Government funding for the trunk roads or for the local authorities from their own Council budget or through the regional transport fund that the Corporate Joint Committees will administer going forward.

6.5. An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken. [Side road zebra crossings: Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

¹² The Stern review (2006) His Majesty's Treasury
https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100407172811/https://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stern_review_report.htm