

NTP 11

Nick Ramsey AM
Chair, Enterprise Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

13 February 2012

Dear Nick

Reprioritisation of the National Transport Plan and Scrutiny of the Minister for Local Government and Communities

Thank you for the opportunity to feed in our thoughts of the reprioritisation of the National Transport Plan. There are a number of areas that we are concerned about.

It is noteworthy that the presentational focus of the refreshed NTP is on schemes that support sustainable transport, however, it is not clear what proportion of the available funding will be dedicated to schemes that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or integrate local transport.

There is specific mention of nine schemes to deliver 'Prioritised investment to deliver walking and cycling improvements'. This is very welcome though it should be noted that these are schemes are benefiting from end of year under spend and in total amounts to only some £1.5 Million.

Lower down on the reprioritised NTP is a commitment to complete the dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys road (by 2020). This commitment was initially valued at £150 Million. It is not clear what the latest cost is but it is likely that it will require a large proportion of the capital budget and therefore prevent many of the other commitments on sustainable transport to be developed at the scale that is necessary to meet the WGs carbon reduction targets.

Walking and Cycling Action Plan

The Prioritised National Transport Plan recommits the WG to "Deliver our Walking and Cycling Action Plan targets (NTP reference 11), with additional funding being made available for this".

However, the action plan is considered by officials to be a 'policy commitment' and therefore does not have a dedicated budgets but is regarded as being delivered by a number of other schemes, including the Regional Travel Plans. However the RTPs do not have specific guidance instructing them to achieve these targets. It is therefore unsurprising that the Walking and Cycling Action Plan targets are not on course.

For example, there is a target to triple the percentage of adults whose main mode of travel to work is cycling by next year from a baseline of 1.4%. The annual progress report on the Action Plan published last September noted that in 2010 the figure stood at just 1.6%. A further target is to increase number of people undertaking walking for recreation to 50% from a baseline of 40%. The latest available data shows that the proportion of adults who have done any walking (over 2 miles) in the past four weeks has fallen to 34 per cent for 2008/09 from the baseline of 40 per cent.

Given that the Government are so badly behind it would be helpful for the committee to explore how it is planned to achieve the targets by 2013 – which have all party support.

Sustainable Travel Centres

Sustrans warmly welcomed the recommendation in the Enterprise Committee's report on regenerating town centres that the Government establish a rigorous performance monitoring framework and commission a detailed, independent evaluation of the Sustainable Travel Centres.

The NTP commits to making available £5m over 3 years to maximise investment in Sustainable travel centres. There are 5 Sustainable travel centres (Cardiff, Mon / Menai, Haverforwest, Carmarthen and Abersytwyth). The announcements amounts to roughly 1/3 Million pounds each per year. In our view this is spreading the funding too thinly. Furthermore the funding is Capital only.

The evidence from the English Sustainable Travel Towns was that concentrated investment in both infrastructure and behaviour change (capital and revenue spending) in a town, underpinned by targets and highly motivated local authorities could produce cuts in car use of around 10%. I am not aware on any targets for the Welsh Sustainable Travel Centres, nor indeed of any publicly agreed strategy on their purpose.

The project to date has been principally infrastructure focused. Of the £28.5 Million budget in Cardiff, only some £1 Million was allocated to 'Smarter Choices' measures to address behaviour change. Measures that benefited public health, such as the OY Bike scheme, were therefore established on too small a scale.

The subsequent decision to have a large Personalised Travel Planning project in Cardiff funded directly by WG and managed outside the STC programme, has helped redress the balance. It has also gone some way to address the lack of baseline monitoring and evaluation in the project to be able to measure change.

The Sustainable Travel Centres have primarily been transport initiatives and have not successfully worked in conjunction with partners in health, education and leisure services to date. Haverfordwest, however, has involved local NHS sites and colleges who are seeking support with their travel plans; and Cardiff has recently co-opted health professionals onto its steering group. The potential for maximising the impact of the projects in public health terms however have not yet been realised.

The evaluation of the three English Sustainable Travel Towns (Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester) showed significant modal shift across the three towns between 2004 and 2008:

- Reductions in car-as-driver trips of between 7% and 9%. A reduction in car driver distance of between 9% and 13%. This compares with a fall of about 1% in medium-sized urban areas over the same period.
- Bus trips per person grew substantially, by up to 35%, compared with a national fall of 0.5% in medium-sized towns.
- The number of day to day cycle trips of less than 100km grew substantially in all three towns, by up to 113%, compared to a 34% national decline in cycling in medium-sized towns over the same period.
- The number of walking trips per head grew substantially, by up to 14%, compared to a national decline in similar towns of 17%.

The evaluation drew three principal lessons from the English experience: delivering travel behaviour change is a long term project; it requires changes in infrastructure and measures to

raise awareness (hard and soft measures); and it requires complementary measures to 'lock in' the traffic reduction to ensure the changes are sustained.

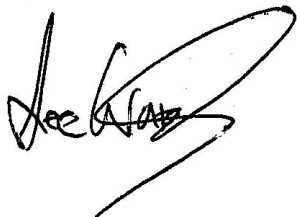
Sustrans believes that the experience in England demonstrates the need for:

- 1 Early stages of programme should include extensive awareness raising among key internal and external stakeholders using data and messages from baseline travel behaviour research.
- 2 Strong communication element must be built in to sell the town as a national or European leader.
- 3 The need for clear identification of physical activity and public health objectives, and getting health promotion professionals involved in maximising the positive potential of the modifications to be carried out in each town.
- 4 Integration between the Sustainable Travel Towns programme and delivery of other local transport schemes.
- 5 Consistent monitoring framework including behavioural surveys and cycle / bus passenger / road traffic counts from the outset.
- 6 Steering group to oversee and advise Towns (more in the style of the English Cycling Demonstration Towns than Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns).
- 7 Strong leadership needed from the public sector. Large employers should lead the way with schemes to promote sustainable transport – for example, car sharing; cycle lockers, storage and showers; removing car parking subsidies.
- 8 Clear strategy for taking work forward at the end of demonstration phase, including capacity-building within planning and transport departments to ensure sustainable travel is prioritised in policy and investment decisions

I appreciate this may be more than you can consider at the meeting to discuss the reprioritisation of the National Transport Plan and may be something the committee would like to look at separately.

Thanks again for the opportunity to feed in our views

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Waters', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

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