

**1. To assess the implementation and operation to date of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, including:**

***How far the stated objectives of the Active Travel Act are being achieved;***

**1.1 The Main objective of the Act is to make –**

**“...active travel the most attractive option for most shorter journeys”**

Authorities that followed the process as stipulated in the Act and consulted, audited and mapped routes on the WG Active Travel platform are now being penalised as no funding is available for the routes that are “shovel ready” These have been placed on a reserve list of schemes.. Monies have been made available for feasibility studies which should only be needed for long term schemes (up to 15years) and not needed for INM routes in the short and medium term if they were audited properly. Those LAs that did not audit prospective routes are being rewarded and those that are ready to build are now being stalled. This prevents the objectives being achieved and weakens the Act.

**1.2** Should WG fail the INM submission of Authorities this would have a negative effect on LA officers’ morale and lead to backtracking in the process which would inevitably mean more resources being channelled into the initiative. If they passed all Authorities then those that had gone the extra mile would see it as a disincentive to continue in that vein engaging what is at this point in time limited resources to the process. There needs to be some clarity. If the WG want local pressure groups to police LAs then this is unlikely to happen as evidence from the limited response seen at the consultation phase points to a general lack of interest on a local level despite the extensive advertising of the process.

***The effectiveness of subordinate legislation and guidance made under the Act;***

**1.3** Subordinate active travel legislation should be under review and the fine tuning should come from LAs. Hopefully this process will be carried out at regular time periods and comments noted.

**1.4** The guidance emphasised the development of new routes but this was impractical in the tight boundary areas of the rural market towns. We as an authority looked at cycle and pedestrian safety in many streets rather than concentrating on a limited number of proposed routes. The limited response from the general public was that they wanted to see improvements in the everyday routes they used. These being investigated and audited led to short term “shovel ready” schemes requiring finance which have now been added to a reserve list for funding with the more ambitious schemes financed in the form of feasibility studies.

**1.5** The walking and cycling audit process scoring mechanism was such that where a factor was not relevant to a specific site, by default it was awarded the full maximum number of points. This meant that a false score was the end result and therefore the audit tool was not fit for purpose. The audit form was based on factors found in the urban environment which meant that rural authorities had to utilise a tool which was not applicable.

**1.6** The walking audit tool was very subjective and as such it was impossible to outsource the work to an external body as the form could be interpreted differently by different people and there is then no consistency in approach. This put added pressure on Local Authorities.

**1.7** Consultation as referred to in the guidance states the importance of engagement before producing an ERM and INM. With regard to the ERM the consultees did not understand the relevance and wanted to suggest new routes that could be developed but this was part of the next INM phase. Some LAs began with producing plans showing proposed INM where others consulted with a blank canvas to ascertain what communities required and then published the results of these consultations to get a finalised version of the INM plan. There needs to be a consistency in approach and WG should specify the minimum level of consultation required. Consultation is an expensive exercise with translation costs and the design of questionnaire and preparation of plans being time consuming. The production of plans for the consultation process was a protracted procedure as those developed off the WG system were unclear and were not user friendly for public consultation. A lot of time was spent converting them to PDFs for the consultation process. The demographic which engaged in the consultation was limited and a concerted effort had to be made to go out and talk to specific groups in the community rather than advertise an event and expect them to attend. The 12 week consultation period stated in the guidelines was not adhered to by some LAs. Those that did follow the guidelines felt that this time period was excessive. By following the guidelines they had limited time to oversee the process which further increased the work load on staff.

***Any action which should be taken to improve the effectiveness of the Act and its implementation;***

**1.8** Technical assistance and mapping workshops need to be given a high priority to support local authorities where there are limited resources to take on this stage in the process. Training is required with regard to the Design Guidance with the needs of the urban traffic engineer very different to those engineers working in a more rural environment who are more restricted in what they can actually do within conservation areas set in historic towns. There should be a review of the Act from a rural perspective. The Bill, when it was produced, stated that the legislation had “an urban focus and those rural routes might be appropriate for connecting settlements where the distance and gradient make it possible to travel actively.” The rural dimension in the Act feels like an add-on; no real thought has gone into how rural settlements can engaged in the process with fundamental changes needed to be introduced to make it fit for purpose in rural Wales.

**1.9** The WG active travel platform produced for use by Local Authorities is not compatible with the GIS formats that Local Authorities use daily. This meant that in effect data was double handled; requiring Local Government Officers to input and check routes which have already been mapped on GIS systems owned and maintained by the Local Authorities. The system should be compatible for ease of use.

**1.10** As the system is not public facing, the public are therefore unable to view the ERM or INM outputs. Whilst Local Authorities are required to host these maps on their websites as PDF documents, this is wholly unsuitable in the majority of cases to adequately display the range of data contained on the system.

**1.11** A simpler process is required with a public interfacing map which would allow stakeholders to directly plot their route suggestions/improvements. Authorities could then audit these and this perhaps might even have encouraged more stakeholder participation. The system as it stands seemed to be all about process which was full of difficulties from start to finish and impeded active travel objectives

**1.12** Increased communication between LAs and WG will improve the effectiveness of the Act and its implementation.

***How far the Act has represented, and will continue to represent, value for money.***

**1.13** Technical difficulties associated with audits and the mapping system led to wasted resources and officer time.

**1.14** WG allocated £200,000 to the process among the 22 LA's which equates to £9,090 per council on average. The financial support was adequate to deliver the bare minimum of compliance to the Act. If more resources had been available the assessments of future demand for route usage would have been more detailed and schemes prioritised further. The squeeze on council finances and highway budgets and the amount of work if the process is carried out properly could lead to raised expectations which may not be able to be fulfilled. LA's could find themselves being committed to numerous schemes that cannot be delivered.

***2. To assess the effectiveness of wider active travel policy in supporting delivery of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, including:***

***The effectiveness of the Active Travel Action Plan;***

**2.1** The Action Plan needs to be reviewed at regular intervals so it is an up to date document that reflects progress being made.

**2.2** The Action Plan states that LAs have a duty to promote AT but how this is achieved is not specified. WG was supposed to have developed a promotion and engagement toolkit collecting best practice and available resources. This is yet to be made available.

**2.3** LA's have to feed into the Action Plan with regard to monitoring the results of certain targets but LA's have no resources to keep track of these indicators. The population travel data is taken from the National Survey but indices specific to travel to school mode comes from LA's who have no resources to effectively monitor this.

***Whether sufficient funding and capacity are available to support implementation of the Act itself and wider active travel policy;***

**2.4** Funding arrangements post INM completion should have been considered before now in order to give an impetus to Local Authorities and for them to see some long term commitment from WG. With regard to capacity, the skills level available in LAs is limited with few cycling officers employed by LAs.

***The operation of the Active Travel Board;***

**2.5** The WLGA usually forward notes from Active Travel Board meetings but we have not received any from the 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2017 meeting. An e-mail directly to LAs from WLGA works well when it comes to the dissemination of the Board's activities. The minutes will be more useful rather than a summary report which is on the website.

**2.6** It's not very clear from the agenda or the meeting notes what the strategic plan is? For example, there is no significant agenda item referring to review of "the Plan". There is also little reference to performance data or target setting. In other words, there doesn't appear to be much strategic focus on where we are now, and where we want to be in 4 years' time (this is compounded by no commitment to a funding structure beyond the next 12 months)

**2.7** The Board should provide the forum to share information, oversee the work of Task and Coordinating groups and to act as a strategic task and coordination forum. The Board should be taking strategic decisions on managing the direction of Active Travel. Of particular concern is the lack of feedback to LAs, with regard to the process. The process and flaws in the delivery by LA's who are stifled by the process is not covered yet feedback must have been received by WG officers. This should be at the forefront of the Board's role to ensure the Act is delivered.

***Whether active travel is integrated effectively in wider Welsh Government and local government policy.***

**2.8** The Robeston Wathen bypass on the Trunk Road A40 was a great opportunity for including a SUP over part of its length, but was missed. The Llanddewi Velfrey by-pass again on the TRA40 is proposed without a SUP. The first bypass scheme to be approved after the AT legislation was introduced namely the Caernarfon and Bontenwydd bypass did not consider the Act either. The Act obliges the Welsh

Government to provide AT facilities alongside new roads and this is a major failing by Welsh Government who is responsible for the legislation.

**2.9** The Welsh Government should have utilised the audit tools associated with the Act to assess the Walking and Cycling facilities on Trunk Roads in Wales before sending these out to LAs. It is only now this is being done. There would then have been some clarity rather than LAs having to make a judgement on the Trunk Road network which may not fit in with the TR network strategic plans.

It was unclear whether Trunk Roads, which are managed by the Trunk Road Agencies rather than Local Authorities, should be included in the INM. This was not satisfactorily resolved and there is now a need for the Trunk Road Agency to retrospectively consider the matter in partnership with Local Government.

**2.10** The ERM failure by the majority of LAs was totally unexpected. The guidance stated that WG wanted a couple of sentences as to why routes had failed in the statements. Further information after submission was then required from those authorities who failed. A few LAs that took out their statement thereby did not show a complete network was rewarded with a pass. (The LAs that used Sustrans to do their ERMs failed yet Sustrans was used by WG to deliver workshops on AT and impart best practice. If Sustrans cannot get it right how an LA with little knowledge of WG thinking can be expected to deliver)

**2.11** WG engineers and policy makers were at odds with regard to the ERM. Planners wanted routes with statements included in the ERM as they wanted a full network of routes mapped. WG engineers wanted to fail ERMs that did not meet new design standards. This was a fundamental issue that should have been resolved before LAs submitted plans.