

Please find my response below to your inquiry regarding The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. I apologise the delay in responding, however I have recently been committed with completion of grant funding bids to recent deadlines requested by the Welsh Government (WG) which has unfortunately created a backlog of correspondence. Please note these comments may have also been incorporated within a regional response to be submitted from Mid Wales.

Positives of the Active Travel Act:

- There now appears to be greater awareness of Active Travel within different departments in Local Authorities, whereas perhaps this was previously viewed in isolation as merely a 'Highways' responsibility. Collaboration with Planning Departments has increased and it is proposed to hold regular meetings to continue partnership working and information sharing.
- Consultations on the mapping projects has seen good engagement with schools, which has been known to be difficult to achieve in the past, in order for them to find spare time within their busy curriculums, however participation was improved when it was explained that the sessions could be used as evidence for their school working towards 2 of their measures: Healthy Living and Eco School targets i.e. often helping them to attain Green Flag status etc.
- This Authority has delivered some high quality schemes with limited funding in recent years, which has helped make a positive difference on the ground, particularly at school locations.

Negatives

- In recent years this Authority has received late allocations of in-year grant funding which has placed pressure on staff resources to deliver before the financial year-end, particularly as this coincides with transport grant bid preparation and submission and also with delivery of existing grant funded schemes, again by year-end. If allocations were made earlier, then our annual work programmes and overall budget management would be improved.
- The Act places duty on LA's to undertake continuous improvements and new routes, with provision of Capital funding to help achieve this, however, an increasing network results in increased maintenance

responsibility which is presenting challenges for LA's due to reducing budgets.

- There has been no recognisable promotion or advertising of Active Travel by the Welsh Government – it appears they have devolved all responsibility for this onto LA's. It is questionable whether the majority of the general public in Wales are aware of 'Active Travel' and what this means?
- The A/T mapping platform, which is the responsibility of the WG, was delayed for both the ERM and INM preparation and when the system was made available, it was riddled with software failures and glitches – particularly for the initial ERM process.
- The A/T maps are not particularly user-friendly for the general public (the map legends are confusing) and it is questionable if these have delivered the intention of the A/T Act made at the outset.
- This Authority was mindful not to raise expectations of the general public following promotion of a 'what routes do you want to see introduced in your community?' type message from certain sectors as part of the INM consultation process. New or improved routes often present considerable challenges for LA's particularly land availability and acquisition and funding.
- There are a few areas that WG could explore in terms of possible improved legislation:
 1. Advertising / A-Frame boards for Businesses. These are becoming increasingly commonplace on the high street and can reduce footway widths and even present hazards for the visually impaired and disabled community. The size and positioning of these could be looked at bearing in mind that there is a balancing act here as LA's also wish to support local business and the economy.
 2. Parking on Footways. This presents a considerable hazard for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and especially those using pushchairs or mobility scooters because access / routes can be blocked and often forcing these users into the highway which is an increased road safety risk. LA's can only enforce in this scenario if there is an existing parking restriction in situ. The police, outside of London, also have limited powers of enforcement in this regard.
- As mentioned in the regional report, rural schemes do not appear to have eligible funding criteria under current grant schemes available e.g. Devils Bridge Phase 3 and The Ystwyth Trail.