

Summary of Active Travel Board

21 February 2019

Air Quality

The Board was given a presentation on Public Health Wales' (PHW) work on air quality. The presentation highlighted the Air Quality Evidence, Improvement and Innovation work stream, and the ambition to develop an All Wales Evidence Centre for Air Quality providing robust evidence and support. The Cwm Taf pilot project was briefly discussed which will consider air quality data against wider contextual socio economic and health data to provide greater understanding of risks and will aim to identify integrated interventions.

The Clean Air Plan for Wales is due to be published later this year which will consider all aspects of improving air quality including legislation and will also focus on vulnerable groups and areas of deprivation. Potential legislation will also be identified to 'plug the gaps' of current legislation. A new website - Air Quality in Wales - has also been created to raise awareness, which includes information on the Young Dragon's programme.

The Board also briefly discussed 20mph speed limits, electric cars and how they have minimal air quality benefits compared with the internal combustion engine, traffic reduction as a key component of improving air quality and encouraging more walking and cycling and the Health Wise Wales survey. This survey, which members of the public sign up to, includes health related questions on core and additional modules, including travel behaviour. The survey has currently 28,000 signed up participants with the aim to reach 200,000.

Lee Waters AM, Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport

The Deputy Minister introduced himself to the Board and explained some of his early priorities. He outlined concerns with grant funding a wide range of schemes, instead preferring to focus funding on schemes which demonstrate ambition and will provide a greater impact on walking and cycling. The Board agreed with this approach.

The DMET stressed that whilst he wants to reward ambition, he also wants to support those local authorities who are lagging behind to become ambitious. A meeting with local authority officers in March will discuss barriers to implementation and what support is needed. He highlighted that he saw effective consultation and engagement as critical to improve the next round of Integrated Network Maps and that he was looking at providing specialist support to local authorities to achieve this.

The Board highlighted areas for the DMET to focus on, including how the new Planning Policy Wales (PPW) can make a practical difference, achieving a step change in active travel consideration for 21st Century Schools, how active travel will be reflected in the Wales Transport Strategy and the balance between capital and revenue funding. It was also raised that a permanent bottom line for sustainable transport funding should be established to maintain momentum. The Board also discussed cross-departmental working, with Rights of Way Improvement Plans highlighted as one area for closer integration, green infrastructure and monitoring of active travel.

Updating the Design and Delivery Guidance and Designated Localities

The Board was provided with a brief update on the review of the Delivery Guidance, which will run alongside the review of the Design Guidance. Sustrans Cymru is undertaking this work, with both draft documents to be published for consultation later in the year.

Road Safety

The DMET raised the possibility of changing the approach to road safety policy, from a focus dominated by casualty reduction to one that places more emphasis on encouraging active travel. The Board discussed the definition of road safety, as the freedom from the risk of harm, and whether targets should be rate based rather than absolute. The need to retrain engineers was highlighted, along with looking at the safe systems approach to road safety.

The Board did not raise any concerns regarding reframing road safety towards active travel. It was suggested that shifting walking and cycling training interventions, currently funded through the Road Safety Revenue grant, to active travel funding, could positively change the perception of the training and open this funding to wider interventions as well.

Active Travel to School National Advisory Group Action Plan

The hands up survey validation has now been complete and found in favour of the methodology. This survey is due to be introduced to 3 local authorities before being rolled out across Wales in September 2019. The hands up survey will take place in late September each year and could eventually replace the current National Survey data on school travel.

Active Travel Conference

The Active Travel Conference has now been moved to 4 July 2019, to accommodate another conference happening on the original date. The conference will be held in the Temple of Peace in Cardiff, with Welsh Government officials and Cardiff Council working together to develop the programme.

AOB

The Cycle to Work scheme is expected to gain approval to raise the purchase price limit. The changes will mean employers will be able to determine their own limit. This will allow participants to purchase e-bikes and adapted cycles and other higher priced bikes through the scheme. The Cycle to Work Alliance has developed a communication plan to ensure employers are aware of the changes.

Date of next meeting: 6 June 2019