



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 16 February 2021

Scrutiny of Active Travel Consultation Process

Purpose:	This report provides background and advice to the Committee in support of its scrutiny of the Active Travel Consultation Process.
Content:	The report outlines the purpose of scrutiny and relevant advice ahead of discussion with the Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management, Councillor Mark Thomas.
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided, ask questions, and make comments and recommendations as necessary.
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management
Lead Officers:	Martin Nicholls, Director of Place Stuart Davies, Head of Highways & Transportation
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 A number of public concerns about the implementation of the Council's Active Travel Plans have been brought to the attention of scrutiny, relating to at least two specific active travel schemes, namely Olchfa and Mayals Road that are currently being delivered.
- 1.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management, Councillor Mark Thomas, has been responding to emails, and other contact, from individuals including all correspondence that scrutiny has been made aware of. This has included concerns regarding the work on the bridleway at Clyne Valley Woods as part of

the Olchfa Scheme. Other concerns relate to the nature of the works, community / user consultation, environmental impact, health and safety concerns, and whether due process has been followed.

- 1.3 Whilst the Cabinet Member is responding to every public contact on this issue, one of the common themes emerging from the public feedback is around the extent of public consultation undertaken to inform decision-making on Active Travel plans. Because of the persistence of concerns, the Committee agreed that it should call in the Cabinet Member to ask about and discuss the Council's Active Travel plans and processes.
- 1.4 The Committee's focus will be on consultation, so the scrutiny session will enable the Committee to understand what consultation processes the Council utilises and why; and whether, in light of experience, that could be improved, and any wider learning points for the future.
- 1.5 The Committee intends to avoid focus on details regarding individual schemes and specific issues, but look at the overall experience in the development, design and implementation of Active Travel schemes, and how we consult with those most impacted, as well as the public at large, and how that informs decisions and actions.

Some background information follows in Section 2 and 3 of this report, which has been taken from:

- Statutory Guidance for the Delivery of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 issued by the Welsh Government (October 2014)

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 (which came into force in September 2014) introduced duties on local authorities to make active travel the most attractive option for most shorter journeys. Its purpose is to enable more people to undertake active travel, meaning more people can enjoy the benefits of active travel. It is about encouraging people to leave their cars behind and use active travel, where it is suitable for them to do so. The Active Travel Act also contributes to the goals and ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Section 6 under Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 also means that local authorities should embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into their early option development, through scheme design, to day-to-day management activities.
- 2.2 'Active travel' means walking and cycling as an alternative means to motorised transport for the purpose of making everyday journeys. An 'active travel journey' means a journey made to or from a workplace or educational establishment or in order to access health, leisure or other services or facilities. This definition covers short-distance commuting, travel to school and other educational facilities, travel to the shops,

travel to leisure facilities and so on. Where routes could not be used to access a workplace or educational establishment, health, leisure or other services or facilities, then they are not suitable to be considered as active travel routes. This definition excludes routes that are for purely recreational use (for example, routes intended as mountain bike trials) as well as routes that do not connect to facilities and services.

- 2.3 The Active Travel Act requires local authorities in Wales to produce active travel maps and deliver year on year improvements in active travel routes and facilities. It requires highways authorities in Wales to make enhancements to routes and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in all new road schemes and to have regard to the needs of walkers and cyclists in a range of other highway authority functions. It also requires the Welsh Ministers and local authorities to promote active travel journeys in exercising their functions under this Act.
- 2.4 The Welsh Government has issued both Delivery and Design Guidance. The Delivery Guidance sets out the processes and procedures that local authorities should follow to meet their duties under the Act. This includes guidance on the preparation of existing route maps, integrated network maps, what maps should explain, consultation requirements, and the arrangements for approval and revision process for the maps. The Design Guidance deals with technical standards for active travel routes and facilities, including what to consider in determining whether a route is suitable, based on its condition, gradient and other factors. The Design Guidance is considered essential to local authorities decisions on whether a route is appropriate for active travel, and what steps should be taken to improve their routes.
- 2.5 The Act requires two maps to be produced: the existing routes map and the integrated network map.

Existing Routes Map

The existing routes maps will show the routes within the designated areas that are suitable and appropriate for making active travel journeys. The existing route maps are primarily intended to inform the public of the safe and suitable routes for active travel and give pedestrians and cyclists the information that they require in order to make a decision about how and where to travel. These routes could be on road, shared, segregated, or traffic-free. They can be for walkers or cyclists, or both. They will also show crossing points and the facilities that exist to support active travel on these routes, including cycle shelters/parking/storage and public toilets. The existing routes maps will need to be accompanied by a statement of the extent to which, if any, routes do not meet the standards set out in the Design Guidance.

Integrated Network Maps

The integrated network maps should set out the plans of the local authority for the next 15 years. The integrated network map is mainly a tool for local authorities to enhance their forward planning of active travel, enabling them to align their plans across their different departments. It will be of interest to the wider public, and as such will need to be available and accessible. However, it is primarily meant to be used to support infrastructure development planning. Some plans will be more advanced than others. It is likely that plans will range from “shovel ready” schemes due for delivery in the next couple of years, to intentions to address the active travel infrastructure at some point in the next 15 years. Where schemes are under active development, they should be depicted in detail, for example, new paths marked, crossings etc. Schemes for delivery in the medium term (within the next 5 years) should have a clear intention for delivery but remain dependent on funding availability, planning permission or other issues. Schemes for delivery in the longer term (more than 5 years away) are likely to be more aspirational, speculative or awaiting defined scope, the area and the outcome sought are known, but the precise solution has yet to be identified.

The Act requires that the maps are submitted to the Welsh Ministers for approval.

- 2.6 In practice, according to the Delivery Guidance, the best active travel routes will be widely used for recreation. While the aim of the Act is to promote walking and cycling as a mode of transport, the Welsh Government also strongly supports recreational walking and cycling and cycle sport. Walking and cycling for leisure is strongly linked to a person’s willingness to travel actively. A high level of recreational walking and cycling on a route is an indicator of a high quality route, and should be considered a sign of success.
- 2.7 Funding has been made available to local authorities by the Welsh Government to create and consult on route maps, and to deliver the active travel schemes set out in their local transport plans as part of the local transport fund. Welsh Government funding for active travel will only be granted for improvement of existing routes and construction of future routes that appear on the authority’s approved Maps. The Council has secured £12.7million over the past three years leading to Swansea’s active travel networks increasing by 25% over the past three years to a total length of 128km by the end of the current financial year. Swansea Council has been awarded £5,117,500 from the Welsh Government’s Active Travel Fund 2020/21, of which £773,000 is defined as ‘core allocation’ intended for feasibility, design and minor works projects.

2.8 **2020/21 projects**

- Mayals Road
- Townhill North (The Ravine)
- Townhill Road
- St. Helens
- Sketty Park
- Olchfa

Further information about these projects appears on the Council website: <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/activetravelschemes>

3. **Active Travel Consultation and Engagement**

- 3.1 Guidance states that Prior to the submission of Maps to Welsh Government, there should be a formal public consultation, which should run for a minimum of 12 weeks.
- 3.2 In preparing maps, the Act requires that local authorities consult with all persons who have requested that they be consulted and any other persons it considers appropriate. When considering which persons to consult, in addition to those who have requested to be consulted, local authorities should specifically seek to engage with groups with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010. Similarly, local authorities should also take proactive steps to consult children and young people and support their engagement with the implementation of the Act, reflecting the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 3.3 Local authorities are given discretion over who else they consult, but, guidance states that local authorities should consider consulting with:
- delivery partners, including: adjoining local authorities, Community/Town Councils, One Voice Wales, National Park authorities (where relevant), Natural Resources Wales, Canal and River Trust, Welsh Water Dwr Cymru, Severn Trent Water and Dee Valley Water, Network Rail, the Crown Estate, National Trust, Woodland Trust and the Welsh Government;
 - the public, including: any Local Access Forum established for the area or any part of it, walking and cycling groups, transport campaign groups, local health promotion groups, local Chambers of Commerce, large employers, trade unions, educational establishments, youth centres and disability groups and children and young people.
- 3.4 Different types of consultation will be accessible for different people. Guidance highlights the importance of making use of a range of different types of consultation including face-to-face engagement and online consultation, which may include use of social media. Local authorities need to consider the appropriate level of detail to be provided when consulting with the public. Technical engineering

drawings are likely to provide more detail than is necessary and prove inaccessible to the layperson. Any schemes should be clearly marked and explained, but any technical details should be made available on request rather than forming the basis of consultation materials.

- 3.5 It will be important to be clear in the public consultation that the integrated network maps are aspirational maps. Whilst they will include proposals for new infrastructure and improvements to existing infrastructure that are under active development, they will also include possible plans for the next fifteen years which are subject to planning permissions or might be affected by future events. It will be important to make this clear in public consultation to ensure that the process does not give rise to unrealistic expectations of what will be delivered and by when.
- 3.6 The Committee should note that the Welsh Government published revised Active Travel Guidance in February 2020 for consultation. The outcome of this is yet to be published by Welsh Government. All schemes currently being pursued are designed in accordance with the current Active Travel Design Guidance (2014) until it is formally replaced.

4. Further Information

- 4.1 Further information has been provided by the Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management to support the Committee discussion.
- 4.2 A copy of Swansea Council's consultation reports on the Existing Routes Map (2015) and Integrated Network Map (2017), which are published on the Council website, are appended to this report. Also attached are associated maps and route lists.
- 4.3 The Cabinet Member has also supplied for information a copy of letters sent to Ward Members communicating the successful active travel schemes for 2020/21. Also provided is additional correspondence with local councillors and letters to residents relating to Sketty Park and Olchfa Schemes, as an example of what was sent out regarding specific Active Travel schemes.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications from this report.

Background Papers:

- Statutory Guidance for the Delivery of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 issued by the Welsh Government (October 2014)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Swansea Active Travel Act Existing Route Map Consultation Report - 2015

Appendix 2 - Swansea Active Travel Integrated Network Map Consultation Report – 2017

Appendix 3 – Existing Routes Map and Route List and Integrated Network Map and Route List

Appendix 4A – Letters from Cabinet Member to Local Ward Councillors

Appendix 4B – Emails to Local Councillors and Letters to Residents (Sketty Park and Olchfa Schemes)