



**Report of the Director of Place  
Policy Development Committee – 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020**

**Active Travel Programme Development & Delivery**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide a briefing to the Policy Development Committee on the development and delivery of the Active Travel programme.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Joint Local Transport Plan for South West Wales 2015 – 2020 Active Travel (Wales) Act (2014) Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)
<b>Consultation:</b>	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that the Policy Development Committee note the content of the report.
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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The City & County of Swansea has planned for and consistently delivered one of the most ambitious active travel programmes in Wales over the past three years. The promotion of journeys by foot and bicycle is considered to be one of the key drivers to meeting a range of national and corporate policy objectives, and will serve to create a more sustainable and healthy environment for those who live and work within the City & County area.
- 1.2. This report will serve to set out the legislative and statutory requirements that have been placed upon Welsh Local Authorities to plan and provide for active travel as well as providing a summary of recent progress.

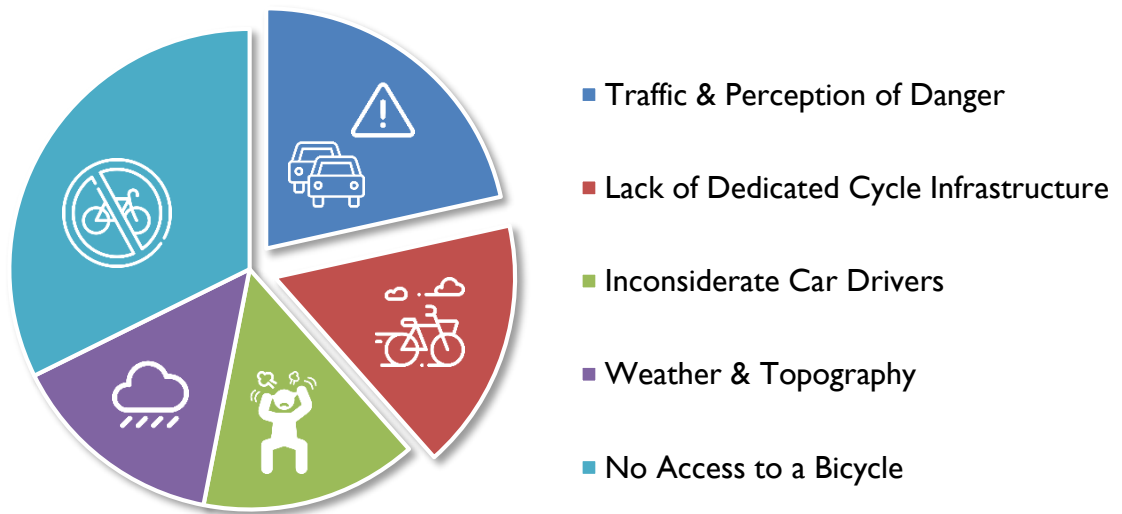
## **2. Policy Framework**

- 2.1. The Welsh Government introduced the Active Travel (Wales) Act in 2014 as one of the first new pieces of legislation introduced since the devolution of the required powers. The Act is expected to encourage the uptake of walking and cycling for utility journeys as part of regular daily life.
- 2.2. The Act introduced three principal requirements for the twenty two local authorities:
  - To map out the existing infrastructure for walking and cycling;
  - To plan for improvements and expansion to these networks;
  - To make year-on-year improvements to these networks.
- 2.3. Whilst the Active Travel (Wales) Act has the most explicit role in promoting the uptake of walking and cycling journeys, there are a number of supporting policy and legislative documents which bolster and deepen the requirement for better planning and provision for the benefit of our communities. The additional policy framework is summarised below:
  - Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015);
  - Climate Change Act (2008);
  - The Road to Zero Strategy (2018);
  - Wales Transport Strategy;
  - Manifesto commitments to deliver the Wheelrights Manifesto.
- 2.4. Swansea Council is required to provide annual reports to the Welsh Government in respect of the Active Travel (Wales) Act to demonstrate its annual efforts to meet its aims and objectives. This acts as an additional check and balance to ensure that progress is made consistently on an annual basis.

## **3. Barriers & Trends**

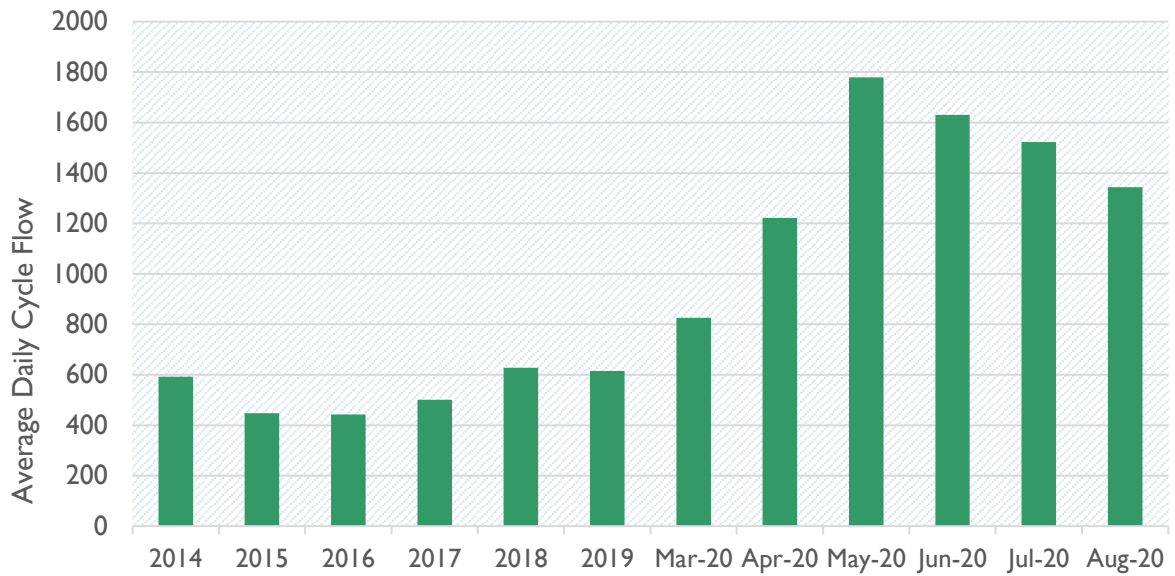
- 3.1. The barriers to the uptake of active travel are fairly well researched and understood, particularly with regards to the drive for modal shift away from conventional motorised transport.
- 3.2. The majority of research papers on this issue highlight a common set of barriers as summarised in the figure below.

Figure 1 – Common Barriers to Active Travel



- 3.3. Whilst it is not within the Council's ability affect some of these barriers, namely the local topography and prevailing weather conditions, the Local Authority can focus on some of the substantive issues such as the danger posed by traffic and the provision of dedicated cycle infrastructure.
- 3.4. Levels of active travel across Wales have remained largely flat for the past five years or so. Some localised areas will have experienced significant growth due to land use policies, such as been experienced with the Fabian Way Bay Campus where levels of cycling increased from around 120 movements per day in 2014 to circa 600 in 2019. The prevailing trend has however been otherwise fairly uniform across the network.
- 3.5. The Covid pandemic and ensuing local lockdowns that have been in place for much 2020 have elicited a significant change in the number of people walking and cycling on the shared use networks. The Council monitors its active travel networks from a series of fixed cycle counters spread across the network. These counters have demonstrated growth of two to three times the volumes recorded in the pre-Covid period. This is obviously a positive contribution to the policy aims set out above, but has also quite quickly demonstrated that at the busiest times, the Council's active travel network is unable to cater for this level of demand. There is some indication that these abnormally high levels are now beginning to subside now that inclement weather has returned in the early autumnal months.
- 3.6. Given the unprecedented nature of recent months, it is not possible to determine with any level of certainty what the medium and long term implications of the pandemic will be, whether to bolster or to detract from the active travel policy agenda.

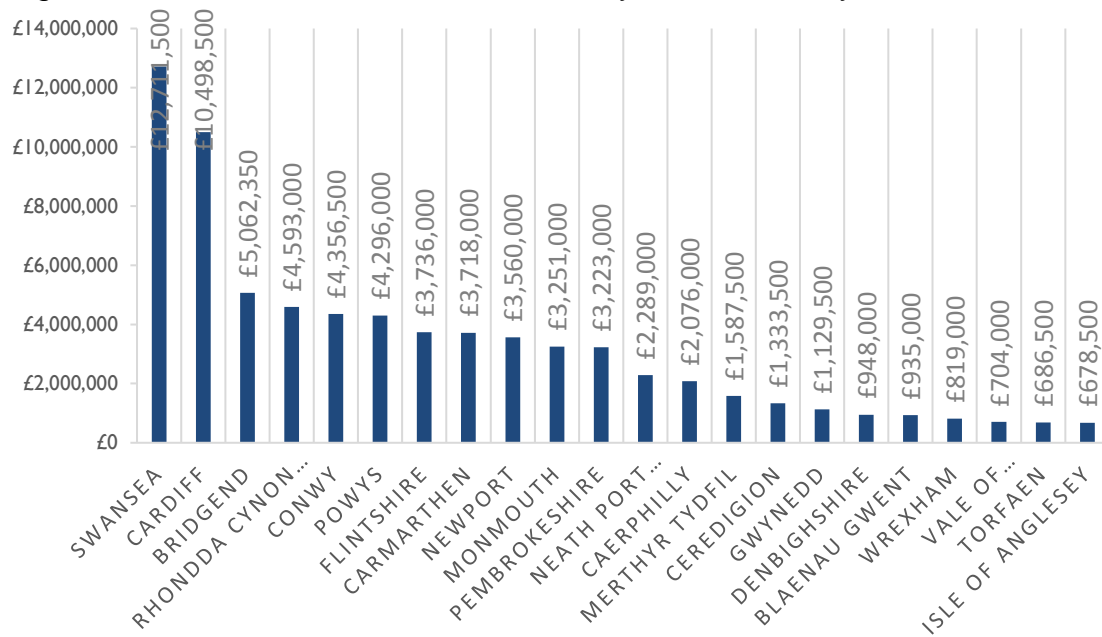
Figure 2 – Blackpill Cycle Counter 2014 to August 2020



#### 4. Active Travel Programme

- 4.1. The Welsh Government announced in late 2017 that a new funding stream was to be made available to support the aims of the Active Travel (Wales) Act. Swansea Council has bid for this funding stream in each of the years since 20218/19 and has been very successful in securing funding from to improve and expand the walking and cycling network across the County area.
- 4.2. The figure below demonstrates the relative performance of each of the Welsh Local Authorities in securing funding from the Active Travel Fund over the past three financial years.

Figure 3 – Active Travel Fund Allocations by Local Authority 2018/19 – 2020/21



### PROJECTS

- 4.3. The consequence of having secured £12.7million over the past three years is that Swansea’s active travel networks have increased by 25% over the past three years to a total length of 128km by the end of the current financial year. The County benefits from a particularly good quality strategic network which now bounds the main urban conurbation area. The target for Officers is therefore to now increase its penetration into the residential areas in order to provide infrastructure from within the community. Presently 60% of the resident population is within 500 metres of an off-road cycle route; this is a figure which will need to continue to increase if active travel is to become a viable alternative to the car.
- 4.4. Swansea Council has developed a number of active travel projects over the past few years. Whilst it would be impractical to list all of these, a few have been selected below to highlight some of the most significant examples:
- 4.5. *SWANSEA NORTHERN LINK*: Whilst Swansea’s urban areas largely benefit from National Cycle Network Routes 4 & 43, which bound the city and its suburbs on three sides, the northern communities have remained disconnected from this. The Swansea Northern Link seeks to address this deficiency by constructing a new off-road cycle route from Skewen in the east to Gorseinon in the west, passing through Llansamlet, Morryston, Llangyfelach and Penllergaer. This project will deliver a new route measuring 16.5km and was commenced in 2018/19. To date, 10.7km of the entire project has been delivered.

- 4.6. *KINGSBRIDGE LINK*: This project will link the communities of Gorseinon, Kingsbridge and Grovesend to Gowerton and importantly the onward National Cycle Network Route 4 links accessible from there. Despite its rather modest length of 1.4km, it has been in development for over a decade for a variety of complex technical issues. Nevertheless the completion of the project will provide direct access to the network for an additional 13,832 residents. The project is due to complete in November 2020.
- 4.7. *TRALLWN LINK*: This is a good example of a project which begins to penetrate into residential areas, linking Swansea's residents to the extensive strategic network. The 1.5km link was completed in 2019. The link enables residents in Trallwn to access a variety of routes in Swansea valley enabling direct access to a range of local services and employment.
- 4.8. *BIRCHGROVE LINK*: Similarly to the project above, the link to Birchgrove was completed in 2019 and provides off-road, traffic free access for the 7,392 residents in this community to access the extensive network which skirts the district.

#### **BAYWAYS PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN**

- 4.9. Whilst the Council has expended considerable resource in expanding its active travel networks and its penetration into the residential areas over the past few years, it has given significantly less attention to the promotion of this infrastructure.
- 4.10. To this end, Highways & Transportation contracted with an external communications agency in 2019/20 to develop a brand and campaign to promote its active travel infrastructure.
- 4.11. The campaign has increased the perception of the programme and is continuing to expand opportunities with employers and user groups to ensure that the benefits of active travel modes are fully realised.

#### **FORWARD PROGRAMME**

- 4.12. Having achieved such prominent levels of investment and expansion to its network, Swansea Council will now be keen to ensure that this trend is maintained. Highways & Transportation Officers are therefore continually working to ensure there is a good supply of projects in development to allow for the continually improvement that is required by the Active Travel (Wales) Act.
- 4.13. *CORE FUNDING*: The Welsh Government makes an annual hypothecated funding allocation to each of the Local Authorities in Wales to support the ongoing development of projects. Swansea's allocation for 2020/21 is £773,000, which is being used to support the development of twelve

projects, some of which includes minor physical works. A plan for these projects is included in Appendix A.

- 4.14. *ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK MAP*: The Council is required to update its forward plan for new active travel infrastructure by the end of December 2021, by producing what is known as the Active Travel Network Map (ATNM). This resource is a record of existing and planned active travel infrastructure that Council expects to deliver over the next fifteen years. The Active Travel (Wales) Act requires that this map be updated every three years.
- 4.15. The Act requires that the development of the ATNM be underpinned by an extensive public consultation exercise. Given the good progress the Council has made in expanding its networks over the past three years, this engagement will be all the more important in identifying the areas of greatest need for expansion. The Council is currently in the process of procuring external resource to provide the resource and support for the planning and consultation exercises that will be required. The public consultations are expected to commence in early 2021.

## **5. Community Benefits**

- 5.1. Highways & Transportation Officers have worked to capitalise upon the investments made in recent years through expanding its investments to wider community benefits in conjunction with its Delivery Partners.
- 5.2. The projects have been constructed using local small to medium sized enterprises to achieve best value and maximise opportunities for local employment and to support the a local sustainable supply chain.
- 5.3. The benefit of supporting local contractors has resulted in skills development through apprenticeships and the Bricks and Mortar Initiative, which are essential in supporting the current skill shortfall within the industry.
- 5.4. The Contractors have fully engaged with the Authority in supporting their local communities through a number initiatives and charitable donations. This approach was recently accredited with the prestigious Value Award through Construction Excellence Wales.

## **6. Equality and Engagement Implications**

- 6.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

6.2 The development of the projects described above will all be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment during their development.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **8. Legal Implications**

8.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

**Background Papers:** None

### **Appendices:**

<b>Appendix A</b>	Summary Plan of the Core Funded Projects
<b>Appendix B</b>	Completed Active Travel Schemes
<b>Appendix C</b>	Active Travel Promotion
<b>Appendix D</b>	Skills Development
<b>Appendix E</b>	Community Benefits