

Active Travel Act Existing Route Map Consultation Report



1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Active Travel (Wales) Act came into force in September 2014. It places statutory duties on Local Authorities in Wales to:

- Map
- Plan
- Make continuous improvements to and
- Promote

Active Travel networks for pedestrians and cyclists. Active travel in this context is defined as walking and cycling journeys for a specific purpose (travel to work, education, health care, leisure facilities) rather than simply for walking or cycling journeys.

1.2 The first deadline for Local Authorities is the submission to the Welsh Government of an Existing Route Map (ERM). The ERM should show the current walking/cycling network and include :

- What facilities are available to users (parking, crossings etc.)?
- Whether the routes meet the Active Travel Design Guidance
- Where and why there are gaps in the network or sections which do not meet Design Guidelines but there is a valid reason still to include them
- What consultations responses were received and how they have influenced the ERM

1.3 This document seeks to address the last bullet point in 1.2.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The original deadline for the ERM and supporting data was in September 2015. However, due to delays in getting access to the all Wales mapping prepared for the Welsh Government, the Minister agreed to extend the deadline to 22nd January 2016.

2.2 Just prior to receiving notification of the extension to the ERM deadline, the City and County of Swansea (CCoS) has started a public consultation. This was not halted when the extension became apparent and the extra time was used to focus instead on consulting with young people specifically on the ERM.

2.3 So there were two specific stages to the ERM consultation and these are described in following sections.

2.4 The ERM consultation was challenging in terms of engagement. Largely because people were being asked whether they agreed with the routes identified and the audits undertaken. But our experience was that people really wanted to focus on and talk about what improvements they wanted and where they would like to see new routes or links in future (which is the Integrated Network Map stage of the Active Travel Act).

3.0 ERM CONSULTATION PART ONE

- 3.1 Since the Active Travel Act had come into force, CCoS had already received contact from 12 individuals who wished to express an interest in the Active Travel consultation. In addition to this, the Council sought to engage with a wide range of stakeholders and seek their views on the ERM.
- 3.2 The consultation involved checking the online ERM to see whether it reflected consultees experiences of using walking or cycling networks. Then considering whether the audits prepared by the CCoS were a fair representation of their experience of the quality/ condition of the network.
- 3.3 There were a total of 18 cycling audits carried out, all on the National Cycle Network (NCN) through Swansea and 60 walking audits based on a peer group review of busiest active travel walking routes (generally close to or connecting key traffic generators
- 3.4 The 12 individuals were contacted directly by letter and/or email on 1st June 2015 and a copy of that letter is shown in Appendix A.
- 3.5 In addition a number of stakeholder organisations (with whom the Council consults on a wide range of issues were also contacted (using a slightly amended version of the letter at Appendix A) and this included the following groups:
- Wheelwrights
 - Sustrans
 - Bus Users UK and Traveline Cymru
 - Funky Dragon (Swansea's Youth Forum)
 - Swansea Disability Forum and Swansea Access for Everyone
 - Guide Dogs Cymru
 - Swansea Bay Racial Equality Forum
 - Age Cymru
 - Carers' Forum
 - Stonewall Cymru
 - Welsh Women's Aid
- 3.6 The consultation was open from 1st June to 31st August 2015 and a press release was issued to draw attention to the opportunity to engage and comment on the ERM. The consultation was also discussed at the Swansea Environment Forum meeting in June 2015.
- 3.7 A specific questionnaire for both pedestrians and cyclists was provided and these are attached as Appendices B and C.
- 3.8 Assessment of the responses began in early September. 31 responses to the pedestrian survey were submitted and 113 responses to the cycling survey. The results of this consultation are included in Section 5.

4.0 ERM CONSULTATION PART TWO

4.1 Following the Minister's letter and the focus on engaging with younger people a new approach was needed. So whilst Part One of the consultation was underway a new approach focusing on young people (under 25s) was developed.

4.2 This had three main prongs:

- A direct approach to schools via the Education Directorate's communications Officer
- An approach to under and post graduates at Swansea University via the University's intranet site
- An online questionnaire (similar to the general questionnaire)

The closing date for comments was December 14th 2015.

4.3 There was a very disappointing response to this second phase of consultation with only two respondees. This is despite local cycle counters confirming that cycle usage to and from the new Bay Campus of Swansea University had increased a hundredfold.

5.0 OUTPUTS FROM THE TWO CONSULTATIONS

5.1 All responses have been analysed and key results are as follows:

Pedestrians

- 35% of respondees never cycle, 68% travel by car at least several times a week,
- 42% of respondees walk for leisure, 33% to get to work and 17% to get to school or college
- 62% often used shared use routes and 32% sometimes use them

When asked to identify places they would like to walk, but cannot because of the lack of access/ facilities (Q5):

- 28% said there were no such problems
- Specific areas identified were:
 - Clyne Common to Murton
 - North Gower
 - City Centre
 - Singleton Park
 - West Way and St Helen's Road
 - Fabian Way
 - Gorseinon and Pontarddulais

When asked what would be the top three changes which would encourage them to walk more (Q6), common responses were:

- No more pavement parking
- Linked up network

- Better maintenance
- Better lighting
- Segregation (from cyclists)
- Slower traffic speeds
- Improved signage
- Better enforcement of cyclists

When asked whether the ERM included all the appropriate routes for pedestrians (Q7), very few respondents answered this question. Of the 20% who did respond 33% said the clarity of the mapping was too poor and other comments were:

- Few City Centre routes are shown
- The mapping focuses on where people already walk
- Doesn't show routes in parks
- People walk everywhere

When asked if the audits appropriately scored the routes (Q8), even fewer respondents answered the question. Of the 13% who did respond there were concerns that:

- Preference is given to cyclists and pedestrians are overlooked
- The data for Mount Pleasant is not accurate

Cyclists

- 97% of respondents have access to a bicycle
- 54% cycle for leisure purposes, 42% for work
- 46% cycle 2-3 times a week and 29% daily
- 42% prefer to use off road segregated routes, 26% prefer off road shared routes and 12% prefer on road marked routes
- 92% of respondents had used NCN 4 and 81% had used NCN 43 within Swansea in the last year

When asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the ERM included all appropriate routes for cycling:

- 37% agreed
- 39% disagreed and
- 24% neither agreed, nor disagreed

There was an opportunity to add comments highlighting what else respondents thought should be included. There was a wide range of comments and some of the common themes were as follows:

- The map is not of sufficient quality to assess this
- There is not enough emphasis on tourists/visitor cycling
- City Centre needs more emphasis
- New routes /links are needed

When asked what the top three changes that would make them cycle more were, the most common responses were as follows:

- Segregation from traffic and pedestrians
- Better maintenance
- Fully integrated cycle network
- Safer links
- Cycle parking

When asked whether the ERM cycle audits had appropriately scored the routes, only 20% of respondees answered the question. Common answers were as follows:

- 24% - referred to specific maintenance concerns
- 13% - yes
- 12% - expressed concerns about the Active Travel Act process itself
- Smaller percentages referred to specific routes (rather than audits) with most common areas being the City Centre, Gowerton, Loughor and Kingsbridge

5.2 In terms of the profile of respondees:

- 66% of respondees were male and 34% female
- 5% of respondees were in the 17-24 age range, 68% between 35-64 and 12% 65 and over years
- 56% were in full time employment, 14% part time employment and 17% retired
- 97% classed themselves as of white ethnicity and 3% as Black African

5.3 Respondees were also invited to add comments and there were several hundreds of comments entered. These can be grouped roughly as follows:

- Comments about new routes that should be developed
- Additional links to existing routes
- Maintenance issues on the existing networks
- The behaviour of cyclists
- Traffic speeds
- Lighting on segregated routes and cycle parking
- The poor quality of the mapping

5.4 It is clear that a number of people who took part in the surveys are not “active” travellers in the sense of the Act. By this it is meant their journeys are purely for leisure (rather than a specific purpose) and so care has been taken (where possible) to try and separate views expressed by those respondents from those who walk or cycle for a specific purpose.

6.0 OUTCOMES FROM THE CONSULATION PROCESS

6.1 There have been two main actions as a result of the consultation responses:

- A large number of comments were about improvements or gaps in the current network and so will be useful for the next stage of the Active

Travel Act, preparing an Integrated Network Map

- The audits have been re-examined in the light of some comments received. However, there appears no valid reason to amend the audits as completed

6.2 Common concerns have also emerged around maintenance, traffic speed and the behaviour of cyclists which will need careful consideration in terms of improving and increasing the amount of provision for the future.

Appendix A – letter sent out to 12 individuals who had expressed an interest in the ATA process

Dear Sir/Madam,

THE ACTIVE TRAVEL (WALES) ACT
CONSULTATION ON THE EXISTING ROUTE MAP

You have expressed an interest in taking part in the consultation on the Active Travel (Wales) Act delivery in the City and County of Swansea. The first stage of the consultation involves the preparation of an Existing Route Map (ERM) for submission to the Welsh Government by 24th September 2015.

Swansea's draft ERM shows the current walking and cycling routes (as defined by the Act) and associated with this are a number of audits undertaken on the busiest routes to assess their suitability against a range of standard criteria.

The mapping and audits can be viewed at www.swansea.gov.uk/activetravelact

We would welcome your views on the draft ERM and associated audits and we should be pleased if you would complete the on line survey by following the link above. The consultation will be open until 10th August after which we will be collating responses and making necessary changes to the map and audits prior to submission to the Welsh Government