



Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 19 September 2023

Scrutiny of Active Travel Programme

Purpose:	To brief the Scrutiny Committee on the Council's work in relation to Active Travel, which is the portfolio responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure.
Content:	The report outlines the statutory requirements of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 placed upon local authorities in Wales and provides an overview of the various strands of work that make up Swansea Council's active travel delivery programme.
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided, ask questions, and make comments and recommendations as necessary.
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Andrew Stevens, Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure
Lead Officer:	Mark Wade, Director of Place Stuart Davies, Head of Highways & Transportation
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1. Background

- 1.1. 'Active Travel' is a term used to describe walking, cycling, and other active modes of travel such as scooting (scooter riding), for purposeful journeys to a destination such as work, school or the shops, or in combination with public transport. Whilst walking and cycling are in themselves healthy activities that are to be encouraged, it is when they displace private car journeys that they deliver significant benefits for the health and well-being of Wales. Achieving modal shift by displacing private

car journeys with walking and cycling and public transport is at the heart of *Llwybr Newydd*, the Wales Transport Strategy 2021.

- 1.2. Swansea Council has an ambitious active travel programme which has a record of securing high levels of Welsh Government capital grant funding. This supports new and improved walking and cycling routes which connect residents with key strategic destinations across Swansea and make travelling actively safer and more accessible. The City and County of Swansea is host to just over 141km of walking and cycling routes, with over 7km being added or improved in the last financial year (2022/23).
- 1.3. The Scrutiny Committee has requested an overview of the Council's work in relation to active travel, which in Swansea Council comes under the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure. This report provides an overview of the statutory requirements of active travel in Wales, how active travel schemes are identified, funded and developed, and how the Council monitors the uptake and impact of active travel in Swansea.

2. The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

- 2.1. The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 (ATA) introduced a legislative requirement on local authorities to plan for, improve, and promote routes for walking and cycling for everyday journeys. Its purpose is to enable more people to travel actively, meaning more people can enjoy the health, environmental and economic benefits of active travel. Increasing levels of active travel contributes to the achievement of all seven of Wales' Well-being Goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 2.2. The Act requires local authorities to continuously improve facilities and routes for pedestrians and cyclists and to prepare maps identifying current and potential future routes for their use. The ATA also requires new road schemes (including road improvement schemes) to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists at design stage.
- 2.3. The provisions of the Act therefore put in place the conditions that will allow many more people whose current mode of travel is the car to switch to more sustainable modes for shorter journeys and facilitate access to public transport as part of longer distance journeys. The definition of an active travel journey therefore includes travel to work, travel to school and other educational facilities, travel to the shops, travel to leisure facilities, travel to public transport interchanges and so on.
- 2.4. The definition of an 'Active Travel Route' excludes those for purely recreational use, such as an off-road circuit or mountain bike trail, but also includes routes used predominantly for walking and cycling for leisure purposes. While it is expected that active travel routes are also used for recreational use, this is seen as secondary to the ATA's objective of attaining modal shift from private car journeys. Swansea Council's Countryside Access Team supports residents wishing to maintain, improve or expand walking and cycling routes which are primarily used for leisure or tourism, including the expansive Public Rights of Way network.

3. Active Travel Act Guidance

- 3.1. The Active Travel Act Guidance (ATAG) published by the Welsh Government in July 2021 provides guidance on the aims, processes and key considerations associated with the ATA (**Appendix A** – [document available on the Welsh Government website](#)). It serves as an aid for the various partners involved in the implementation of the Act and provides detailed technical guidance on how infrastructure should be planned and designed, which is what Swansea Council must comply with when developing design proposals.
- 3.2. The ATAG states that active travel networks should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive. For example, the guidance outlines that the number of active journeys people make will depend on how comprehensive and connected the network of safe routes is and how well the routes connect to/from key destinations, public transport infrastructure, and people's homes. Therefore, the Council's approach is that new active travel routes should connect to Swansea's existing network, so that there are no isolated sections of infrastructure and so that the network develops in a joined-up, cohesive way.

4. Active Travel Network Maps

- 4.1. The ATAG requires local authorities in Wales to produce maps of walking and cycling networks, and to deliver year-on-year active travel improvements along those mapped routes and their related facilities. The maps - known as Active Travel Network Maps (ATNM) which replaced the previous Existing Route Maps and Integrated Network Maps (2017) - show existing routes and potential future routes which Swansea Council aims to develop. The ATNM is used as a network planning tool which enables local authorities to develop and maintain a strategic plan of all routes, and whether a route currently exists and meets the required ATAG design standards (an Existing Route) or if it does not (a Future Route).
- 4.2. Swansea Council's ATNM was developed throughout 2021, with residents, ward members and stakeholders being signposted to various engagement and consultation activities undertaken both throughout the development of the ATNM and subsequent 12-week public consultation on the proposed ATNM. The formal 12-week consultation took place from late August to mid-November 2021.
- 4.3. Members of the public, ward members and stakeholders were initially provided with the opportunity to comment on the network using a [mapping software](#) tool to identify issues and opportunities for active travel routes around Swansea. Following a number of stakeholder engagement sessions, a draft ATNM which included over 200 potential future routes was formally consulted upon.
- 4.4. The consultation was promoted across the various social media channels which the Council utilises, featured in local newspapers and their associated online content, ward members were provided with dedicated communications and briefing notes at the various stages of engagement and consultation, to share with their communities, in addition to online surveys, school engagement, stakeholder sessions, five face-to-face public sessions and a YouTube video presentation for those unable to attend an in-person session.

- 4.5. Following revisions resulting from the consultation, Welsh Government assessed the ATNM submission and Swansea Council's ATNM was subsequently approved in August 2022. The Council will use the ATNM to guide Swansea's active travel programme, and the ATNM will be revisited and updated through further consultation every 3 years alongside those of other Welsh local authorities.
- 4.6. Only routes identified on the ATNM can be put forward for Welsh Government Active Travel Fund funding, which includes feasibility, design and construction stages.
- 4.7. Swansea's ATNM can be viewed on the Welsh Government's [DataMapWales](#) website. A downloadable PDF version of the ATNM (**Appendix B - attached**) and a detailed report which provides an overview of the development of the ATNM (**Appendix C – document available on Council website**) can both be found on [Swansea Council's webpages](#).

5. The Active Travel Fund (ATF)

- 5.1. The Active Travel Fund (ATF) is a grant established by the Welsh Government to which local authorities can bid for capital funding which supports the development and delivery of active travel routes and facilities, and other minor works which improve active travel infrastructure and supporting facilities across the network. The ATF is managed on behalf of the Welsh Government by Transport for Wales (TfW), which assesses funding applications, monitors progress and provides advice and support to local authorities.
- 5.2. ATF funding is applied for on an annual basis through a competitive grant application process, and the available grant funding each year is consistently exceeded by the total value of bids submitted across the country. However, Swansea Council historically has a strong record of successful grant applications, with the second-highest proportion of funding secured in Wales over the last five financial years (please see **Appendix D**).

6. Swansea's Active Travel Programme

- 6.1. Swansea Council has an annual programme made up of a combination of grant-funded 'Main' and 'Core Allocation' schemes awarded from the Active Travel Fund. 'Main' schemes are funded for construction in the given financial year and are typically organised into 'packages' to reflect strategic or geographical areas with a specific focus on origins and destinations with built-up areas (amalgamations of a number of towns and villages, which are in close proximity to each other and/or to a larger densely populated area).
- 6.2. Every local authority is also awarded 'Core Allocation' funding based on a formula which relates to population size (50%) and the area covered by designated settlements (50%). Core Allocation funds a pipeline of future schemes, which enables feasibility, technical design, consultation and business case development required for a scheme to be approved and funded for construction. Depending on the size and complexity of a potential route, schemes may take a number of years to progress through the required stages of development within the Core Allocation programme. Other schemes in Core Allocation can include 'minor works' which

cover the whole network rather than a specific route. This may include enhancements such as signage, cycle parking and accessibility improvements.

- 6.3. A 'Community Benefits' programme, delivered through active travel schemes using local contractors from the South West Wales Regional Civil Engineering Construction Framework, provides a number of local benefits as part of the construction of active travel routes, including free active travel equipment to local schools. In the past this has included free bikes, shelters, scooters and toolkits for teachers, and has benefitted a significant number of schools across the Swansea area. Active travel schemes have also delivered new seating, heritage information, placemaking features and greenery which make walking and cycling through communities more attractive and enjoyable.
- 6.4. Swansea's active travel programme is overseen by Transport for Wales (TfW) which manages the Active Travel Fund on behalf of the Welsh Government. Council officers submit quarterly grant claims to TfW, hold regular progress meetings with TfW advisors and submit annual ATF applications for TfW to review and make recommendations to Welsh Government for grant funding.
- 6.5. When the Welsh Government announces the funding opportunity annually, alongside the objectives and conditions of the grant for the following financial year, there is usually a very short timeframe to compile and submit the grant applications. As it is not usually possible to seek Cabinet approval within this short period of time, Cabinet Member approval is sought prior to the compilation of grant applications. A Cabinet report, in the form of an FPR7 report, is subsequently scheduled for retrospective approval at the earliest opportunity. The Cabinet report contains an overview of the packages submitted for grant funding, including details of origin and destination point, length of route to be delivered, financial summaries and an overview map for context.

7. Consultation & Engagement

- 7.1. In response to concerns raised about the consultation process on active travel schemes, a past meeting of the [Scrutiny Programme Committee on the 16th of February 2021](#) reviewed the consultation aspect of active travel delivery in the development, design and implementation of active travel schemes. The Committee considered the information provided, asked questions of the Cabinet Member and supporting officers, and made comments and recommendations as necessary – resulting in a Letter to the then Cabinet Member (**see Appendix E**). The Cabinet Member responded to the Committee's feedback (**see Appendix F**) and affirmed the Council's commitment to thorough consultation and engagement, which has been the focus of continued improvement over the last two years.
- 7.2. The Active Travel Act Guidance (ATAG) states that prior to the submission of Active Travel Network Maps (ATNM) to Welsh Government, there should be a formal public consultation, which should run for a minimum of 12 weeks. Swansea's ATNM was informed by extensive early engagement with Councillors and stakeholders, and by a 12-week public consultation. An initial engagement exercise, funded and implemented across Wales by Welsh Government, used an interactive online mapping tool for people to map out issues and opportunities in the network which received 3,782 visitors and 3,210 contributions made by 785

respondents. This feedback informed the creation of a draft ATNM alongside wider stakeholder engagement. As a result of the formal 12-week public consultation, a further 346 responses were submitted and a number of detailed letters and emails from stakeholder groups received. Consultation was widely promoted through newsletters, social media posts, briefing notes to all ward members, a series of press releases, lessons and surveys in schools, publicity materials such as posters and five face-to-face drop-in events. A detailed report outlining this consultation is included in **Appendix C** (*Active Travel Network Map Development Report 2023*).

- 7.3. The approved ATNM displays potential future routes which have been identified and confirmed via public consultation, but consultation on what may actually be delivered on specific routes can only take place if the route is approved for ATF development funding. If a route is taken forward, proposals could take a variety of different forms. Details such as which side of a road a route might go, what infrastructure is used, or what it might look like would all be considered as individual routes progress through the design development process. Where routes are taken forward for development, there will be scheme-specific engagement with local Councillors, interest groups, and local communities. Each year, once Swansea Council receives its ATF funding award letter by Welsh Government, the Cabinet Member writes to all Councillors to confirm that funding has been awarded, and to confirm which schemes are being developed or delivered in their specific wards (please see an example letter to Ward Members in **Appendix G**).
- 7.4. In 2022, the Council created a new role of Active Travel Officer to recognise the increased workload and increasing importance of this programme in recent years. Alongside supporting with project management and administration related to active travel, this officer has also supported the Highways Improvements team with consultation and engagement activities in the development of schemes. The active travel pages of the Council's [website](#) have also been updated to better inform the public of cycling and walking opportunities in Swansea, including more information on projects, the benefits of active travel for employers and the 'share with care' campaign.
- 7.5. A new 'Active Travel Stakeholder Group' has also been established to provide a forum for Swansea Council to share updates with, and seek input from, stakeholders with an interest in the development, promotion and use of active travel in the Swansea area. This group replaced the previous 'Cycle Action Progress Meetings' cycling forum to include a much wider representation of stakeholders from disability, walking, cycling, education, public health, age and equestrian groups. These meetings have helped raise awareness of active travel schemes and ensured that issues and opportunities are informed from a broader range of perspectives. A number of schemes both 'Main' and 'Core' have also been submitted and funded as a direct result of requests or input received through this stakeholder group.

8. Monitoring & Evaluation

- 8.1. In accordance with its duties under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, Swansea Council submits annual reports to the Welsh Government on spending on active travel, how it is being promoted, and levels of use. These reports are available to view publicly, and so are uploaded to the Council's [webpages](#). All ATF bids for

schemes must be submitted with a Monitoring and Evaluation plan which may include measures such as a recording walking and cycle usage before and after a scheme has been delivered, the number of households within 500m of a dedicated cycle route, or user satisfaction / travel habit surveys.

- 8.2. There are 23 fixed cycle / pedestrian counter units positioned at strategic locations across the active travel network in Swansea which collect data on usage levels which inform both the Council's reporting duties and provide baseline data which contributes toward the business case of future schemes. Nine of these counters were installed over the last year, and work has been undertaken to upgrade the older counters to count pedestrian as well as cycle numbers.
- 8.3. Within the Highways and Transportation service area, a Survey Team is also tasked with undertaking ad-hoc temporary cycle counts using pneumatic tube technology, camera surveys and conducting face-to-face surveys with those travelling on routes.
- 8.4. As part of the 2023/24 active travel programme, the Council is due to commence a programme of work with walking and cycling charity Sustrans to engage with schools in Swansea which are either near recently completed active travel routes or where new schemes are being developed. The aim of this is to ensure that young people have a say in how new proposals are informed and are engaged in evaluating how effective they have found recently completed schemes in changing their travel habits.

9. Conclusions / Key Points Summary

- 9.1. The Welsh Government has legislated for active travel through the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, prepared guidance for how local authorities should best implement the objectives of the Act, and established a capital grant which funds the delivery of active travel projects across the country. These all enable Swansea Council to meet its legal requirements set out by Welsh Government.
- 9.2. Swansea's ATNM is a strategic plan for potential future routes which has been developed in consultation with residents, Councillors, and other stakeholders before being approved by Welsh Government. Specific routes from the ATNM are selected for development in which technical design work, scheme level consultation and the preparation of a business case are progressed to allow for a future bid for construction.
- 9.3. The Council engages with stakeholders and the community on the outcome of funding bids, the development of scheme proposals and the delivery of its active travel programme. It engages regularly with stakeholders on broad issues related to active travel, seeks to develop infrastructure which complements the existing network, and works to promote the benefits of walking and cycling.
- 9.4. The Council actively monitors existing and newly delivered routes on the walking and cycling network. This enables us to assess and respond to any issues raised, gather information for future development of the network and to meet our reporting requirements set out by the Welsh Government.

10. Legal implications

10.1. There are no legal implications from this report directly.

10.2. The Active Travel Fund grant requires that all spend is compliant with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Applicable spend must also comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Accepting ATF grant funding and delivering schemes enables the Council to comply with its obligations under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.

10.3. ATF scheme development and delivery may require land acquisition or acquiring legal rights over land by agreement with relevant landowners where the works fall on land outside of the Council's ownership. Planning permission will be required where works fall outside of permitted development rights, and common land consent will be required from the Welsh Ministers where works are to be carried out on registered common land.

10.4. Where the Council needs to acquire land or rights over land to deliver an identified route, the relevant responsible officer must instruct the Head of Property Services to negotiate, settle or confirm the terms of such acquisition after taking into account any relevant statutory provisions or guidance and any advice from the Chief Legal Officer. Any land acquisitions must comply with the Council's Land Transaction Procedure Rules and generally the terms of any acquisition must be in accordance with the market value of the interest to be acquired and be approved in writing by the Head of Property Services.

10.5. Whereas acquisition by agreement is always favoured, when this does not prove practicable or possible - a power of compulsory purchase will often be available to local authorities where land may be acquired without the owner's consent. Compulsory purchase powers can support the delivery of a range of development, regeneration and infrastructure projects in the public interest. In doing so, they can help to bring about improvements to social, economic and environmental well-being. The compulsory purchase of land is a serious action which requires sensitivity, close attention and great care. Making a compulsory purchase order involves statutory notice procedures and if opposed, a public inquiry may be required. Confirmation of the order would be required by the Welsh Ministers who must be satisfied that that taking of land compulsorily is necessary and complies with all statutory requirements including public sector bodies' duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

10.6. The advice of the Chief Legal Officer is sought regarding any contract and procurement issues relevant to individual active travel schemes.

11. Finance Implications

11.1. There are no financial implications from this report directly.

11.2. The Active Travel Fund provides 100% grant funding to secure the development and delivery of schemes. Any revenue costs (e.g. cost of maintaining new active travel routes or infrastructure) arising from capital schemes, must be met by existing internal revenue budgets, with no additional funding available to meet these costs. This places additional pressures on both Highways Maintenance and Cleansing.

Glossary of terms:

- **ATA** – The Active Travel (Wales) Act, 2013
- **ATAG** – Active Travel Act Guidance
- **ATNM** – Active Travel Network Map
- **TfW** – Transport for Wales
- **ATF** – Active Travel Fund

Background papers:

None

Appendices:

Appendix A - Active Travel Act Guidance (ATAG) – document available on Welsh Government website: <https://www.gov.wales/active-travel-act-guidance>

Appendix B - Swansea Active Travel Network Map PDF (Approved 2022)

Appendix C - Swansea Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) Development Report 2023 – document available on Council website: <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/activetravelact>

Appendix D - Summary Chart: Active Travel Fund Allocations by Local Authority 2018/19 - 2022/23

Appendix E - Chair's Letter to Cabinet Member dated 8 Mar 2021 re. Scrutiny of Active Travel Consultation Process (Scrutiny Programme Committee – 16 February 2021)

Appendix F - Cllr. Thomas Response to Scrutiny Committee: Active Travel Consultation Process – dated 26 March 2021

Appendix G - Active Travel Fund 2023-24 Schemes in Mumbles (Letter)