

active travel cymru news

Issue 3

Climate change: likely public health impacts

Active Travel in Rhondda Cynon Taff



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News in brief

Funding for active travel projects

Over £90,000 as part of the Active Lifestyles Fund has been made available by the Sports Council Wales to buy capital items for a range of organisations across Wales to support Active Travel projects including:

- in the workplace at Bronglais Hospital, Singleton Hospital, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff Council
- working with a community project in Butetown, Cardiff
- working with physically and mentally disabled individuals.

The Active Lifestyles Fund is a Welsh Assembly Government initiative, conceived to help create new or improved physical activity opportunities through which mass participation can be achieved.

Further information:
www.activetravelcymru.org.uk

The Evidence!

The Evidence! is a regular information service identifying research evidence on the benefits of physically active travel.

Physical activity lowers risk of hospital admission from COPD

Recent research from Spain suggests that participation in regular physical activity lowers the risk of hospital admission from chronic pulmonary disease (COPD) and of respiratory mortality. The study showed that a level of physical activity equivalent to walking and cycling for 2 hours a week or more was associated with a 30-40% reduction in the risk of both hospitalisation due to COPD and respiratory mortality.

Garcia-Aymerich et al, 2006, Regular physical activity reduces hospital admission and mortality in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: a population based cohort study, Thorax

Active Travel Cymru works with policy-makers and practitioners to promote walking and cycling as health-enhancing physical activity. Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity and works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport to benefit health and the environment.

Photography credits: Sustrans staff

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More people...more active...more often...in Wales



Active Travel in Rhondda Cynon Taff

The Active Living Partnership in Rhondda Cynon Taff has successfully bid to the Big Lottery to establish a four year Active Travel Project in South East Wales.

The aim of the project is to provide physical activity opportunities for individuals within their own communities - specifically those on a low income and with low levels of physical activity. The project will combine the talents and experience of a number of partner organisations to offer a range of interventions that aim to increase people's levels of health-enhancing physical activity.

A key element of the project will be the evaluation and collation of evidence regarding the different interventions. As a key part of the Active Travel programme in Wales, we hope to evaluate how existing and newly built sections of the National Cycle Network will impact on participants' levels of physical activity.

The project also aims to compare the beneficial effects of different kinds of physical activity for the participants – not only in terms of individual health, but which kind of activity supports longer term behavioural change and how best can this can be achieved.

The partnership has also successfully bid to the Sports Council's Active Communities Fund for £10,000 of signage to highlight local links to the National Cycle Network. The signs will be used to draw walkers and cyclists onto the Network and also show those who are already using the Network how to access local facilities and public buildings.

Further information:
www.activetravelcymru.org.uk

Climate change and public health impacts



The nation's health is a fundamental concern of all the UK governments, across all departments.

Over the next century we will experience higher temperatures, other climatic changes, extreme weather events, rising sea levels and increased ultra-violet radiation. Global climate change is a significant threat to public health and urgent action is needed to mitigate it.

Predicted health impacts of climate change in the UK include additional cases of skin cancer and cataracts as levels of UV radiation increase, increased heat-related deaths, possible increase in vector-borne diseases such as malaria and more cases of food-borne disease in the summer.

However, on a global scale predictions are much graver, with water shortage, crop failure and changes in disease patterns likely to affect many millions, often among the world's poorest people. The World Health Organisation calculates that 150,000 deaths per annum may already be attributable to climate change, and that the 2003 European heatwave alone caused 44,000 deaths¹.

Transport and climate change

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution warned 13 years ago that 'the unrelenting growth of transport has become possibly the greatest environmental threat facing the UK.'

However, 56% of car as driver trips are still under 5 miles in length (and 25% under 2 miles)², distances that could be easily walked or cycled by many people.

Sustrans believes that destinations and services must be located closer to where people live, walking, cycling and public transport be given priority over private motor transport, traffic restraint become the norm and local streets and public spaces become enjoyable to use.

Low carbon travel of this kind would pay a health dividend both through environmental protection and by promoting physical activity.

Further information: www.sustrans.org.uk

References

¹ **World Health Organisation**, <http://www.who.int/globalchange/climate>

² **Sustrans, 2004**, *Travel Behaviour Research Baseline Survey, Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns*