

active travel cymru news

Issue 2

Minister visits the active in Rhymney Valley

Healthy travel... to Singleton Hospital

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News in brief

How transport can save the NHS

Research published by Sustrans suggests that cash spent on cycling and walking could save the NHS huge amounts of money and help defuse the obesity "time bomb". The findings highlight how money spent on creating an environment that encourages and enables walking and cycling directly saves NHS, and other spending, on preventable deaths from illnesses attributed to physical inactivity such as coronary heart disease, stroke and colon cancer.

Further information:
www.sustrans.org.uk

The Evidence!

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

Active commuting increases physical activity levels

New research from Sweden suggests that less than a third of men and women in Europe take enough exercise. The Netherlands, where 44% of people take sufficient exercise, tops the league, whilst France, Belgium and Britain have the highest rates of inactivity. The authors suggested that "countries with the best infrastructure for active commuting...were amongst the most active."

Roger Dobson, 2006, *Active commuting is important in raising exercise levels, British Medical Journal*

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 and Western Mail

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

Minster visits the active in Rhymney Valley

Deputy Health Minister, John Griffiths met up with some of the participants of the *What are you weighting for...* project in the Upper Rhymney Valley recently to talk about their experiences and involvement with the Sustrans project.



Those who attended represented a cross section of over 200 people who have participated in the weekly walks and cycle rides. The community based scheme aims to get local people to be more active in a fun and environmentally friendly way.

"The cycling is of great benefit to my client, not only for the physical and mental health benefits, but also the social interaction and the empowerment and responsibility he is given to help other cyclists with their bikes and to take the role of the front leader."

Local care worker and participant in the cycle rides

"For many years I did a lot of walking until arthritis limited my mobility. Thanks to the support and encouragement I have received, I am taking walks again which has been of great benefit to me."

What are you weighting for participant

The local support for this project is evident, with over 800 people participating in the walks and cycle rides since September 2005.

"This initiative aims to make it more attractive for people to get out and enjoy the countryside to help get themselves fit. Initial feedback shows people have enjoyed their experience and once they visited they return with their friends and family. Health Challenge Wales, the national focus for improving the health and well-being of the people of Wales, highlights that regular physical activity, like walking or cycling, can contribute to a healthier lifestyle."

John Griffiths, Deputy Health Minister, Welsh Assembly Government

What are you weighting for... is part of Sustrans Cymru's Active Travel Programme and funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, Sports Council for Wales, Caerphilly Health Alliance and the Enfys Partnership.

Further information:

www.activetravelcymru.org.uk



Healthy travel... to Singleton Hospital

Singleton Hospital, Swansea, is a large site that suffers from transport congestion, parking problems and poor access for staff, visitors and patients. Part of the solution has been to employ a dedicated Travel Plan Coordinator, the only NHS Trust in Wales to do so, to develop a travel plan and encourage active travel.

In 2005 a staff travel behaviour survey was included with all staff pay slips for Singleton hospital and parking permit renewal forms at Morriston hospital. With nearly 2,600 responses, Swansea NHS Trust has been able to develop a detailed picture of how people commute to and from the acute hospital sites.

Using staff home postcodes the Trust has identified the alternative routes that are available to commuters, whether by public transport or the accessibility of the National Cycle Network.

As a result of the travel survey the Trust intends to:

- create incentives to try to change commuter travel behaviour, including a new shower block, drying rooms, pool bikes, new lockers and
- develop a targeted information campaign to encourage staff to try out the alternatives.

Swansea Council leisure department has also been running lunch time walks for NHS staff to give them the confidence and fitness to consider walking to work.

“By working in partnership with Sustrans, Sports Council Wales, Swansea City Council and the National Public Health Service, Swansea NHS Trust wants this project to contribute to our achievement of the gold Corporate Health Standard¹ in 2008. We plan to launch the next phase of the project in early 2007 to encourage people to be more active in the workplace and to combat our local congestion problems.”

Rhodri Davies, Travel Plan Coordinator, Swansea NHS Trust

The Trust has applied for funding from Sports Council Wales's Active Communities Fund to support the initiative.

Further information:

Sports Council Wales:

www.sports-council-wales.co.uk

Swansea NHS Trust:

www.swansea-tr.wales.nhs.uk

¹ *Health at Work: The Corporate Health Standard* is the national quality mark for workplace health initiatives from the Welsh Assembly Government. It is designed to reduce sickness absence levels and improve recruitment and retention of staff. For more details see FH06C at www.activetravelcymru.org.uk