

# active travel cymru news



## What are you weighting for...

*What are you weighting for... Sustrans' programme of guided walks and cycle rides in the Upper Rhydney Valley, is successfully encouraging communities to be more physically active.*

Five walks and cycle rides run each week and have attracted more than 200 participants in just over three months. A community bus, the Rhydney Runner, transports the groups to various country parks and traffic-free routes in the Caerphilly area.

One of the highlights so far has been the Fun Day organised on behalf of the Communities First partnership, with a further 80 people participating in the cycling taster sessions.

*What are you weighting for...* addresses the issues that may otherwise prevent individuals and communities from walking or cycling. The experience in the Upper Rhydney Valley helps inform Sustrans and its partners on effective action to promote walking and cycling in deprived communities.

Active Travel Cymru obtained grant funding for the project from the Welsh Assembly, Enfys, Caerphilly Health Alliance and the Sports Council for Wales.

Sustrans' work in the Upper Rhydney Valley has involved local groups, offering bike rides as part of the Fit for Fun initiative for overweight children, with Menter Iaith to support the use of the Welsh language in Caerphilly, and with NCH, the children's charity.

***"The young people who have been able to benefit from the rides may not normally have access to outdoor activities, so in many cases it has been the highlight of their group work experience. One young man in particular had never ridden a bike before, and after 2 sessions is now able to ride around the lake at Bryn Bach Park, a distance of 1.5 miles. This has been an outstanding achievement for him. He has said "I can do it now... I feel more confident... I'm enjoying it." Others have commented "I want to go again" "I enjoyed the cycling" "can we go cycling again?"***

***Sustrans has been an excellent resource, one that has been reliable, accessible, and local; and has had not only an immediate but long term impact on the young people and families who are able to benefit."***  
Young People's Officer, NCH

**“Physical activity continues to be one of the major determinants of health in Wales. Over two thirds of the people of Wales are now at risk from a lack of physical activity. To address this requires a multifaceted approach, involving a range of sectors including health, local government and transport. ‘Climbing Higher’ focuses strongly on raising physical activity levels across the board, a key to which is getting people more active by walking and cycling more often, not only for pleasure but in getting to work, travelling to school and doing the shopping.**

**Sustainable travel has become an important area for delivering physical activity for health. Organisations like Sustrans can help with the development of local cross-cutting strategies to maximise the potential of active travel.”**

Dr Tony Jewell, Chief Medical Officer, Welsh Assembly Government

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

By improving opportunities for walking and cycling, Sustrans is working to make it easier for people to lead healthier, more physically active lives.

Sustrans’ Active Travel Cymru programme works to promote physically active travel through the development of policy and practical projects.

As part of this programme, Sustrans is working in partnership to develop Physical Activity Action Plans, identifying priorities and providing a coordinated approach to increase physical activity levels within communities across Wales.

Sustrans also works with partners to deliver the physical activity objectives of the National Assembly’s *Health at Work: The Corporate Standard*. This involves a site by site approach to understanding and addressing potential barriers to active travel to workplaces.

## The Evidence!

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

### Physical activity reduces pain for arthritis sufferers

A US study suggests that people suffering from arthritis should try to exercise more in order to reduce pain. The study, which surveyed nearly 7,000 arthritis sufferers across the United States, found that most don't exercise enough, while nearly a third do no exercise at all. Exercise has been shown to reduce pain caused by arthritis, delay disability and improve gait and function.

**Shih et al, 2006, Physical Activity in Men and Women with Arthritis, American Journal of Preventive Medicine**

Research papers are available to download from The Evidence! at [www.the-evidence.org.uk](http://www.the-evidence.org.uk)

## News in brief

### The National Cycle Network continues to increase physical activity

During 2005, 232 million trips were made on the National Cycle Network - a 15% increase on 2004.

Nearly three quarters of users report the Network has encouraged them to increase their participation in regular physical activity.

Cyclists made 117 million trips and pedestrians made 114 million trips on the Network in 2005, and over a third of users say that they are planning to walk and cycle more in future.

The National Cycle Network Route User Monitoring Report is available to download from [www.activetravelcymru.org.uk](http://www.activetravelcymru.org.uk)

### Active Travel Cymru - further information

A website has been developed to support the work of Active Travel Cymru. A selection of facts and figures on physical activity and health, links to useful reading and details of project work in the Upper Rhymney Valley are available at [www.activetravelcymru.org.uk](http://www.activetravelcymru.org.uk)

Active Travel Cymru has also produced two bilingual information sheets:

- *Active travel and healthy workplaces*
- *Active travel as physical activity promotion*

The information sheets have been sent to contacts in transport and health policy, local government and the health sector across Wales, and are available to download from the Active Travel Cymru website.

**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.

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