

Active and healthy travel is the right step for our children: Sustrans Cymru's proposals for the next Welsh Government

Wales leads the world with its Active Travel legislation. Focusing delivery initially around the journey to school will benefit children's health and the environment.

We want to see a safer, healthier school run. Let's make it happen.

We believe that every child has the right to walk, cycle or scoot to school safely.

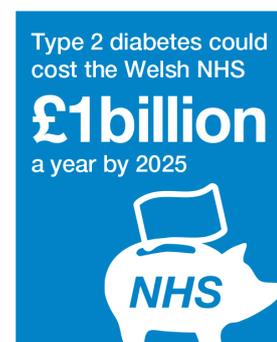
To make this happen the next Welsh Government should:

- Make a commitment to "every child a cyclist". Cycling should be a core skill for children in Wales, delivered through the physical literacy area of the national curriculum and the new curriculum arising from Donaldson's Successful Futures.
- Put in place a long term investment strategy to develop safe walking and cycling routes, particularly to and around schools,
- Enable every school to be engaged as part of the Active Travel Act, with mapped routes to all schools as part of the Integrated Network Maps
- Support an increased number of 20mph areas across our communities – delivered by local councils in the short-term.

Executive summary

The Active Travel Act has given Wales the opportunity to transform itself into a country where walking and cycling are the normal ways of getting around for shorter journeys. Making this opportunity a reality depends on investment and behaviour change. We believe that it makes sense to start the change with our children; to build in healthy lifestyles that will last them a lifetime. We want the next Welsh Government to have a clear commitment to making this happen.

Every child should have the right to walk, cycle or scoot to school safely. Although most children in Wales live within a short distance of their local school, very few cycle there – just 2% of journeys are by bike – with more and more children being driven to school.



The loss of everyday physical activity, freedom and independence has had a profound effect on our children's health and well-being. **Only 35% of Welsh children are getting the recommended hour of physical activity that they need every day.** Walking or cycling the school run is an obvious way for children to be more physically active every day, and brings with it a whole range of other benefits to our economy, communities and environment.

It is primarily road danger and fear of traffic that stops parents letting their children walk or cycle to school. **In 2013, the equivalent of almost three primary school classes of children was killed or seriously injured on Welsh roads.** If this many children were killed or hurt in any other way, there would be a national outcry.

In 2013 the Welsh Assembly passed world-first legislation in the Active Travel (Wales) Act, which sets a clear framework for the changes we need to make cycling and walking the norm for everyday shorter journeys.

Now the framework exists, we must ensure we deliver.

There are four key areas that will enable the Act to become a success and for a safer, healthier journey to school to be the right of every child.

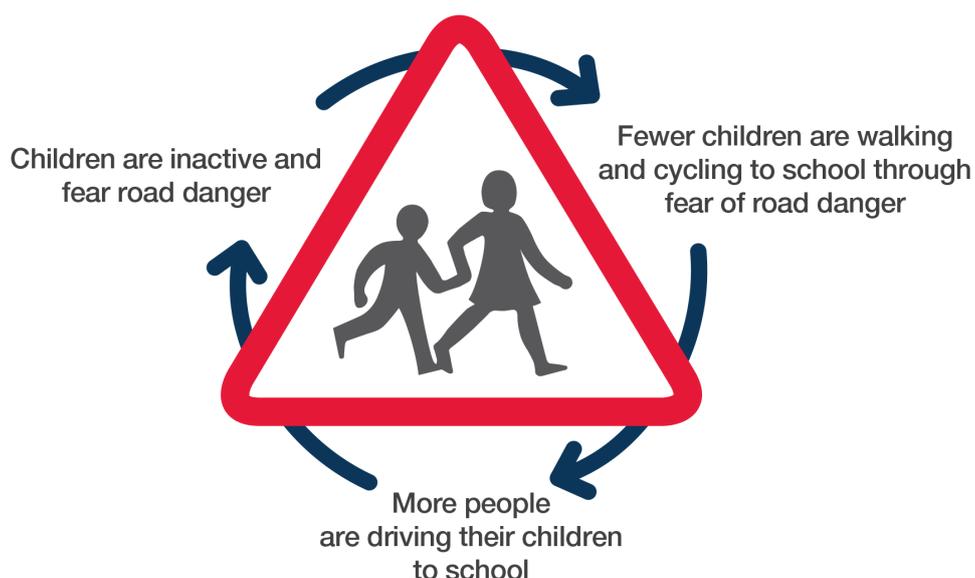
- a long-term investment strategy from government to develop safe walking and cycling routes especially to and around schools
- every school to be engaged with as part of the Active Travel Act, and have mapped routes as part of the Integrated Network Map
- Welsh Government to support an increased number of 20mph areas across our communities – delivered by local councils in the short-term.
- Active travel skills to be embedded within the curriculum and cycle training to be part of every child's school experience, as key components of every child being a cyclist

Parents and children want safe routes for walking and cycling in their communities; they want real engagement in what is planned; and they want slower speeds on roads in our local communities.¹

A safe journey to school for every child could be delivered within existing spending commitments for transport, road safety and school travel; would offer excellent value for money; and would be good for our children, our health and our economy.

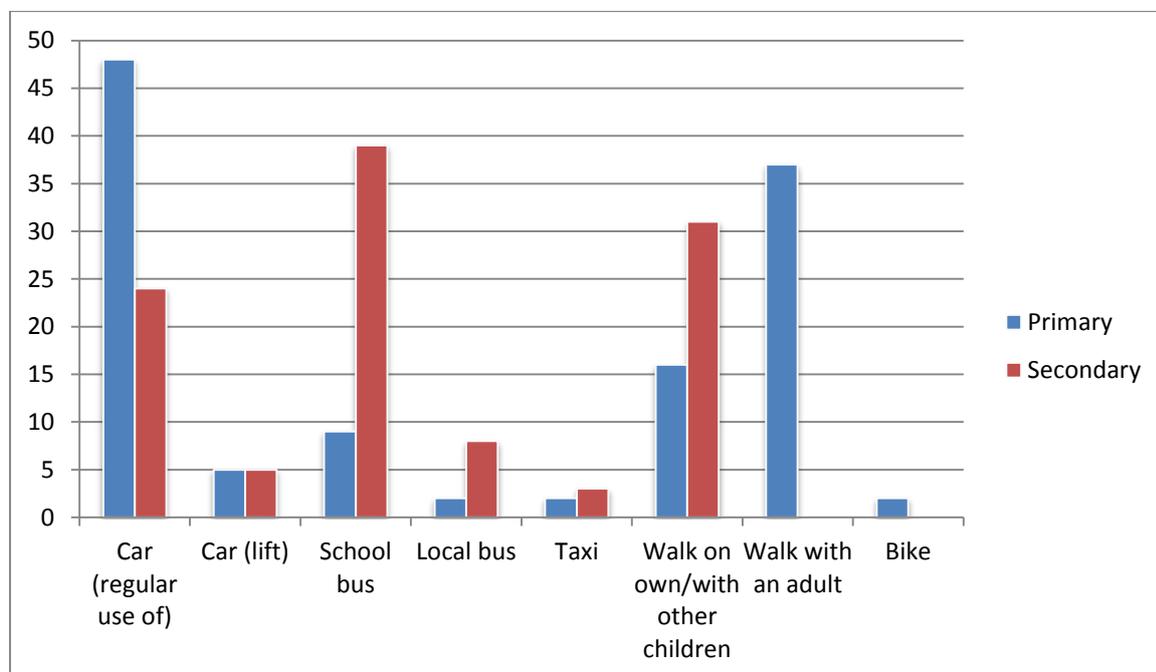
We want to see a safer, healthier school run. Let's make it happen.

What is the problem?



Fewer children than ever are walking and cycling to school

Most children want to walk or cycle to school, and live near enough to do so if the route was safe enough. The average trip to school is short: 1.4 miles (a 30 minute walk, or 15 minute bike ride) for primary schools and 4.9 miles for secondary.² But children walking and cycling only exceeds parents driving for the shortest trips. 69% of children's trips to primary school of between one and two miles are driven, and over a third of trips between one and three miles to secondary school.³



The above graph shows the % of pupils using a transport mode as their regular mode of travel to school.

Children and their parents feel unsafe

Road danger has removed children from our streets: half of those aged 7-10 are never allowed to cross roads on their own. Road danger is the biggest influence on how children travel to school, with nearly half (44%) of parents concerned, ahead of distance or convenience (29%) and nearly twice as important as concerns about stranger danger (24%). Concern is highest (60%) among those who walk to school.⁴ Evidence shows that traffic speeds, volumes and driver behaviour are persistent problems in our communities, while pavement parking, drivers using mobile phones, and inconsiderate parking around schools are growing concerns.⁵

Too many children are killed or injured on our roads

Concerns about road danger are well founded. In Wales in 2013, 79 children under the age of 15 were killed or seriously injured while walking or cycling on our roads. That's equivalent to 3 classes of children attending an average sized primary school.

Young people are disproportionately represented in casualty statistics – in spite of relatively low levels of active travel 28% of pedestrians and 21% of cyclists killed and injured in 2011-13 were under 19.⁶ While there has been a steady fall in child road casualties in Wales over recent decades. While welcome this can partly be attributed to the ongoing decline in the numbers of children walking, cycling or playing outside.

The school run is bad for our children ...and for Wales

Being unable to walk or cycle to school has profound impacts on our children's health and wellbeing, both in childhood and over the course of their life. Only 35% of children get the recommended hour a day of physical activity in Wales, compared to 42% in England. Building physical activity into daily life has been shown to be the most effective way to address this, and for most these targets could be achieved by walking or cycling to school.⁷ Children in Wales also lag far behind their peers in other nations when it comes to the freedom, confidence and independence to get around under their own steam.

The consequences go far beyond the immediate impacts of physical inactivity, air pollution, and road death and injury on children's health, wellbeing and education. This generation of children may be the first generation to have a life expectancy lower than their parents. Diseases linked to obesity and physical inactivity are costing the Welsh NHS hundreds of millions every year. For example, Type 2 diabetes – a preventable disease with close links to physical inactivity and sedentary lifestyles - could cost the Welsh NHS £1billion a year by 2025.⁸

Giving our children healthy lifestyle skills

In order to take advantage of better, safer facilities to cycle to school our children need to be given the skills to cycle competently and safely. Too many children in Wales currently miss out on proper cycle training. Schools also need to be able to provide secure storage facilities for bikes and scooters.

What needs to change?

Making healthy travel to school a priority

The decline in walking and cycling to school is the result of decades of transport policy and investment which has prioritised people driving over people walking and cycling, even for very short journeys.

Danger reduction initiatives have focused too much on putting responsibility on children, parents and drivers individually, rather than tackling the systemic causes of road danger such as traffic speed.

And school travel policies have discouraged walking and cycling to school, with many councils in Wales providing free buses for journeys to school under 2 miles, which could easily be walked or cycled.

The need for a more joined up and cross-governmental approach to the school run is clear. In Wales, active travel remains almost exclusively the remit of the transport department, despite the clear benefits to education and – particularly – health. Behaviour change projects supported by the Health Department within Welsh Government, such as Change4Life, have been limited in scale.

The Chief Medical Officer has highlighted the need for more of us to travel actively⁹. There needs to be greater coordination of revenue spending and capital investment across government to make this happen.

The Active Travel Act gives a clear framework for increasing the number of people walking and cycling in Wales, including for the journey to school. Now it needs to be delivered effectively.

Investing for the long term

Local authority investment in walking and cycling – including implementation of the Active Travel Act – relies mainly on funding from the Welsh Government. The funding picture remains challenging. Nations such as the Netherlands have achieved significant modal shift by spending up to £19 per head of population on cycling, over a generation, Scotland is now spending £12 per head of population each year from central Government funds.

In Wales, the figure is significantly lower.

2010/11 - £14.042 million (£4.68 per person)

2011/12 - £9.99 million (£3.33 per person)

2012/13 - £13.51 million (£3.50 per person)

2013/14 - £13.13 million (£4.38 per person)

2014/15 - £11.79 million (£3.93 per person)¹⁰

The figure for 2014/15 is less than 2% of the overall transport budget with just under £12million for walking and cycling schemes, which works out at under £4 per head of population each year. Prof Stuart Cole's recent report commissioned by Welsh Government called for an investment of between £10 and £20 per head. Walking and cycling investment must be a budget priority if Wales is to stand any chance of realising the benefits of becoming a nation where walking and cycling are the transport of choice for short journeys.

While funding for new routes is key, even more can be achieved by combining capital investment in better routes with revenue programmes to build children’s skills, knowledge and confidence.¹¹ In Wales, some councils already fund National Standards cycle training.

The current funding model of short-term, grant-based, small scale investment does not incentivise local authorities to develop or implement ambitious plans under the Active Travel Act.

Providing safe routes for all

Evidence shows that creating safe walking and cycling routes is effective in increasing cycling and walking to school (and for other local journeys). In England creating new routes to and around schools has delivered an average 151% increase in children using them to walk and cycle, and has returned at least £10 of economic benefit through congestion, physical activity, and safety benefits for every £1 invested.

The Welsh Government does have a “Safe Routes in Communities” fund that in 2014/15 was ring fenced specifically for schools. This £4.99million of funding will deliver 30 schemes across Wales. Whilst welcome, there are more than 1600 primary and secondary schools in Wales. We need to up the pace to give every child the right to a safe and healthy journey to school.

Slower speeds make safer streets

A key component of safer streets where more children walk and cycle is lower traffic speeds. There is strong evidence that 20mph speed limits are effective in making the roads safer for children and young people, and increasing walking and cycling.

In Bristol, area-wide 20mph pilots saw increases of 12% in walking and cycling and 35% of people felt safer. 20mph streets have 40% fewer road casualties with the greatest reduction in numbers of young children killed and injured. Default 20mph limits are also cheaper to implement and can reduce the need to spend on significant new infrastructure.¹²

What is the solution?

Getting the Active Travel Act off of the map and onto the ground

Sustrans Cymru is calling for a political commitment to the right for every child to be able to walk, cycle and scoot to school safely, backed by four specific policies. These policies are outlined in more detail below.

Long term, consistent investment by government is the only way to increase levels of walking and cycling and transform local travel

Continued leadership matched with investment from national government is needed to provide the resources and incentives to improve things in the ground. At Westminster, the UK Government has now accepted the need to provide a five-year Walking and Cycling Investment Strategy for England.

The ground-breaking Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 provides a clear framework to enable people of all ages and abilities to walk and cycle far more, particularly for short journeys.

There is a real danger that the Act will fall far short of its potential unless it is properly delivered.

Wales should spend a minimum of £10 per head of population (£30million) each year on active travel if it is to start to become a cycling nation. This is only slightly over 4% of the transport budget (as of 2014/15). Wales has over 1600 schools – for pupils right across Wales to benefit from a safe journey to school we need to dramatically increase the number of routes we are able to build each year.

Wales currently suffers from providing only annual funding streams for walking and cycling schemes (most recently via the Local Transport Fund and Safe Routes in Communities). This can make it almost impossible to deliver some more complex schemes, as they take longer than a year to deliver. Funding also does not cover 'pre-works', so that process also has to be brought into the financial year.

Pupils, staff and parents at every school in Wales to have a voice

The Active Travel Act delivery guidance sets out a clear policy aim to engage with young people across Wales. The Act provides a unique opportunity to engage with schools and ensure that all school children have safe routes that will allow them to walk or ride a bike to school

This is an opportunity for Local Authorities to engage communities in their future, with meaningful discussion about the journeys they make and the routes that would make the biggest difference to their daily lives.

The Welsh Government will be scrutinising the Integrated Network Maps provided to them by local authorities in 2017 (and every three years subsequently). The Welsh Government should be clear that it expects to see plans for walking and cycling routes to schools.

More 20mph areas

Default speed limits remain the responsibility of Westminster,¹³ but the Welsh Government could do more to promote and enable their introduction.

Many towns and cities in England and Scotland have moved to a 20mph speed limit but not one Welsh town currently has 20mph limits on most of its streets. This is despite six in ten people in Wales supporting 20mph.¹⁴

Slower speeds make our communities safer for residents and encourage more people to walk or cycle. Local authorities have the powers to introduce 20mph limits. When these powers devolve Assembly Members should immediately reduce the default speed limit to 20mph with local roads to remain 30mph by exception.

Every child a cyclist

In a nation where we have legislation setting out the ambition for active travel to be the norm for short journeys, cycling must be recognised as a life skill for our young people, providing them with the foundation to make choices in later life. Sufficient resources embedded within guidance on Physical Literacy in the core curriculum, alongside practical skills acquired through cycle training provision will enable every child to have the confidence and knowledge to choose to cycle as a means of active travel in appropriate situations.

The learning outcomes of National Standards Cycle Training Level 2 are an appropriate benchmark for the required level of skills for pupils leaving primary education. Every child in Wales should have the opportunity to receive this training.

We know how effective this can be. Sustrans' own work in schools across seven local authorities in Wales trebled regular cycling to school, with a 22% increase in walking and scooting and a sustained decrease in people driving children to school.¹⁵

Ensuring schools cater for active travel, prioritising pedestrian and cycle safe entrances and cycle storage, must be a consideration in school design for both new build and refurbishment.

There is also strong evidence to link physical activity with improved academic achievement¹⁶ and getting that activity to happen on the way to and from school means it does not eat into curriculum time.

All of this means how children get to school is not just a transport issue it's an education and health issue.

Where would the money come from?

A very small reallocation from the roads budget would transform the ability of children to have a safe, healthy, active journey to school, and would pay for itself very quickly, particularly in reducing congestion and improving health.

The Welsh Government should consider an 'Active Travel' budget line as part of the Economy, Science and Transport Main Expenditure Group – to show how it is supporting the delivery of the Active Travel Act. This would provide greater clarity to funding being provided through a medium-term investment strategy.

About Sustrans

Sustrans is a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

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¹ YouGov for Sustrans Cymru, 2013

[http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/file_content_type/yougov - sustrans results - cycling - 130318.xlsx](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/file_content_type/yougov_-_sustrans_results_-_cycling_-_130318.xlsx)

² Statistics Wales 2010 Learner Travel in Wales 2010

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2010/101012sb852010en.pdf>

³ Welsh Government 2014 National Survey for Wales, 2013-14 - Active Travel

<https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Download/File?fileId=406>

⁴ DfT 2014 National Travel Survey 2013 Table NTS0616 Whether children (aged 7-13) are accompanied to school by an adult and the reasons: Great Britain, 2003 to 2012

⁵ ONS 2012 Crime in England and Wales; DfT 2012 British Social Attitudes Survey 2011

⁶ Statistics Wales 2014 Road Safety 2013 SB 68/2014 <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/road-safety/?lang=en>

⁷ DH 2011 Start Active, Stay Active; HSCIC 2013 Health Survey for England 2012; APCPA 2014 Tackling Physical Inactivity; NHS 2008 Healthy Weight Healthy Lives

⁸ Add reference to Diabetes Wales report

⁹ Chief Medical Officer Wales Report 2013/14

<http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/report/140929cmoreporten.pdf>

¹⁰ The “per person” assessment is based on a 3 million population

¹¹ Sustainable Travel Projects: revenue and capital investment, Department for Transport, March 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-travel-projects-revenue-and-capital-investment>

¹² Bristol City Council 2012 Cabinet report and research findings; Haringey Council 2011 Scrutiny review: 20mph speed limit; London Assembly Transport Committee 2009 Braking Point: 20mph speed limits in London; LGiU 2013 Area-wide 20mph neighbourhoods

¹³ Powers for a Purpose, Wales Office, February 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/powers-for-a-purpose-towards-a-lasting-devolution-settlement-for-wales>

¹⁴ See note 1

¹⁵ Cycling and Walking: putting young people on the map, Sustrans Cymru 2014

http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/file_content_type/rhoi_plant_ar_y_map_putting_children_on_the_map.pdf

¹⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010.