

CTC Cymru response to the consultation draft of the Welsh National Transport Plan 2015

March 2015

1. CTC, the national cycling charity has championed the cause of cycling since 1878. We promote all forms of cycling, protect the interests of existing and would-be cyclists, and inspire people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to discover the joys of cycling.

2. As an independent, democratic and expert organisation, our activities reflect the commitment of our members, volunteers and partners to make cycling mainstream, making a lasting difference to the lives of individuals and communities.

3. CTC has about 60,000 members in the UK and about 2,400 in Wales, where CTC is organised as CTC Cymru. In Wales, CTC has active groups in Cardiff, Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Bangor, Wreccsam and North Wales. We have affiliated groups and run bike clubs and cycle training. We are represented on the Active Travel Board, the Wales Inclusive Cycling Forum and the CCW's National Access Forum; and we enjoy close links with Welsh Cycling, Sustrans, and numerous local cycling clubs and groups, for example Pedal Power and Cardiff Cycling Campaign. Drawing on our long-standing expertise in planning and designing cycleways, we played an active role in the development of the Active Travel Act and the associated Design Guidance.

4. The National Transport Plan Consultation Draft discusses Active Travel as beneficial for health and in other ways, and we welcome the idea of 'improving connectivity' to key sites. However, as a transport strategy, and especially regarding cycling, this is limited in four ways.

(1) The Draft Plan assumes economic benefits of road-building and ignores the economic benefits of active travel.

5. The plan fails to mention the economic benefits on offer from improvements to active transport. The most important mechanism by which transport brings economic benefit is better transit capacity, especially within built-up areas. Journey speed in cities is limited by junction capacity - top speed is of minimal relevance. Bicycle traffic allows capacity many times greater than motor traffic for a given amount of road space. Thus, providing bicycle facilities that attract a significant minority of travellers out of cars can

reduce congestion by increasing throughput, and can reduce motor congestion indirectly by reducing the number of cars on the road. Reduced congestion and better throughput are accepted as leading directly to better economic performance. As a report for the Department of Transport in 2010 concluded:

'...the economic justification for investments to facilitate cycling and walking has been undervalued or not even considered in public policy decision-making... almost all of the studies report economic benefits which are highly significant, with benefit to cost ratios averaging 13:1'.

This is far higher than any motoring scheme is likely to offer.

6. On the other hand, it has been established clearly in a thorough review of all of the evidence that there are no automatic economic or employment benefits from expenditure on trunk roads – though policy-makers (like this Plan) often assume that this is obviously the case. Commonly there are no benefits at all, and almost universally any benefits are exaggerated (SACTRA 2010).
7. The assumed economic benefits of road building are not explained in the Plan, nor are the major economic benefits of active travel mentioned, marginalising the significance of active travel in the Plan and promoting old-fashioned myths about road-building. The DETR provides good guidance on calculating the value for money of transport schemes (DETR 2013); and in the Netherlands there are sophisticated tools in use to calculate the cost benefits of cycling infrastructure (Fietsberaad CROW, Tiemens 2015). The final version of the Plan should include a commitment, based on economics as well as the other benefits of active travel, to a dense, good-quality network of cycle facilities, as outlined in the guidance to the Active Travel Act.

(2) Active Travel needs elaboration

8. Active travel is a sensible and important policy which we support strongly. However, whilst it is the responsibility of local authorities, if the legislation is to meet its aims, the Government should be setting targets and prioritising. It is important that Government thinking is joined-up across departments on this as other matters.

(3) Cycling is much more than the NCN

9. Given, as the Plan states, the concern is with transport and not leisure cycling, then it is surprising to see so much emphasis on the NCN – which, by and large, was planned for and is used for leisure. Whilst we support the work of Sustrans, and many of our members are involved with that body, long-distance cycling (for example NCN4 to Fishguard) is not a

significant part of a national cycling strategy. Far more relevant is active travel, and how in communities, and to school, workplaces, shops and hospitals, citizens are able to travel safely by bike.

(4) The plan needs targets, e.g. regarding the modal split

10. There are no targets in the draft plan – regarding the modal split or the budget allocation to cycling. Indeed the term ‘modal split’ does not appear once in the policy. Without such targets, it is difficult to imagine how the Government might meet its sustainability targets. These need to inform the Transport Plan. Without targets, there is little in this Plan to suggest that anything will change, except lots of specific roads building projects.

References

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