

Enterprise and Business Committee

Active Travel (Wales) Bill

AT 34 – John Bowers BA(Hons)

This was received in the medium of Welsh and has been translated by the Assembly Commission

Consultation on the Active Travel Bill

Snowdonia National Park Authority is responsible for town planning services and access to the countryside. We are not a “local authority” in the way that is meant in the Bill. These are my comments on the Bill in response to your invitation dated 22 February 2013. I have followed the format of your letter.

1. Is there a need for a Bill?

I believe that the outcomes of the Bill are likely to be positive, by encouraging local authorities and the Welsh Government to plan for active travel.

It should be possible to encourage authorities to do so through processes that already exist.

For example, Strategic Policy L of the Eryri Local Development Plan 2007-2022 begins:

“The National Park Authority is committed to improving access to local facilities and reduce the need to travel especially by private car...” The policy also mentions *“convenient access via footpaths, cycle paths...secure cycle parking facilities...recreational routes identified on the proposals map...”*

The Plan was adopted by a decision of the Snowdonia National Park Authority on 13 July 2011.

2. The Bill's requirements

Local highways authorities should publish maps identifying adopted highways, unadopted highways for motor vehicles, public footpaths, cycle routes, permissive public access routes, bridleways, byways open to all traffic and restricted byways. If a new Bill is needed to ensure this, the Bill would be beneficial.

Local highways authorities should publish plans to improve all types of highways and to create new ones. If a new Bill is needed to ensure this, the Bill would be beneficial.

The mandatory publication duties set out in Section 5 are likely to be beneficial.

There should be no need for a Bill to realise the objectives of Section 6, namely local transport planning. Section 108 of the Transport Act 2000 should be adequate.

The duties to improve provision in Section 7 might be beneficial.

The lack of provision for cyclists and walkers during the designing and building of the A55 as a dual carriageway near the northern boundary of the National Park demonstrates the need for Section 8 of the Bill.

3. The White Paper consultation

No comments.

4. Other ways of delivering the aim of the Bill.

See comments under paragraph 1 above.

5. What are the barriers to active travel?

My comments on what the barriers are to active travel are based on the research work *“Understanding Walking and Cycling” (POOLEY G F and Others, Lancaster University, Lancaster 2011)* as well as my experience in and around Snowdonia National Park.

I do not feel comfortable cycling on a busy main road that is used by other cars and vehicles. I do not feel comfortable walking on a pavement that is used by cyclists, especially if they do not use their lights at night or their bells at any time.

Snowdonia National Park Authority has created the Mawddach Trail for cyclists and walkers.

We have ensured a wide route with signposts stating that the route may be used by cyclists and walkers, with priority given to walkers.

There are many new routes adjacent to byways and other “A” Class roads in Snowdonia and Gwynedd. Some are narrow, and it is not clear whether they are for cyclists only or for cyclists and walkers. Section 72 of the Highway Act 1835 bars cycling on pavements.

Therefore, I would not like to cycle on a new route on the side of a road without knowing its status.

The work of Pooley and others suggests encouraging changing the behaviour of motorists towards cyclists and walkers, in order to reduce the fears of potential active travellers. They suggest policies that would assist all active travellers, improved provision for children with parents who work and improved cycle storage facilities at home, at schools and in the workplace. They also suggest encouraging walking and cycling as something for everyone, not only for super-healthy fitness evangelists.

6. Financial implications

I believe that the costs of overcoming the lack of provision on the A55 have been much higher than the costs of making adequate provision when the road was built.

7. Level of detail

No comments.

8. Other issues

Public policy on education, health and other areas has led to centralising services in a way that is likely to increase the number of journeys by car, bus and ambulance and to reduce the number of journeys undertaken on foot or by bike. Rural hospitals and primary schools have shut down. Large shops with large private car parks have opened, and post offices and other small shops in towns and villages have shut down.

There was a planning application to build a new primary school in Snowdonia in 2012. The new school would have replaced the current village schools. Many objections were received on the basis of additional car and bus journeys. The Planning Officer's report referred to Strategic Policy L, which encourages active travel. (See paragraph 1 above for the objectives of Strategic Policy L of the Eryri Local Development Plan). However, according to the report, the authority was not in a position to question the need (the education department is responsible for such functions). Planning consent was granted.

I believe that there are strong arguments for centralising education and health in order to improve standards.

I see nothing in the consultation to help local planning authorities consider the requirements of active travel against the requirements of health authorities and education departments.