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Llywodraeth Cymru
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Dear Welsh Youth Parliament Members,

Thank you for the Sustainable Ways Report published by your Climate Change and Environment Committee. I am a passionate advocate for encouraging modal shift, getting people out of their cars and travelling sustainably – either through active travel or on public transport and the findings of your work are an important contribution to driving this agenda forward.

The report highlights some incredibly important issues, views and challenges that we as a government welcome. I would like to assure you that the content and its recommendations have been reviewed in detail by Ministers and officials and your findings will help inform the policies we develop and deliver whilst we progress on our transformational journey to develop an integrated transport network across Wales.

Many of your recommendations complement our aspirations set out in Llwybr Newydd, our Transport Strategy, where we have set out clear our ambitions to deliver an integrated active travel and public transport network that is both accessible, sustainable and efficient for the people of Wales.

We are in the early stages of this process. The Bus Bill which we are planning to bring to the Senedd next year will be a major step towards realising our ambitions. The Bill provides us with an opportunity to look afresh at bus service delivery across Wales by moving away from a commercial network (where private bus operators determine which routes they run and how much they charge) to a franchised model of delivery. Bus franchising allows the franchising authority (planned to be Welsh Government) to specify key aspects of bus services, including routes, timetables, fares, hours of operation and service quality standards – many of the themes that your recommendations touch on. Bus operators are therefore then responsible

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

for running these services under contracts awarded by the franchising authority. As our aims are ambitious, these reforms will take time, but it is vital that we get this right to support all citizens of Wales.

Transport for Wales are responsible for delivering the Welsh Government's vision of a high quality safe, integrated, affordable and accessible transport network. In 2022 they, with the support of the Children's Commissioner, introduced a Children and Young People's Charter. Building on this work, we have asked them to accelerate the Children & Young People's Advisory Group who we will be ask to explore options for taking forward the recommendations of your report.

I will take each recommendation in turn so that you have a clear understanding of our position and, where relevant, the actions we will take.

THEME – AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING

Recommendation 1:

Places of learning to put a greater emphasis on improving young people's understanding of the practicalities of how they can travel sustainably in their local area

Welsh Government response:

Welsh Government agree with the sentiments of this recommendation and we will continue to support places of learning in developing the resources they require to encourage and promote sustainable travel in their local area.

We continue to invest in promoting Active Travel and have recently worked with Sustrans to provide support to schools to develop Active Travel School Plans, which aim to identify and address barriers to active travel to school, to help increase the number of pupils and staff walking, scooting or cycling regularly.

A set of resources and approaches were launched on 4 October this year and are available, online, for use by places of learning This investment complements our long standing Active Journeys programme, and cycling and child pedestrian training.

A new Walk to School programme, delivered by Living Streets has started working with local authorities and schools and will operate for two years providing schools and their learners with the skills and resource required to support sustainable travel.

Recommendation 2:

An increase in efforts to promote sustainable travel, and schemes like MyTravelPass.

Welsh Government response:

Welsh Government agree that children, young people, their families and others of influence in their lives should be fully aware of all the benefits and opportunities available to them to travel sustainably.

We were concerned to read about the low proportion of those responding to the survey who knew about the MyTravelPass scheme. Although schools and colleges are notified of the initiative on an annual basis, and we have asked delivery partners, such as the Children's Commissioner to also promote these initiatives, the report demonstrates the requirement to do further work in promoting this benefit.

We will explore options with Transport for Wales to develop tailored communication resources for use by schools, colleges, local authorities and other key stakeholders, such as the Welsh Youth Parliament, to promote this benefit to eligible applicants.

We believe that a campaign targeting young people should be cocreated with young people, through Transport for Wales' Children & Young People's Advisory Group to be established in early 2024 and will ask them to prioritise this recommendation.

THEME - AFFORDABILITY

Recommendation 3:

The introduction of free public transport for people under the age of 25.

Welsh Government response:

One of the key aims of the Welsh Government's Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, is to reduce the cost of sustainable travel for everyone in Wales, including young people, and we are currently looking at a range of options to make travel by public transport more affordable for all in the community, including under 25s by simplifying the fares and ticketing system.

We have undertaken a comprehensive piece of planning work around options to deliver a 'Fairer Fares' offer for bus passengers in Wales, which has included the potential introduction of an enhanced young person's ticket option.

However, we have been faced with a challenging funding settlement from the UK Government. Following the Covid pandemic, we have had to prioritise our bus funding to ensure essential bus services are maintained whilst keeping fares as low as possible through the conditions set out in the Bus Emergency Scheme and current Bus Transition Fund, that has successfully sustained the bus industry over the past 2 years.

By the end of this financial year Welsh Government will have provided over £200m of emergency funding to protect our bus network across Wales since the onset of the Covid pandemic. This means that we haven't been able to progress as quickly as we would have liked on our Fairer Fares commitments. As and when the funding position does improve, we are keen to progress this piece of work and will continue to work with children and young people to develop any future intervention.

Recommendation 4:

The introduction and effective promotion of schemes to support young people to access equipment like bikes.

Welsh Government Response:

We recognise that access to cycles, as well as lack of secure cycle storage is an important barrier to greater uptake of cycling. Through our grants to local authorities, Welsh Government has funded school bike fleets to enable access to roadworthy cycles for cycle training and for trips during the school day.

We have supported public bike share schemes, such as in Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Swansea, which offer affordable cycle hire. There are already a large number of charities and social enterprises across Wales, which repair and re-sell second hand bikes, making cycle ownership much more affordable.

Welsh Government is currently exploring options to provide more support for this sector and encourage schemes in areas where these do not exist currently.

Recommendation 5:

Greater Investment in our public transport service, with a focus on:

- Expanding public transport routes
- Increasing the frequency of services
- Ensuring that services are reliable
- Reducing journey times

Welsh Government Response:

The current privatised operating model for buses means that buses are run by commercial companies for profit. This model does not provide Welsh Government with the tools, resources nor flexibility to make the changes that the recommendations request.

The Bus Bill which will be introduced to the Senedd next year will, however, provide the legislative framework to introduce a franchised model of delivery where Welsh Government, along with our delivery partners will be able to develop a truly integrated public transport network to reflect the requirements of local communities.

Under the franchise model we would be able to run bus routes that work for local communities, that integrate with rail services and link up with Active Travel routes. We will be able to introduce one ticket for people to be able to travel on all modes of transport, with a single timetable that can align with other bus and rail services.

In preparation for this radical reform, we are working collaboratively with Transport for Wales and local authorities to agree on the shape of public transport networks in the different regions of Wales. We are working to deliver a coherent, consistent, well planned and passenger friendly network with simple affordable tickets valid across all services.

Recommendation 6:

Improved connectivity between different modes of sustainable travel.

Welsh Government response

Integrated journey planning is one of the four key workstreams in Llwybr Newydd, recognising that modal shift requires a holistic, integrated approach to journey planning, working across different modes and sectors to make it easier for people to travel door-to-door using sustainable transport modes. Integrated journey planning involves a complex range of issues such as timetabling, information provision, infrastructure planning and policy development

All local authorities are required to develop Active Travel Network Plan in which they have planned the walking and cycling routes for each of their towns - railway and bus stations are key destinations for these routes. Transport for Wales is working with local authorities on making improvements at stations, for example by putting in secure cycle parking.

As outlined in response to recommendation 5, by introducing a franchised model of delivery for the Bus network we will be able to develop an integrated public transport and active travel network improving connectivity between different modes of sustainable travel.

Recommendation 7:

The removal of barriers facing different groups including neurodiverse young people and those with physical disabilities

Welsh Government Response:

Safety is a key theme of our forthcoming Equality Action Plan, another one of Llwybr Newydd's key workstreams.

We want everyone to feel confident, safe and secure in using the sustainable transport mode of their choice. The action plan will feature measures to address personal safety on public transport, in active travel and on the roads. We will also integrate safety considerations into all aspects of transport policy and planning, including the design of infrastructure.

The Equality Action Plan will be published in early 2024. We will ensure that the Children & Young People's Advisory Group has the option to engage with this piece of transport planning as it develops.

in the development and implementation of policies and programmes the Welsh Government applies the Social Model of Disability, recognising that those who are covered by the legal definition of disability are frequently disabled by barriers in society, rather than by their impairment or condition. We will take this approach in developing our franchised network.

Transport for Wales has an access and inclusion panel made up of people with protected characteristics. This panel helps scrutinise our accessibility policies and advise on how to engage and support passengers to use bus and rail services.

THEME - ACTIVE TRAVEL ROUTES**Recommendation 8:**

Greater investment on active travel routes, with a focus on improving safety and accessibility. Specifically we would like to see:

- a greater number of bike, walking and wheeling paths
- more segregated bike lanes
- improvements to the condition of paths and pavements

Welsh Government Response:

This Autumn we celebrated 10 years since the Active Travel Act was passed. Senedd Members from all parties marked the anniversary at an event organised by the Cross Party Group on the Active Travel Act on 4 October, reconfirming their, and our, commitment to make Wales a walking and cycling nation.

We have allocated just under £55m to local authorities for active travel infrastructure through the Active Travel Fund and the Safe Routes in Communities Grant for 2023/24. This funding is available for local authorities to make improvements to walking and cycling routes and facilities.

The Welsh Government are also encouraging local authorities across Wales to introduce School Streets, which involve road closures around schools at the start and end of the school day, in order to improve conditions for walking and cycling, improve road safety and reduce air pollution.

Recommendation 9:

An increase in the amount of secure bike parking facilities in communities, and particularly in places of learning.

Welsh Government Response:

We agree with the principle of this recommendation and provide grants to local authorities to be able to develop this infrastructure. Our grant funding to local authorities is for walking, wheeling and cycling routes and facilities. Each local authority can access a set amount of money each year, which is currently at least £500,000, to make small scale improvements or do preparatory work for bigger projects. This funding can be used to install secure cycle parking where it is needed.

In addition, the Safe Routes in Communities Grant is aimed specifically at improving the conditions for walking, wheeling and cycling to and from places of learning and is frequently used to fund cycle and scooter storage.

As part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, proposals for new or improved places of learning must include details of sufficient secure and convenient cycle storage.

THEME – SIGNAGE, TICKETING & TIMETABLING INFORMATION

Recommendation 10:

Improvements in how information regarding public and active travel is made available and communicated, making it more accessible, so that it is easier to see how various modes of travel can be used to get to the end destination.

Welsh Government response:

The Active Travel Act 2013 requires local authorities in Wales to produce maps of walking and cycling networks in their local area, known as Active Travel Network Maps (ATNMs). These maps are designed to show two main things:

1. Existing routes – those current walking and cycling routes that already meet Welsh Government active travel standards, meaning they can be readily used for everyday journeys, and
2. Future routes – new routes that the local authority proposes to create in the future, as well as current routes that are planned for improvement to bring them up to the standards.

In developing these maps local authorities must consult on these networks at the planning stage. They then should also engage with the local community during the development of each project through to construction. The approved maps can be viewed on Datamap Wales. [Active Travel Network Maps | DataMapWales \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/data-map-wales)

Working with Transport for Wales and the Children & Young People's Advisory Group we will explore options to develop an accessible multi modal journey planner.

Recommendation 11:

Improved provision of real-time information to show the progress of and updated arrival times for public transport, on those times when there are delays

WG Response:

We agree that public transport operators should be making use of modern technologies to make sure that good information is easily available to people.

An integrated transport system, underpinned by a franchised bus network, as outlined in Llwybr Newydd will enable the Welsh Government in partnership with Transport for Wales to specify the service requirements, including features such as the provision of real-time information, in future contracts.

Transport for Wales are already providing this service on their TrawsCymru network and rails connections.

Recommendation 12:

Provide a ticketing option which enables young people to use one ticket across multiple modes of public transport.

Welsh Government Response:

We agree with the principle of this recommendation, the current system of operating buses has resulted in a complex, fragmented system of fares and ticketing on local bus services across Wales.

Our Bws Cymru strategy, and the Bus Bill, sets out a path for the provision of more simplified, affordable and accessible arrangements for fares and ticketing on bus services. Our ambition is to develop a system based on the principles of One Network, One ticket, One timetable where people can travel across Wales

We have recently introduced combined bus / rail ticketing on the Transport for Wales procured TrawsCymru bus service T1 linking Aberystwyth and Carmarthen, which is proving popular with passengers. Steps are being taken to extend this to other parts of the TrawsCymru network over the next few months.

We will be using the learning from these initiatives to help inform and realise the Welsh Government's aspirations set out in Llwybr Newydd to develop a transport system that is accessible, efficient and sustainable.

THEME – DISCRIMINATION & ABUSE**Recommendation 13:**

A co-ordinated campaign to reduce anti-social behaviour and discrimination against marginalised groups of young people, and for places of learning to support within the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales.

Welsh Government response:

Inclusion will be a key theme of our forthcoming Equality Action Plan. Wales' transport network must be inclusive of everyone who needs to travel. The action plan will also set out actions to help make the transport industry within Wales also an employer of choice, improving its representation of people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, women, LGBTQ+ and disabled people.

The Children & Young People's Advisory Group will provide an opportunity to work with delivery partners to address issues around equality and accessibility.

We have recently worked with Young Wales to undertake a consultation exercise with children and young people on their thoughts, insights and experience of travelling to school. The findings of this consultation exercise have informed the recommendations of an internal report which includes actioning a piece of work to update the Travel Behaviour Code, and associated resources for schools, to promote ownership and responsibility amongst children, young people and schools with respect to their attitudes, behaviours and values when travelling. Your research and recommendation will help inform this piece of work.

Once again, I would like to thank you all for your hard work, dedication and effort to use the platform that you have as members of the Welsh Youth Parliament to ensure that the voices of children and young people across Wales are heard and listened to by the Welsh Government.

Your work, and this report in particular, will leave a lasting legacy on the infrastructure and culture of transport provision in Wales as we deliver on our ambitions to deliver a truly integrated transport network to help deliver on our commitments to be a Net Zero Nation by 2050.

Yours sincerely



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