

Consultation Response by Wheelrights. 1 August 2014

Statutory Guidance For Delivery of Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

David Judd

Wheelrights the Swansea Cycle Campaign Group

email david@djtranplan.wanadoo.co.uk 01792232649

12 Northway, Bishopston, Swansea SA3 3JN

Background

Wheelrights was founded in 1995 to campaign for better safety and provision for cycling in the Swansea area. We have seen volumes of policy, strategy and action plans written by the local authorities and the Assembly but precious little progress over the years. Many local authorities have been found wanting in cycle provision, particularly regarding major planning applications and infrastructure proposals. It is still difficult bordering on dangerous to get about on a bicycle unless very experienced. The issues of Safety and Better Provision for cyclists are paramount if the benefits to Transport, the Environment, Health and the Economy are to be realised. We and doubtless other campaign groups (as primary users), would be pleased to be included as consultees in future deliberations.

We are very pleased to support this Active Travel (AT) initiative for something is clearly needed to force progress on this matter. The downside is this work will put a large burden on local authorities, with little promise of anything concrete for years. Notwithstanding this, the attention and technical expertise that will result from this work will doubtless be of real benefit.

We are unhappy that your definition of Active Travel does not embrace the whole spectrum of cycling, which it clearly should. The Act includes only some trip purposes whereas it should cover all trip purposes, especially so in areas where tourist and recreational demand is high, such as Swansea. Recreational cycling especially by families will lead to the cycling culture we all seek. We hope that this definition will not preclude many routes from improvement. The Action Plan (consulted on separately) seems to cover this wider definition but confuses the Active Travel Act description.

The layout, titles and referencing of the issued documents have caused me some confusion and there are many inconsistencies in the file references that appear on screen and documents that hopefully will be sorted.

An Executive Summary of each of the documents would be of real benefit.

Question 1: *Does the draft delivery guidance provide the information local authorities will need to meet their duties under the Act? If not, what else needs to be covered?*

Whilst the coverage is huge our concern is that it is overcomplicated and will lead to a massive workload for local authorities. The information intended to be included on the maps beggars belief. An example including the detail you propose would be helpful. What scale do you envisage?

Question 2: *Are the approaches in the guidance the most appropriate way of delivering the requirements of the Act? If not, what approaches would be more appropriate and why?*

Certainly the existing and proposed routes need to be identified and prioritised for action, but this could be simplified. How will the Assembly deal with this volume of local detailed information ?

Question 3: *Would the actions in the delivery guidance incur costs on you, your organisation and/ or the people your organisation represents?*

Our group has assisted in many activities to promote cycling, from the annual cycling festival to construction on work camps, we do not want to see large sums of potential scheme funding wasted. Volunteer costs are of course real costs in time and effort and recognised as such by many funds.

Question 4: *Are the links between the delivery guidance and the design guidance sufficiently clear?*

I think the links are established and time will tell as to their adequacy.

Question 5: *We have asked a number of questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:*

The views and involvement of the Police and Road Safety organisations, accident stats etc are crucial. Changing the law to better protect cyclists, accident responsibility of car drivers etc seem to be missing. These are crucial to increased cycle use but perhaps a matter for elsewhere. Certainly the appalling accident rates are a major concern and should not be tolerated in a civilised society. That is what motivated our continental neighbours to act, and act they did. We are not inventing the wheel here.

Specific Questions

Question 1: *Do the features and facilities listed for inclusion in the maps capture all those that would be necessary for people to decide where to travel? Do any not need to be included?*

Most of them...too much information. They are of very little use to consider a trip that will usually be a regular event. I question the impossible amount of detail you suggest, accompanying notes etc etc. The Swansea Cycling Maps you funded are really useful for the purpose, anything more complicated, or indeed simpler(the underground map), would not be much use in deciding on a route to travel. Including information on steep hills would be useful.

Question 2: *What are your views on the consultation processes for the existing routes maps and the integrated network maps?*

Certainly more likely users can be targeted with publicity and local meetings and campaign groups /cycle shops are important and could assist.

Question 3: *What are your views on the guidance on how local authorities should deliver their duties to make year on year improvements to active travel routes and facilities?*

Too many shoulds and coulds ..replace them with must and will. It is difficult to motivate the local authority to give priority to cycling in their current circumstances. Very minor links suggested have taken years to develop. I do not expect much year on year improvement.

Question 4: *What are your views on the circumstances when it would be unreasonable to make enhancements for walkers and cyclists in exercising functions under the Highways Act?*

When there is an adequate facility nearby where cyclists are given priority across side roads (they are main road traffic) so that they have a quick convenient passage not one constantly interrupted. The concept of convenient routes along desire lines seems lost on many planners.

Question 5: *What are your views on how local authorities can promote active travel in exercising their functions under the Act?*

By getting involved in cycling activities, practising what they preach, setting a good example and getting on with their duty to provide for cycling.

Responses to consultations may be made public – OK