

Enterprise and Business Committee
Active Travel (Wales) Bill
AT 38 – Rowland Pittard

04/04/13

Dear Sir,

Written evidence to Enterprise and Business Committee on Active Travel (Wales) Bill

I submit on behalf of myself a submission to the Enterprise and Business Committee on Active Travel (Wales) Bill.

Yours faithfully,

Rowland Pittard

General Comments

I submit a number of general comments and some specific example of developments that could be encouraged by the bill and others which should be avoided by the Bill

I believe that the bill should aim to provide safe walking and cycling routes between communities and also from communities to places which are essential for them to access eg railway stations, bus stops, schools, shops medical facilities, sporting and entertainment locations. Priority should be given to walkers and all paths provided should be for both walkers and cyclists. Access is important for rural and urban fringe communities that which have little or no public transport. Priority should be given to communities which are deficient in public transport rather than urban areas with good public transport provision. The provision of paths to encourage recreational use and support health and tourism initiatives should also be taken into account. Good all weather paths will encourage use and safety can be improved by the provision of lighting where appropriate.

Developments which hinder walking and cycling should not be allowed or made to provide for alternative but more convenient routes for walking and cycling. I refer to road schemes which cut across footpaths, housing developments which create more circuitous routes and even railway crossing closures.

There should be retrospective powers to provide better access where access has been affected by such schemes. This should also apply where these schemes could be to provide better access.

I give an example. The enlarged village of Penyfai near Bridgend has poor transport links and none on Sundays and Bank Holidays. The nearest station at Sarn is 15-20 minute walk from the village by a direct route along a road which has excellent lighting, a wide verge and a road centre refuge at one end and a pedestrian controlled crossing at the other end. However pedestrians or not allowed along half the section of road which forms the direct route. Removal of the pedestrian restriction and the surfacing of the verge would provide a safe all weather route for the community to its nearest railway station. It would also provide a safe route to school for children from the village and a safe route to the nearest doctor's surgery. The cost of surfacing a footpath would be small in contrast to other expenditure on road schemes including unused cycle paths. It would reduce short distance car journeys from the village to the railway station and the eventual need to enlarge the car park at the station.

I give a second example. Bridgend Council has provided near Tondy railway station two sections of cycle path that are each 10 yards long together with associated signage. I have never seen these

sections used and they are partly grassed over. This type of wasted expenditure should be avoided but I can see no provision in the bill to prevent this happening in the future. The cycle route from Port Talbot to Pyle follows the main road but cyclists still use the main road because of its better surface and lack of obstructions such as road signs and pedestrians.

I give a third example. Greater consideration should be given to the design of shared segregated paths. The path for Bridgend Brackla to Coychurch is on the south side of the road. It is only five foot wide and the half adjacent to the road is signed for cyclists and the half adjacent to a wall is signed for pedestrians. Both widths are unsatisfactory for their designated use especially as the pedestrian section is blocked at times by road sign obstructions. Pedestrian groups do not like walking Indian file and it is not wide enough for a pram. This waste of money should also be avoided and provision made in the bill for a responsible use of finance and the controls over such wasteful schemes.

The examples I have provided are not unique to Bridgend and occur across Wales and there must be a more responsible use of finances to provide for the requirements of the bill. There must also be consultation at a local level as to the best possible schemes to provide for improved access for communities. This could be provided by improved mapping as suggested in the Bill together with an audit of what is available and what is used by local communities.

The finance for the provision at great expense of a cycleway parallel to the Heads of the Valleys road could be better used where it would improve the facilities for communities including recreational use.