



**RESPONSE TO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT'S  
CONSULTATION PAPER  
"ACTIVE TRAVEL ACTION PLAN"**

**30 JULY 2014**

## Introduction

This is the response of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to the Welsh Government's consultation paper, "Active Travel Action Plan". RoSPA thanks the Welsh Government for the opportunity to comment.

### **Do you agree with the main barriers to walking and cycling identified in the Draft Action Plan?**

RoSPA agrees with the main barriers to walking and cycling acknowledged in the Action Plan.

With a vision of walking and cycling becoming the most natural and normal way for people to get around, particularly for short journeys, and for leisure and sport; RoSPA supports the Welsh Government's the Active Travel Action Plan, as there are a number of strong reasons for encouraging people to walk and cycle more often and, crucially, more safely.

By addressing the three main barriers, safety, ease and culture, RoSPA agrees that active travel can be increased, bringing benefits including a healthier nation, a less polluted and less congested environment and greater social inclusion and general well-being, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

Wales' road safety vision is "A continued reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on Welsh roads, with the ultimate aspiration of no fatalities<sup>1</sup>." This includes cyclists and pedestrians. It is clear from the survey findings quoted in the Active Travel Action Plan consultation document that the biggest deterrents to walking and cycling are concern for safety; the existing infrastructure, the speed and proximity of traffic and personal safety.

Therefore, RoSPA is pleased to note that one of the themes of the Active Travel Action Plan is to help more people to cycle and walk more safely. The key challenge is how to achieve an increase in walking and cycling without increasing cyclist and pedestrian casualties.

The way we travel is a major determinant of how healthy people are. Road safety activities can be integrated with wider public health work by considering it alongside healthy transport and efforts to increase physical activity.

In March 2014, RoSPA published new guidance for road safety and public health professionals to help them promote opportunities for walking and cycling. The report, titled Road Safety and Public Health<sup>2</sup>, was funded by the Department for Transport (DfT), and sets out the need for a joined-up approach between public health and transport professionals. By doing so, road safety activities can have a positive impact on issues ranging from heart disease, mental health and air pollution, as well as preventing injuries.

Often the underpinning causes of poor health and injury are the same and should be identified as part of collaborative working. Public health and road safety are linked by factors related to the roads such as the speed and volume of traffic, which can cause injuries and prevent opportunities for healthy activity outside of the home. Social status is a large predictor of health and risk of traffic injury.

The report shows that the greatest impact can be achieved when public health and road safety teams tackle shared agendas, such as working together to reduce the speed and volume of motor traffic or introducing road layouts that encourage safe walking and cycling. The key findings of the report support improved collaboration with public health, as identified within the Draft Active Travel Action Plan.

Road safety fits best with public health when both are seen together under "healthy transport". Joint working between road safety and public health teams on this wider issue can enable the link to be made. There are opportunities to integrate the work of public health and road safety teams by developing mechanisms, such as joint funding of interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/det/publications/130719delplanen.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [www.rospace.com/roadsafety/info/rospa-road-safety-and-public-health.pdf](http://www.rospace.com/roadsafety/info/rospa-road-safety-and-public-health.pdf)

Transport has a big impact on health, and so it is important that we understand how road safety activities fit into this. Integrated or co-ordinated efforts that involve road safety professionals, highways departments and public health teams are essential, especially where joint working is supported by local strategies that make these links clear and use the best information and data. This will help to make transport both safer and healthier.

**Do you agree with the actions we have identified to address the barriers to walking and cycling?**

The Action Plan rightly includes measures to provide a safer road environment for active travel, to improve the awareness and behaviour of drivers and to improve the awareness and behaviour of cyclists and pedestrians.

RoSPA agrees that providing a safe environment, and one that is perceived to be safe, is essential to achieving the overall aims of the Active Travel Action Plan, to help more people to cycle and walk more often. The Action Plan correctly identifies a range of outcomes to achieve this through the design process, which together with appropriate funding to local authorities, should lead to improved quality of active travel schemes that encourage road users to seek alternatives to travelling by car.

Traffic control, especially speed management, is also crucial as reducing the perception, likelihood and severity of a collision is key to the promotion of active travel, particularly for children. The relationship between a vehicle's impact speed and the severity of injury is well established, especially for pedestrians who are more likely to be fatally injured at higher impact speeds. In built-up residential areas, reducing traffic speed is one of the most effective ways of reducing the risk to vulnerable road users, including children, pedestrians and pedal cyclists, as well as encouraging more people to walk and cycle.

The overall aim is a modal shift from car use to cycling, not walking to cycling; the needs of cyclists should not be given priority over the needs of pedestrians. Great care needs to be taken in route design to ensure there is no conflict between the two groups. In particular, we must ensure that elderly people, or people with disabilities, are not scared to go out because what used to be a pavement has now become a shared path.

The measures discussed under Design will help to make cycling and walking a realistic choice for many people. Of course, there will always be people who do not wish to travel by foot or cycle, for personal reasons or because it is impractical; their journeys may be too long or they may have too much to carry. In addition to the measures to provide a safer environment, measures are also needed to improve the awareness, skills and behaviour of cyclists and drivers.

Cycling training and education should be available to every child, as far as possible reflecting local needs and environment. Ideally, cycling education and training should be available throughout every child's school life (using the model of a spiral curriculum) incorporating separate stages of cycling education appropriate to their ages and stages of development. All practical training schemes involving children over nine years of age should incorporate training on public roads; however, the delivery of such training should be evaluated to ensure quality. National Standards Cycle training is not currently available to all children in Wales.

Cycle training can and should be supported by measures to help children cycle to school safely, such as cycling trains and Safer Routes in Communities projects, and by road safety education in schools. Cycling education and training should be seen as part of a wider road safety education curriculum that includes pedestrian safety, in car safety, and ultimately pre-driver education. While the primary audience for cyclist training is schoolchildren, appropriate courses should also be available for adults, who form most cyclist casualties in Wales. However, as highlighted within the Road Safety Framework for Wales, there is an expectation that Road Safety Grant funding will focus on casualty reduction. Given the road casualty statistics for Wales, it could be argued that currently a disproportionate amount of road safety funding is allocated to a group identified in the Framework for Wales as 'vulnerable' rather than 'high risk'. Consideration could be given to utilising alternative appropriate funding streams to contribute to the cost of cycle training for children and adults.

Educating drivers, will be an important factor in the success of the Action Plan, there are many accidents in which the cyclist is using the road responsibly and safely, but is put at risk because a driver fails to do the same. Drivers need to be aware of the characteristics, needs and vulnerability of cyclists. Cycle accidents at junctions in urban areas are usually the fault of drivers who fail to see a

rider who is in clear view, and in some cases even wearing high visibility garments. Road safety publicity campaigns need to target drivers with key messages to raise their awareness that they need to look out for cyclists, especially at junctions. It is essential that drivers are aware that cyclists may be present on any road, at any time. A thorough review of the causes and circumstances of cycling accidents in Wales, and what further measures might be effective in preventing them would produce some valuable insights into the causes of cycling accidents and how they may be prevented.

Route Maps, whether printed or online, are very useful. They can help to highlight safer, walking and cycle-friendly routes, which may not be obvious (as they are probably less direct and include both on and off road sections). These maps tend to be extremely popular with visitors, students and young people who are enthusiastic about cycling and walking.

**Are there other actions that you think should be included in the action plan? Please list them and indicate who should be responsible for undertaking them.**

A particular issue that deserves more focus is the interaction between cyclists and large vehicles, especially when large vehicles are turning left at junctions. It is often suggested that when people are learning to drive, the process should include some form of cyclist training in order to give prospective drivers some experience of cycling and help them understand the vulnerability and needs of riders. While this idea seems superficially attractive, RoSPA does not believe it would be practical or cost-effective, but increasing the messages about cyclists' and pedestrians' vulnerability in the learning to drive process would be a good step forward.

RoSPA would welcome the inclusion of advice to wear cycle helmets that meet a recognised safety standard. Cycle helmets, when correctly worn, are effective in reducing the risk of receiving major head or brain injuries in an accident. It is recognised that helmets do not guarantee protection for the wearer, nor prevent accidents from happening in the first place. The most effective ways of reducing cyclist accidents and casualties are to improve the behaviour of drivers, improve the behaviour of cyclists and to provide safer cycling environments. However, wearing a cycle helmet is a simple, low cost and effective way that individual cyclists can protect themselves. Education and publicity measures to promote the use of cycle helmets should, therefore, continue.

RoSPA does not believe that it is practical to make the use of cycle helmets mandatory because voluntary wearing rates are too low, and it is unclear whether such a law would deter cycling and so reduce the health and other benefits that flow from more cycling.

Alongside promoting the benefits of active travel, awareness of safer cycling can and should be incorporated, especially to those who do not access the proposed cycle training. It is vital that pedestrians and cyclists adhere to the Highway Code e.g. cyclists riding in the dark without adequate lights and reflectors are at greater risk of being involved in a road accident. Therefore, when riding in the dark, all cyclists should use front and rear lights (and have a rear reflector fitted) as required by law. They should also have front, pedal and wheel reflectors fitted to the bicycle and wear something fluorescent and reflective.

Accident data indicates that more cyclists are likely to be involved in an accident during daylight hours. Therefore, daytime conspicuity is just as, if not more, important than the issue of cycle lights. Cyclists should wear bright, preferably fluorescent and reflective, clothing and accessories. Cyclists, especially those new to riding, must be made aware of their vulnerabilities and responsibilities. This work can be carried out by local authorities and their partners, with police enforcement where appropriate.

Cycling has, rightly, received much focus and funding in public policy in recent years. It is important not to forget that walking is equally important; also brings a range of public health benefits and that pedestrian casualties are much higher than cyclist casualties. The Action Plan should therefore pay equal attention to walking.

In addition to monitoring road accidents and casualties, RoSPA would welcome further ongoing analysis of road casualty data in order to identify causation factors. This will assist in highlighting trends and can provide the focus for targeted road safety interventions to address a potential increase in pedestrian and pedal cyclist casualties, thus affecting the ability to meet and exceed the targets of the Road Safety Framework for Wales.

**We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please tell us below.**

In July 2013, the Welsh Government published the “Road Safety Framework for Wales”, which sets out Wales’s road safety vision, road casualty reduction targets and the many and varied ways in which these will be achieved. It is essential that the Road Safety Framework for Wales and the Active Travel Action Plan support and complement each other.

However, the Road Safety Framework for Wales does not appear to be mentioned in the Active Travel Action Plan. This is a significant omission, and RoSPA recommends that a section outlining the links between the Action Plan and the Framework be added.

In terms of National Standards Cycle Training, to date there is little evidence available regarding the retention of improved knowledge, attitudes and observed behaviour, or whether trained children have fewer accidents than untrained children. RoSPA would welcome research of this nature to ensure that training is effective, funded appropriately, and brings long term casualty reduction benefits.

RoSPA thanks the Welsh Government for the opportunity to comment on the proposals. We have no objection to our response being reproduced or attributed.

Wales Road Safety Department, RoSPA.

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