

Enterprise and Business Committee
Active Travel (Wales) Bill
AT 18 - National Association of Head Teachers

Thank you for inviting us to submit a response to the consultation on the Active Travel (Wales) Bill. While we do not propose to make a formal presentation to your Committee, we are anxious to communicate NAHT's commitment to the aims of the Bill.

NAHT is an independent trade union and professional association representing more than 28,000 members in Wales, England and Northern Ireland. Members hold leadership positions in virtually every special school, 85 per cent of primary schools and more than 40 per cent of secondary schools, as well as many early years providers, independent schools, sixth form and FE colleges, outdoor education centres, pupil referral units, social services establishments and other educational settings.

The aim of the Bill is to make walking and cycling the normal mode of travel for people undertaking short, everyday journeys. It proposes to place a requirement on local authorities to improve, on a continuous basis, the information and facilities available to encourage greater participation in cycling and walking. This requirement would ensure that the needs of walkers and cyclists are considered at the outset of all transport planning processes and, equally importantly, that existing facilities are improved.

Many schools have already instigated a number of activities to encourage active travel by arranging special 'cycle to school' days for example where pupils and parents make the journey on bicycles (in some recent cases dressed in superhero costumes!) to raise the profile of cycling and to encourage parents to investigate safe cycling and walking routes to schools which avoid more dangerous thoroughfares; often these routes are not known to parents or pupils who routinely made the journey to school by car. Better promotion of safe cycling and walking routes would be immensely useful in this regard. Involving schools and pupils in consultations on future safe route maps is a welcome proposal.

Schools also remain concerned about the safety implications of severe traffic congestion during school opening and closing times.

Schools make substantial efforts to engender in pupils an understanding of the lifelong benefits of healthy lifestyles but in order to address our nation's most pressing health concerns, including obesity, this effort must extend far beyond the school gates.

For these reasons, NAHT members are keen to see that the aims of the Active Travel (Wales) Bill are fully realised.