



**UK HEALTH FORUM'S WRITTEN EVIDENCE TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WALES'
ENTERPRISE & BUSINESS COMMITTEE ON ACTIVE TRAVEL (WALES) BILL**

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Introduction

The UK Health Forum welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the National Assembly of Wales' Enterprise & Business Committee on Active Travel (Wales) Bill.

Please note: *The UK Health Forum is formerly the National Heart Forum. Our new name reflects the wider focus of our work today, both within the UK and internationally. The National Heart Forum was established in the 1980s to coordinate national action to prevent coronary heart disease. Since then, our membership and activities have grown and developed, and now also encompass the prevention of stroke, type 2 diabetes, obesity, cancer, respiratory diseases and vascular dementia.*

The UK Health Forum (UKHF) is a leading charitable alliance of 70 national organisations working to reduce the risk of linked conditions such as coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and some cancer. UKHF is both a UK forum and an international centre for chronic disease prevention. Our purpose is to co-ordinate public health policy development and advocacy among members drawn from professional representative bodies, consumer groups, voluntary and public sector organisations. Government departments have observer status. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all individual members of the forum.

The UKHF supports the promotion of active travel and everyday physical activity because evidence shows that regular activity – including walking and cycling – helps to reduce the risk of developing non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. Infrastructure changes to our built environments are a required element to supporting everyday physical activity and active travel across populations.

Written evidence to the Enterprise & Business Committee on Active Travel (Wales) Bill:

1. Is there a need for a Bill aimed at enabling more people to walk and cycle and generally travel by non-motorised transport? Please explain your answer.

1.1 Six years ago Sustrans, a UKHF member, submitted a widely supported petition to the National Assembly calling for a legal duty on highway authorities to develop and maintain a network of routes for walking and cycling.

1.2 They did so because they identified a series of systemic blockages from developing a culture of active travel in Wales. We believe a duty to develop provision for walking and cycling is an important symbolic statement to Highways Authorities in Wales that their remit is not simply to provide roads for cars, but to provide for people to travel on foot or by bike too.

1.3 One of the initial barriers to making this a reality that Sustrans identified was the availability of funding to maintain paths. When a Highway Authority creates a road there is funding available to maintain their asset. When a traffic free path is created there is no on-going maintenance funding available and authorities are in effect creating a maintenance liability for which they have no easy way of maintaining. As a result many of the small authorities refuse to build anything on the basis that they couldn't afford to look after it.

1.4 A further barrier to increasing usage is the quality of the infrastructure that is provided, and the extent of the existing network. It is not uncommon for 'cycle routes' to start and stop randomly, and not connect people with the places they want to go. This is arguably a result of active travel not being taken seriously by Highway Authorities.

1.5 The current approach often results in road design standards applied to the development of walking and cycling routes. Furthermore, local authority engineers will often apply different standards to schemes with different stated aims, for example, a 'road safety' scheme will be treated differently to a 'cycling scheme'. This is one of the reasons why users encounter sometimes bizarre design details which frequently bring investment into 'cycle schemes' into disrepute.

1.6 While this may seem like an opaque issue it goes to the heart of what we are trying to achieve: getting people currently do not travel in physically active ways to do so. The lack of a 'user focus' to the design of routes means that infrastructure is often off putting to new or novice cyclists. Unless the detail of a route is sympathetic to a new user it will be unlikely to attract new people to use it. Attempts to remedy this through voluntary guidance have not resulted in a shift in professional practice and therefore best practice design standards underpinned by law is the best way forward.

8. Are there any other comments you wish to make on the Bill that have not been covered in your response?

20 MPH

8.1 Local authorities have the power to implement 20mph limits and zones in their local communities but the complications they face in exercising this power often discourage them from doing so. To support them in implementing this duty, greater guidance is needed.

8.2 Importantly, local authorities should be encouraged to implement area-wide 20mph limits as opposed to just isolated streets. This will ensure that through-traffic is displaced to arterial roads (designed to handle it) and not simply shift from one residential street to another, to the detriment of other walkers, cyclists and residents.

8.3 We recognize the WG do not have powers to impose area wide 20mph, local authorities can, and would like to see explicit reference to 20mph as one the suite of solutions councils can apply in developing an effective network.