



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd October 2024

Report of the Head of Engineering & Transport (David W. Griffiths)

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected: All wards

Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 – Update on progress implementing and revising the Council’s ‘Active Travel Network Map’ (ATNM)

Purpose of the Report

To provide an update on the progress being made implementing and revising the Council’s ‘Active Travel Network Map’.

Executive Summary

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 (*the Act*) makes it a legal requirement for the Council to map and plan for suitable routes for active travel, including making year on year improvements within settlements specified by the Welsh Government.

Following approval by Welsh Ministers on the 3rd August 2022, the Council is in the process of implementing its revised Active Travel Network Map (ATNM), seeking to deliver upon the wider aspirations set out in the ATNM and improve the active travel network wherever possible.

The Act requires that the ATNM should be reviewed by Local Authorities every three years, or no later than a date specified by the Welsh Ministers. In November 2023 the Minister and Deputy Minister for Climate Change agreed to extend the next date for all local authorities to submit revised versions of their Active Travel Network Maps (ATNM), to 1 December 2026 (nearer to 5 years).

This report also provides an update on the Active Travel funding received, feasibility, engagement activities, and improvement works undertaken during the previous financial year, as well as a summary of the schemes and activities that are planned for the current financial year.

Background

In November 2013, the Welsh Government introduced the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 (*the Act*) which makes it a legal requirement for local authorities in Wales to map and plan for suitable routes for active travel within designated localities. These designated localities are specified by Welsh Government and derived from the Office for National Statistics' Built Up Areas.

Settlements within designated localities in Neath Port Talbot include: **Neath, Port Talbot, Pontardawe, Croeserw, Cymmer, Brynamman, Gwaun Cae Gurwen, Blaengwrach, Glynneath, Cwmafan, Seven Sisters and Resolven.**

The assignment of designated localities, does not limit an authority's ability to develop network maps for other localities, **where there is demand for active travel routes and a high potential for their use.** Crynant received a large number of consultation responses during the ATNM consultations in 2021, which showed a demand for routes in this locality. As a result, future routes were added in Crynant during the revision of the Councils ATNM in 2021.

Active Travel is defined as walking and cycling for everyday purposeful short distance journeys, such as journeys to school, work, or for access to shops or services. Active travel does not include journeys purely made for recreation or social reasons.

The Act requires local authorities to prepare, publish and keep under review an ATNM which comprises of:

- **Existing routes** – informs the public of the existing routes in the County Borough that the Council considers suitable for active travel meeting Welsh Government standards; and
- **Future routes** – Future Routes are either routes that do not yet exist, or routes that fall short of the threshold to be classified as an existing route and require improvement.

The current version of the Council's ATNM was approved by Ministers on 3rd August 2022. The approved maps are available to view on the Welsh Government website DataMapWales <https://datamap.gov.wales>

Implementation of the Active Travel Network Map

The following work has been completed in 2023/2024:

Main Schemes Tonna hospital link

The scheme delivered improvements to the pedestrian route between Tonna hospital and Tonna. Connecting the village with the hospital while also linking a residential area to the local shops.

NPT's approved ATNM shows two routes in the vicinity of the hospital: existing route ref NPT-TON-P003 and future route FR-TON-SU001.

NPT-TON-P003 is shown as an existing pedestrian route; however, the route had failed the audit with an audit score of 64. The route is an important pedestrian route as it links to a residential area, Tonna hospital and the centre of Tonna, as a result the route had passed with statement. The audit showed that the route had critically failed due to the lack of suitable crossing points for pedestrians. The scheme addressed these issues while also bringing the route up to the standards in the ATAG.

The proposed route FR-TON-SU001, is classified as a shared use primary route. While the footway provision for pedestrians was improved by reallocating road space, there was insufficient available space to construct cycle lanes or a shared use path. The volume of traffic in this area is relatively low and the speed limit on the road was reduced from 30mph to 20mph, with a transition being introduced to ensure that vehicles reduce their speed when exiting the 60mph zone (to the east) before entering the 20mph zone. This will make it safer for both pedestrians and on-road cycling.

Works included:

- Widening the existing footway to meet the standards set out in the ATAG.
- Improving the crossing facilities junctions to give priority to pedestrians, by the installation of raised crossings (except at the entrance to the hospital where there are dropped crossings with tactiles).
- Enhancement to the crossing at the roundabout by the installation of a raised roundabout.
- Reduction in speed along the route from 30mph to 20mph and the introduction of a transition zone between the 20mph section and 60mph section.
- Installation of an uncontrolled crossing point to link the residential area and the hospital.

- Relocation of the bus stop to allow the improvement of the side road junction and bring the crossing point to the desire line.
- Installation of seating on the route.
- Installation of a green wall to enhance biodiversity and the local environment.
- Installation of improved crossing facilities on side roads, to improve access to residential areas.

Bryn to Goytre Active Travel Route (and links to Port Talbot)

The scheme, when complete, will see the creation of a suitable off-road active travel route suitable for cyclists and pedestrians linking the communities of Goytre and Bryn. The route will enable the residents of Bryn to commute to Goytre and Port Talbot to access the everyday facilities they rely on.

Funding was allocated to undertake a feasibility study on providing suitable active travel links between Port Talbot and Goytre. Several routes that could be improved for walking and cycling were identified.

Core allocation

In **2023/24** Neath Port Talbot was awarded £716K core funding for further design work, minor improvement works, land negotiations and promotion of schemes.

The following core allocation work has been approved by WG and TfW:

Neath to Cimla - Funding was awarded to progress the detailed design, undertake negotiations with CADW in relation to the listed structures affected by the scheme and commence the legal process to revoke the prohibition of cycling order.

Dwr-y-Felin – Funding was awarded to further develop the design to improving the walking route to a shared use facility.

Newbridge Road Link – Funding was awarded to further progress the design of the scheme. Ground investigation was undertaken on Docks road along with testing of the bridge to determine if it can be repaired or if sections would need to be replaced.

Sandfields Master Plan – Building on the feasibility work that has been undertaken in 2022/23 the outline design of the highest prioritised routes was taken forward. The routes when complete will see a link from Bae Baglan School along Princess Margaret Way and onto Victoria road linking the seafront to the National Cycle Network while providing access to key destinations.

Village road crossing – The scheme delivered a new toucan crossing point on Village Road to allow residents of the Village Gardens estate to safely cross the carriageway. In addition to the formal crossing point, raised plateaus were installed on Village Road to slow the speeding traffic, traffic orders have been implemented to remove indiscriminate parking making it safer for users to cross and dropped kerbs and tactile paving was installed on adjoining streets to enable

access for all users. The crossing point links the estate with the National Cycle Network 4 and the existing footbridge, which crosses the A4241 Afan Way. The works improved the designated safe route for pupils of Ysgol Bae Baglan and Bro Dur.

Monitoring – Traffic data to record the speed and volume of traffic, along with cycle and pedestrian counts, was captured on routes. Data is captured to record baseline data and capture evidence to demonstrate the benefits that improving active travel routes creates. This will allow NPT to discharge out duties under the Active Travel Act.

Promotion – NPT's website has been updated provide information on routes that have been created in recent years. This promotes the good work that has been undertaken to enhance the network to both raise awareness and give users the confidence to utilise the routes for commuting.

ATNM Development – Routes identified on NPT's ATNM were audited against a set of Welsh Government- specified criteria to determine if they are suitable for walking, cycling or both. An exercise has been undertaken to update the data held on DataMapWales to reflect the scores of the routes that have been audited in 2021-23.

The council also commenced an exercise to audit and map our important publicly accessible related facilities. Related facilities are important as they support and enable active travel, related facilities include seating, cycle storage, toilets etc. This will enable the data held on DataMapWales to be updated.

Related Facilities – The funding was used for the removal/replacement of access control measures at 4 locations to ensure that barriers comply with the Active Travel Act Guidance. This will build on works undertaken in previous years to replace non-compliant barriers and make NPT's routes more accessible. During 2022/23 a map was produced to show where cycle storage is available within NPT. Gaps have been identified at many of the County Borough's key destinations points. Funding was used to install cycle storage at 4 key leisure trip attractors namely Cwrt Herbert sports centre, Aberavon leisure centre, Pontardawe leisure centre and Vale of Neath leisure centre.

In response to complaints about insufficient signage for navigation between NCN 887 and NCN 4, a review was conducted to improve wayfinding. As a result, missing signs have now been installed.

In **2024/25** Neath Port Talbot was awarded £716K core funding for further design work, minor improvement works, land negotiations and promotion of schemes.

The following core allocation work has been approved by WG and TfW:

Sandfields Masterplan – Building on the outline designs completed for the three highest priority routes during 2023/24 funding has been received to take forward the detailed design of these routes.

Neath to Cimla – Funding was awarded to complete the detailed design, secure listed building consent for opening the gates on the gatehouse and memorial

gates, complete the legal process to revoke the prohibition of cycling order (including formal consultation), undertake public and statutory consultation on the proposals.

Neath Masterplan – The proposal will take forward the 3 highest priority routes to develop outline designs, building on the work undertaken in 2023/24.

Taibach to Goytre links – following the feasibility works that were completed in 2023/24 the outline design of the route to link Taibach to Goytre to the cycle network and the town centre will be taken forward. In addition, a feasibility study will be developed to further improve links to residential areas in Taibach.

A48 link to NCN47 on Canal – A feasibility study will be conducted to explore the possibility of providing a link from the A48 to NCN47 along the Neath Canal. The existing future route (FR-NEA-SU031) has been audited and failed for both walking and cycling, due to poor surfacing, limited signage and gradients. It is therefore proposed to look at potential improvements to provide better connectivity between the network (along FR-NEA-SU031 and any alternative routes).

Dropped Crossings – All future routes on NPT's ATNM have been audited in accordance with WG criteria. Over 100 future walking routes scored enough to be classified as existing routes but have critically failed due to missing dropped kerbs and tactiles. To improve access for residents with reduced mobility, and/or visually impairment, it is proposed that we install dropped kerbs/tactile paving on these routes. This work will take several years to complete.

Funding allocated in 2024/25 will be used for the installation of dropped kerbs and tactiles on six active travel routes at various locations throughout the county borough and will ensure that routes comply with the Active Travel Act Guidance. Once complete routes will be added to the ATNM as existing routes.

Improvements to NCN4 in Taibach – Funding will see improvements to two sections of the NCN4 in Taibach:

1.) Lighting will be installed on the back lane adjacent to Groeswen playing fields.

2.) At Margam Education Centre, the route will be segregated from traffic through the education centre car park, and minor improvements will be made to the route.

Facilities – During 2023/24 complaints have been received in relation to the large road sign on the approach to Briton Ferry roundabout. One of the posts for the sign has been placed in the middle of the path leaving users with adapted bikes little option but to pass it on carriageway. Funding will be used to relocate the sign to the rear of the path leaving the path clear for users.

Since 2019 we have removed or replaced 56 non-compliant barriers, opening up access to our network of routes for all users. Funding will be used to build

on works undertaken in previous years to replace non-compliant barriers and make our routes more accessible.

ATNM Development – An exercise will be undertaken to audit all of the existing routes shown on our ATNM to ensure that they comply with the latest Active Travel Act requirements.

The annual update of the ATNM on DataMapWales will be completed to show future routes that have been improved and can be classified as existing routes. Additionally existing routes that have been reassessed and fail the revised audit criteria resulting in them being downgraded to future routes.

The council will continue with an exercise to audit and map our important publicly accessible related facilities. Related facilities are important as they support and enable active travel, related facilities include seating, cycle storage, toilets etc. This will enable the data held on DataMapWales to be updated.

Monitoring – In order to discharge our duties under the Active Travel Act and to influence design data will be captured to record baseline data and capture evidence to demonstrate the benefits that improving active travel routes creates. This will involve capturing traffic data to record the speed and volume of traffic, along with cycle and pedestrian counts.

Active Travel Delivery Plan 2024-2029 – Outside the grant funding the council has developed an Active Travel Delivery Plan which sets out the blueprint for how we intend to encourage and facilitate a change in travel for local journeys by walking, cycling and wheeling (e.g. wheelchairs, scooters, prams). The Active Travel Delivery Plan is being presented to cabinet for endorsement alongside this annual update.

Future Plans and Proposals

In addition to the above, the Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities, partner organisations and developers in order to deliver upon the wider aspirations set out in the ATNM and improve/extend the active travel network wherever possible.

Financial Impacts

Funding to carry out the pre-work feasibility activities and active travel route improvement works has been provided by the Welsh Government as part of the Active Travel Fund Grant. Costs have therefore been accommodated within existing budgets.

Integrated Impact Assessment

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring purposes.

Valleys Communities Impacts

There will be incremental positive impacts across the Valley communities as the implementation of the ATNM progresses and the network of routes are improved/extended wherever possible.

Workforce Impacts

There are no implications as a result of this monitoring report.

Legal Impacts

There are no implications as a result of this monitoring report.

Risk Management Impacts

Not applicable, this report is for monitoring purposes so therefore there are no recommendations.

Consultation

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

Not applicable, this report is for monitoring purposes only.

Reason for Proposed Decision

Not applicable, this report is for monitoring purposes only.

Implementation of Decision

Not applicable, this report is for monitoring purposes only.

Appendices

None

List of Background Papers

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 [Active Travel Act](#)

Active Travel Act Guidance – Welsh Government (July 2021) [ATAG](#)

NPTCBC Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) [datamap.gov.wales](#)

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