



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

Regeneration & Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee
14th May 2021

Report of the Head of Planning and Public Protection
Ceri Morris

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All

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.

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.

Following approval by Welsh Ministers on the 27th February 2018, the Council is in the process of implementing its 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 also requires that the ATNMs should be reviewed by Local Authorities every three years, or no later than a date specified by the Welsh Ministers. In view of circumstances at this time, Ministers have considered it appropriate to extend the submission of the next round of Active Travel Network Maps to 31st December 2021.

This report also provides an update on the ATNM funding received, feasibility, engagement and improvement works undertaken, and a summary of the schemes and activities that are planned for the current financial year, including the ongoing revision of the ATNM.

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 settlements specified by Welsh Government.

Those settlements in Neath Port Talbot include: **Neath, Port Talbot, Pontardawe, Croeserw, Cymmer, Brynamman, Gwaun Cae Gurwen, Blaengwrach, Glynneath, Cwmafan, Seven Sisters and Resolven.**

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 Active Travel Network Map (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** – sets out the Council's aspirations for the next 15 years, identifying improvements to existing routes or new routes that the Council considers should be added to the network. The ATNM is therefore mainly a tool to enhance the forward planning of active travel and to support infrastructure development planning.

The current version of the Council's ATNM was approved by Ministers on 27th February 2018. The approved maps are available to download from the Council's website alongside an 'Interactive Active Travel Map' facility: www.npt.gov.uk/activetravel

In February 2020, Welsh Government consulted on updated Active Travel Guidance, this new guidance has a number of implications associated with delivery of the Active Travel Act requirements. Notable changes include:

- The design and delivery guidance documents have been merged into one document and revised;
- Local Authorities (LAs) may also consider guidance contained in 'Manual for Streets' (MfS) and MfS2, but advice contained in the Active Travel Guidance document will take precedence if there is any conflict;
- The requirement for LAs to reach a 250 metre mesh density of walking and cycling routes in urban areas and 500-1,000 metres on the outskirts of urban areas by the third round of map submission;
- Changes to the auditing criteria for walking and cycling routes;
- A prioritisation scoring system introduced for all routes on the ATNM;
- Enhanced consultation required, with a proforma now required to be submitted to WG alongside the revised ATNM; and
- Proposed routes can now be added outside built up areas/settlement if it can be demonstrated there is a need/demand.

The table below provides a summary of the terminology that has changed as a result of the new guidance.

Previous Terminology	New Terminology
Integrated Network Map (INM)	'Future Routes' now within the Active Travel Network Map
Existing Routes Map (ERM)	'Existing Routes' now within the Active Travel Network Map
Trip Attractors	'Destination Points'
Active Travel	'Walking and cycling as a means of transport'

LAs have been informed that whilst the final version of the Active Travel Guidance is being drawn up, LAs should adhere to the draft Active Travel Guidance. The final version of the document is expected in spring/summer 2021.

Implementation of the Active Travel Network Map

On 1st May 2018, the Welsh Government announced an enhanced funding commitment for active travel infrastructure across Wales. Structured over a three year period, £10m was allocated for 2018/19, £20m for 2019/20 and £30m for 2020/21. Subsequently on 20th March 2021, Welsh Government announced an Active Travel funding allocation of £53m for 2021/22 with a

further £20m allocated later in the year to support more schemes. This funding has increased significantly this year and is widely seen to present an opportunity to boost the improvement, construction and promotion of prioritised active travel routes across Wales.

LAs are required to submit annual funding applications with schemes that have been identified on the respective ATNMs being considered.

Improvement Works / Feasibility and Engagement Activities (2017/18–2020/21)

In **2017/18**, Neath Port Talbot was awarded £282k for specific cycle route improvement works and the development of the active travel maps.

Works were subsequently completed to NCN 47 between Zoar's Ark in Neath and Crown Foods, including improved signage and road markings, along with the route being widened, tarmacked, vegetation cut back and barriers replaced with bollards where considered appropriate to do so.

In **2018/19**, a further £775k was awarded comprising £235k for pre-work feasibility activities and £540k for improvement works.

In respect of the pre-work feasibility activities undertaken, a total of 18 ATNM routes have been considered. Pre-work activities included:

- Land ownership checks;
- Commencing negotiation with landowners (where required) including issuing correspondence and meetings;
- Adopted highways checks (where required);
- Public Rights of Way network checks;
- Biodiversity/Ecological surveys; and
- Design work.

Factors such as topography, viability, benefits to the local community and the potential for the new route to meet 'Active Travel Design Standards' were all taken into consideration when determining which routes should be taken to design stage.

Specific improvement works have been carried out to active travel routes along Fabian Way and the Neath Canal Towpath, with the latter building upon the improvements completed to NCN 47 the previous year.

Work has included improving signage and road markings, tarmacking, vegetation cutback and removal of barriers. Only minor improvements (i.e.

improved drainage, cycle signage and road markings) were needed on the Fabian Way route to bring it up to Active Travel Design Standards.

The **2019/20** financial year was extended to July 2020 due to Covid-19. Neath Port Talbot was awarded £334k core funding for further design work, minor improvement works, land negotiations and promotion of schemes. In addition, £405k was awarded for 'Phase 2 Pontardawe' Active Travel Route.

The following works were completed in 2019/2020:

- **Pontardawe Active Travel Route (Phase 1 & 2)** – comprising of widening the active travel route, resurfacing, road markings, provision of signage, removal / replacement of non-compliant barriers and clearance of encroaching vegetation.
- **Angel Street to Dwr Y Felin Comprehensive School** – defining and improving the footway between the existing footbridge and Neath town centre, including resurfacing and the installation of dropped crossings/tactile pavings.
- **Pre-Work Feasibility Activities (Various Routes)** – comprising design, land negotiation and consultation / engagement.
- **Active Travel Route Sign Audit and Design** – an audit was undertaken to establish the number, type and suitability of signs in place across the Active Travel network.
- **Audit of Access Control Measures** – an audit was undertaken to establish the number, type and suitability of barriers in place across the network.
- **Removal / Replacement of Access Control Measures (Phase 1)** – informed by the audit, 14 prioritised control measures were removed or replaced with bollards (where appropriate).
- **Scheme / Route Promotion and Engagement** – comprising public / stakeholder events and publicity, social media advertising and survey work.

In **2020/21** Neath Port Talbot was awarded £465k core funding for further design work, minor improvement works, land negotiations and promotion of schemes. In addition, £515k was awarded for Phase 1 of the Vale of Neath Active Travel Route – Neath to Tonna.

The following works have been completed:

- **Vale of Neath Active Travel Route (Phase 1)** – improvements to the Active Travel Route on the National Cycle Network (NCN) between Neath and Tonna (building on work already completed on the NCN between Neath and Briton Ferry). Works included widening and

resurfacing, removal of diseased trees and clearance of encroaching vegetation.

- **Renewal of NPT's active travel mapping** – to comply with the Act, the Council is in the process of reviewing its ATNM (to be submitted to WG on 31st December 2021). The first active travel consultation took place between 27th November 2020 to 15th January 2021 with 2,642 contributions received. The initial review process for the maps is currently underway, which will take into consideration: responses from the first consultation, background data, audit results from site visits, linking key destination points and current routes on the existing ATNM.
- **Off-road Active Travel route between Neath and Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School** – funding was awarded for a feasibility study – it was intended that part of the route would be off-road through the Gnoll Estate; however, due to biodiversity constraints (the proposed route would be through ancient woodland), the study was put on hold and the funding allocated to this element was reallocated within the programme.
- **Pontardawe Active Travel Route (Phase 3 of 3)** – works included widening the active travel route, resurfacing, clearance of encroaching vegetation and obtaining landowner agreements. This completes the works to the route from the administrative boundary in Trebanos through Pontardawe to Ystalyfera providing an off road surfaced route.
- **Godre'r Graig Active Travel Route** – the scheme involved construction of a small section of route between the National Cycle Network and Godre'r Graig. Works included obtaining landowner permission to undertake the works, resurfacing the route, raising the parapets on the footbridge, replacement of non-compliant barriers and drainage improvements.
- **Newbridge Road Bridge Alternative Route** – a feasibility study is ongoing into providing an alternative Active Travel diversion route for the closed Newbridge Road Bridge, Port Talbot.
- **Removal of Access Control Measures (Phase 2)** – to date phase 2 has resulted in the replacement of 11 non-compliant barriers/gates.
- **Promotion of Schemes and Monitoring and Evaluation** – a photographer / videographer has undertaken promotional videos (via drone and segway) of the newly improved cycle routes in Neath and Pontardawe along with promotional photographs of key locations in Neath Port Talbot. These will be used in the 2021/22 financial year to promote the next Active Travel consultation, supplement the Council's active travel webpages and any other promotional activity required. Monitoring and evaluation of the routes in Neath and Pontardawe has been completed along with the annual report to Welsh Government.
- **Pre-works** – this has included feasibility, design, land negotiation and consultation / engagement on various routes in the County Borough.

Future Plans and Proposals

Neath Port Talbot has been awarded £721K funding for 2021/2022, with an additional £50K awarded for the Active Travel route between Neath Port Talbot Hospital to Baglan railway station.

- **Active Travel Network Map Renewal (ATNM)** – work continues on reviewing the ATNM, this will include; a further formal consultation (including consultation in schools); prioritising all routes using new criteria set out in the Active Travel Guidance; continuation of auditing of routes (where required) and a further revision of the maps prior to it being submitted to WG in December 2021.
- **Blaengwrach to Glynneath Active Travel Route** – planned works include: widening the existing footways to accommodate a shared use path, resurfacing, providing tactile paving and dropped kerbs, cutting back encroaching vegetation and extending the route to link with the newly constructed health Centre and NCN 46.
- **Newbridge Road Bridge** – funding has been allocated to progress land negotiations for the alternative route.
- **Safe road crossing Tonna NCN46** – consisting of a feasibility study, design and construction of a build out in Tonna on the NCN46 improving visibility for cyclists and pedestrians, assisting with speed reduction and making the crossing safer for users of the active travel route.
- **Removal/Replacement of Access Control Measures (Phase 3)** – prioritised control measures will be removed or replaced where appropriate.
- **Dropped Kerbs and Tactile Paving (Phase 1)** – installation of a number of dropped kerbs and tactile paving across the County Borough, locations will be informed by the active travel audits undertaken as part of the revision of the active travel maps.
- **Provision of Cycle Storage & Seating** – a review will be undertaken to determine where new provisions can be installed. Locations which have the maximum benefit will be prioritised.
- **Promotion of Schemes, Routes & Networks and Monitoring and Evaluation** – comprising public / stakeholder events, publicity and collecting of cycle count data.
- **Neath Port Talbot Hospital to Baglan railway station** – funding has been awarded for development work and design.

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.

The Council is also giving consideration to what options are available to better monitor how the levels of use of active travel routes and related facilities has changed since the introduction of the active travel maps. Therefore, a number of mobile cameras have been procured and a schedule is being put in place to get yearly figures at set locations within the County Borough.

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 Local Transport 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 / information 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

No implications.

Legal Impacts

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts

No implications.

Consultation

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

Not applicable.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

Not applicable.

Implementation of Decision

Not applicable.

Appendices

Not applicable.

List of Background Papers

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

Draft Active Travel Act Guidance – Welsh Government (February 2020)

NPTCBC Active Travel Network Map (ATNM)

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