ACTIVE TRAVEL (WALES) ACT 2013 – DESIGN GUIDANCE

Consultation by Welsh Government

Response from BMA Cymru Wales

INTRODUCTION

BMA Cymru Wales is pleased to respond to the Welsh Government’s consultation on draft Design Guidance produced under the provisions of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2103.

The British Medical Association represents doctors from all branches of medicine all over the UK; and has a total membership of over 150,000 including more than 3,000 members overseas and over 19,000 medical student members.

The BMA is the largest voluntary professional association of doctors in the UK, which speaks for doctors at home and abroad. It is also an independent trade union.

BMA Cymru Wales represents some 7,000 members in Wales from every branch of the medical profession.

RESPONSE

Given the technical nature of this consultation, BMA Cymru Wales does not offer a comprehensive response to the specific questions raised within the consultation document. We would nonetheless wish to make a number of points for consideration.

In our written response to the Stage 1 consultation on the then Active Travel (Wales) Bill in March 2013, we outlined the clear and positive health benefits that can be derived from enabling individuals to undertake more travel by active means. We therefore approach our assessment of this draft design guidance from that perspective. We are keen to see guidance adopted that will be as effective as possible in achieving this aim.

In the first instance, we welcome the comprehensive nature of the draft guidance as it has been produced. We are pleased to note that the Welsh Government has engaged a number of key stakeholders in the course of its drafting.

Turning our attention to cycle lanes, we believe it is important that as far as possible they should be fully segregated from the road surface that is used by cars and other motorised vehicles. We therefore welcome the incorporation of examples of such segregated cycle lanes within Chapter 6 of this document. If cycle routes are properly segregated away from the road space then this will clearly improve their safety for cyclists when using them,

In our view, however, it is important to also ensure that such good-practice approaches are delivered as widely as possible across Wales. Whilst we recognise that this document provides helpful guidance for the identification of good practice, it could perhaps go further than it does in directing the provision of better-practice options whenever it is possible to do so. We also recognise the need to provide flexibility given that different solutions will be appropriate for different situations, but we nonetheless feel that more could be incorporated into this document to help ensure the most effective available option is employed in all cases.
For instance, greater emphasis on a hierarchical approach could be adopted which would rank different infrastructure solutions according to their effectiveness in promoting active travel. Local authorities and Welsh Government could then use this defined hierarchy to identify the most effective option for each individual circumstance when providing new active travel routes, or upgrading existing routes.

Such an approach could also assist in delivering greater consistency across Wales in the provision of active travel infrastructure. The use of more consistent infrastructure could in turn increase the confidence of individuals in using it and this, in turn, could therefore encourage people to undertake more active travel.

It is also important, in our view, to ensure continuous cycle routes are delivered. Too many current routes stop and start, and this minimises their effectiveness. We believe that the guidance must promote the provision of cycle routes that are, as far as possible, continuous routes. To be further effective, such routes should also form part of a sufficiently comprehensive network – something that this guidance should also encourage.

BMA Cymru Wales believes that signage and way-marking needs to be provided for active travel routes to an appropriately effective standard. This is something that should be facilitated by this guidance to ensure it is consistently delivered. Ensuring good signage and way-marking is provided will assist in making it easier to convince people to switch to making journeys by active travel means.

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