INTRODUCTION

BMA Cymru Wales is pleased to respond to the Welsh Government’s consultation on the Active Travel Action Plan.

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 action plan from that perspective. We are keen to see an action plan adopted that will be as effective as possible in achieving this aim.

An over-riding initial impression which strikes us in relation to the draft action plan is that it contains very few dates against which improvements and actions are proposed to be achieved. We would consider that, in order to be worthwhile, an action plan of this nature should contain clear and defined commitments as to when the actions outlined within it are targeted to be completed.

We also note that many of the actions the plan contains are existing actions that are already underway, in some cases from the delivery of other existing plans. Rather than representing a plan which is articulating a particular vision, it would therefore seem to us that a lot of existing work has been simply rebadged to form this action plan. Furthermore, a majority of the actions it contains are described in a manner which does not enable progress against them to be meaningfully measured.

We note that the Welsh Government has previously failed to deliver on many of the targets outlined in its Walking and Cycling Action Plan for 2009–13. This may explain why the Welsh Government appears now to be shying away from setting clear targets as part of the new Active Travel Action Plan. However, we feel
strongly that this would be a mistaken approach. Simply because attempts to increase walking and cycling
have not succeeded as hoped in the past, this is no reason not to be ambitious for the future health of the
people of Wales.

In our view, this action plan should be substantially reworked to include clear targets that are specific,
measurable, achievable, realistic and time-specified (i.e. SMART targets). Unless this is done, we would be
significantly concerned that the Welsh Government is giving the impression it is placing the need to avoid
being held accountable ahead of the need to achieve a measureable shift of public behaviour through the
increased adoption of travel by active means amongst the Welsh population.

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