

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**

**County Council  
15<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor John Brunt, Portfolio Holder for Highways**

**SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance**

**What progress has the Council made in developing its vision for an active travel network?**

The Welsh Government's Active Travel (Wales) Act came into force in September 2014 and has the intention of providing opportunities for healthy exercise across Wales. In practice, the present emphasis is to ensure that local networks of walking and cycling routes are coherent. They should offer connectivity and safe access to local employment, and education facilities and support business, social and leisure journeys.

The provision of new or improved facilities will require external capital funding and growing networks will increase the need for inspections and maintenance in future years. The Act also places a new statutory duty on each local authority to produce maps of all towns with more than 2,000 residents. These have to show all existing routes and the 11 built up areas to be mapped in Powys are: Brecon, Builth Wells, Crickhowell, Knighton, Llandrindod Wells, Llanidloes, Machynlleth, Newtown, Presteigne, Welshpool and Ystradgynlais.

Draft maps will be available from September and a public consultation exercise will provide the opportunity for Powys residents to comment on them, either via an online survey or at face-to-face meetings that are to take place in each town during September and October. Officers will also be working with schools in the eleven areas to gather student's views.

The Council has been developing a network of walking and cycling routes across the county for almost twenty years. Previous investments have included traffic free routes into local centres and between towns, and a wide variety of "Safer Routes" projects. Good examples are at Brecon and Newtown where both towns have links to their Coleg Powys campus and the High School and they also have riverside paths. These projects have been constructed in partnership, e.g. with Sustrans, the National Park, Canal & Rivers Trust, Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency and local landowners.

In general, a distance of up to 2 miles when walking, or 5 miles if cycling, is taken to be appropriate to generate everyday use. However, the county also has a network of regional and national routes that permit longer distance travel but are available to local users. These, together with the county's many Rights of Way are equally important in promoting healthy recreational use and supporting the tourism industry. Welsh Government funding for route development is limited for 2015/16 and only £7,000 has been provided to support surveying and map production for the county's qualifying towns.

In terms of developing its "vision", the Council has contributed to the production of design and construction standards for active travel routes in Wales and it has received Ministerial approval for its joint Local Transport Plan that supports walking and cycling. The Council's own Corporate Travel Plan and the travel plan requirements placed on new developments, including schools, will continue to promote the use of new, and current, facilities. It is intended that the Authority's response to the Active Travel Act will be informed by local interest and user consultation. Network growth will inevitably be governed by the availability of funding.