

## Consultation response: National Development Framework for Wales

Sustrans Cymru,

March 2017

### Introduction to Sustrans

1. Sustrans Cymru makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. Working across Wales and the UK, we are a leading charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.
2. In this submission we provide feedback primarily from the perspective of walking and cycling, and how this can be better integrated into the national planning system.
3. Sustrans Cymru welcomes the establishment of a National Development Framework (NDF) for Wales, and the creation of Strategic Development Plans within the planning system.
4. **Overall Recommendation:** The NDF should be the means by which Wales develops in a way that meets the needs of future generations. The NDF should ensure that all seven goals contained within the Well-being of Futures Act are reflected within the planning system, in a way that adheres to the Act's 'five ways of working'.

### National significance, 7 well-being goals

5. Expanding walking and cycling provides multiple benefits of national importance (aligned to the seven well-being goals):
  - Healthier Wales – designing our communities around walking and cycling, and increasing physical activity will help tackle Wales' public health problems including obesity, heart disease, respiratory conditions, diabetes, and mental health;
  - A globally responsible and resilient Wales – increasing levels of walking and cycling can help achieve reductions in carbon emission, improved air quality, reductions in energy consumption;
  - A prosperous Wales – boost economic vitality in towns and villages; increasing connectivity, and access; expanding tourism;
  - Cohesive communities – improved road safety; when delivered through a place-making approach, walking and cycling can improve the liveability of communities; making our neighbours attractive, safer, and better connected;
  - More equal Wales – planning future developments around car-use will further raise barriers for the 23% of all Welsh households who do not have access to a car (Census, 2011). Improving walking and cycling routes improves accessibility to education and employment centres, particularly for those on lower incomes.
  - Vibrant culture and Welsh language – the cultural vibrancy and strength of the Welsh language is being eroded by an increased reliance on car use. Expanding

travel options enables more people to access more services and facilities. Designing communities for walking and cycling enables people to play a more active part in local life.

6. **Recommendation:** To deliver the Well-being Goals, the NDF should take a two-pronged approach to expanding walking and cycling. First, Wales' existing network of walking and cycling routes should be given prominence within spatial planning and be considered an important part of Wales' infrastructure asset base. Second, expanding the number of journeys made on foot or by bike should be a core aim of any NDF (and resultant SDP/LDPs).
7. The role of the NDF should be in part to deliver the Active Travel Act; and should drive a step-change in how walking and cycling is dealt with within the planning system. The NDF should ensure a 'parity of esteem' between car use/public transport, and walking and cycling.

### **The development of the NDF**

8. Wales currently has a National Transport Plan, and local authorities have a duty to prepare Local Transport Plans. Whilst these national and local plans could be important vehicles to deliver expanded walking and cycling infrastructure and better integration with public transport; our evidence suggests that too often transport planning is not only disconnected from development planning, but can also fail to fully consider walking and cycling as a means of travel. Under the Active Travel Act, local authorities have a statutory duty to compile Existing Routes Maps (ERMs) and new Integrated Network Maps (INMs), anticipating travel future needs.
9. **Recommendation:** the new NDF provides strategic coherence, and enables better alignment between the implementation of the Active Travel Act, transport planning and development planning.

### **Walking and cycling: part of Wales' existing asset base**

10. Wales' network of walking and cycling routes should be seen as part of Wales' national infrastructure asset base, and as such should be strategically managed through the NDF. There are approximately 1,200 miles of National Cycle Network (NCN) routes in Wales, with several hundred more miles of walking and cycling routes outside of the NCN. In 2011 alone, 29 million individual trips were made on the National Cycle Network. Work is ongoing to identify gaps and improvements across the NCN and walking and cycling routes in Wales. Community-led projects like the Rhondda Tunnel demonstrate local demand for new flagship schemes. Whilst local authorities are working to improve routes and networks within their boundaries, cross-boundary routes can be overlooked. There is a role for the NDF (and SDPs) to give direction to the development of routes that span local authority boundaries.
11. **Recommendation:** the NDF provides a strategic plan for the development of Wales' walking and cycling routes, complementing but additional to ongoing work within the INM process.

### **NDF and planning for liveable communities**

12. The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires Wales to adopt a new approach to planning. Previous approaches to planning have tended to focus on allocation of land for specific uses. This approach often fails to recognise a development's impact in its wider setting. Where recognition has been given, it is usually limited to road connectivity. The NDF should facilitate a new approach to planning, which places a

greater priority on place-making. In practice this means ensuring new developments create spaces that promote people's health, happiness and well-being. An example would be a housing development that is not designed around car use, but instead provides liveable streets with priority given to green spaces, play and recreation, and walking and cycling. Sustrans has significant experience in community-led urban design and placemaking, and would welcome the opportunity to support Welsh Government's thinking on this agenda.

13. **Recommendation:** that the NDF becomes a catalyst for placemaking as the primary approach to development in Wales.

#### **Planning guidance fit for future generations**

14. Given recent legislation and developments in public policy, Sustrans Cymru recommends Welsh Government undertakes a systematic review of existing planning guidance. The current one-size-fits-all approach acts as a counter-weight to place-making: prioritising development type above factors particular to the place.
15. **Recommendation:** Welsh Government instigates a review of existing planning guidance.

#### **Contact details**

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