

Maintenance of Active Travel Routes in Ceredigion – Overview Report

1. Introduction / Background

The Welsh Government introduced the **Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013** on 4th November 2013 and the Act commenced on 25th September 2014. The Act places a requirement on local authorities to continuously improve facilities and routes for walkers and cyclists and to prepare maps identifying current and potential future routes for their use. The Act also requires new road schemes to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists at design stage.

On 7th October 2014 the Welsh Government issued a document titled 'Statutory guidance for the delivery of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.

In December 2014 the Welsh Government issued a document titled 'Design Guidance' which is a supplementary document of the Act.

It is a term and condition of acceptance of Active Travel Fund / Safe Routes in Communities / Road Safety Grant / Local Transport Fund grant awards from the Welsh Government that all schemes must be designed in accordance with this Design Guidance.

These 2 documents mentioned above have now been superseded – on 16th July 2021 the Welsh Government have issued a revised 'Active Travel Act Guidance' document:

[Active Travel Act guidance \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales)

“Active travel is a key priority in the Welsh Transport Strategy – Llwybr Newydd – and is identified at the top of the sustainable transport hierarchy that guides all our transport activities.

Consequently, Llwybr Newydd the new Wales Transport Strategy sets a mode share target of 45% of journeys to be made by walking, cycling and public transport by 2040.”

Lee Waters MS
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

2. Current Scenario / Issues

- Maintenance issues – vegetation creep and overgrowth – path width reduced and route signage / safety signage is obscured – photo examples are shown below
 - Figures 1 – 4:** Show the Ystwyth Trail (Ceredigion's 'flagship' cycle route) where vegetation has grown over the years to the extent that the route now appears enclosed and uninviting for users.
 - Figures 5 – 7:** Show the Ystwyth Trail where vegetation creep has reduced path width to less than 2m, though the path was constructed to 3m width.
 - Figures 8 – 9:** Show the Rheidol Trail with overhanging branches and vegetation reducing available path width.
- Currently Active Travel / Cycle routes receive a single swathe cut back a year. This does not address vegetation creep over path edges or clearing vegetation at height which is a potential user safety issue. Vegetation at height also obscures route direction and safety / warning signage.
- A private contractor has the maintenance contract for some routes, however some active travel route maintenance is also undertaken internally when resources allow. There is potential flexibility to undertake additional maintenance work during winter months, subject to increased resource which is likely to require additional funding

- CCC Highways Maintenance have limited resources and specialist equipment to deal with reactive maintenance issues on cycle routes, particularly leaf-fall, fallen branches / trees and vegetation creep, and a pro-active maintenance programme could help prevent issues reaching the scale of intervention required at present.
- Public consultation responses – both Active Travel consultations undertaken to date (2016 and 2021) received responses highlighting lack of maintenance on cycle routes.
- There is inevitably an additional / increasing path network and associated Active Travel facilities and infrastructure to maintain e.g. cycle shelters, public bike repair stations and cycle pumps etc. (**Figures 13 – 18**).
- The Highways network is increasing annually (Active Travel and Safe Routes, sections of new footway serving new developments and in particular estate Section 38 adoptions) – yet the maintenance budget and resource has reduced and has not kept pace with the expanding network. The Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) should reflect this and highlights additional resource that is required.
- As an example of the expanding network, in recent years the following new paths were constructed:

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Rhiwgoch Footway | 950 metres of new footway added to Public Highway |
| Bow Street to Penrhyncoch | 2km of new shared use path added to Public Highway |
| Llanbadarn to Penweddig School | 275 metres of new shared use path added to Public Highway |

Responses received as part of the current Active Travel Network Mapping Review has led to the following proposed Future Routes added to the Network which represent a very significant increase to be added to Public Highway for future inspection and maintenance:

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Waunfawr to IBERS | Approximately 2km's |
| Llandre to Borth | Approximately 3km's |
| Llechryd to Cardigan | Approximately 2km's |
| Lampeter to Llangybi | Approximately 6km's |

The Council has recently submitted an application to the Department for Transport (DfT) 'Levelling Up Fund' for an ambitious programme of several long distance rural cycle routes – enhancement of existing routes (e.g. The Ystwyth Trail) as well as new or extended routes (e.g. The Llanerchaeron Trail, connecting Aberaeron with the new Dyffryn Aeron School in Felinfach measuring approximately 11km's).

3. Matters for Consideration

Active Travel is at the forefront of the current Welsh Government agenda to achieve modal shift from car usage to contribute to the decarbonisation of travel and transport, promote healthier and more active lifestyles, contributing towards cleaner air and the various issues associated with Climate Change.

There are a number of actions that may be considered, such as:

- Dedicated Maintenance resource to maintain Primary Active Routes on a more regular cyclical basis and Secondary Routes on a less frequent cyclical basis. There is potential for this work to remain 'in-house' or be allocated to an external contractor.
- CCC Parks and Gardens have potential flexibility to undertake additional maintenance work during winter months, subject to increased resource.
- Maintaining cycle infrastructure i.e. Cycle Shelters (includes annual washing / cleaning) and Bike Repair Stations & Cycle Pumps.

Active Travel routes must be constructed to WG Active Travel Design Standards e.g. minimum 500mm gap between street furniture to the back edge of shared use paths; minimum 2.4m mounting height for signage – maintenance needs to ensure these standards are maintained to ensure people are encouraged to use these routes safely under the Active Travel and Climate Change agenda.

The Committee is asked to note the Report and the steps that Officers are taking to address implications of the expanding Active Travel network. The existing budgets for Highways Maintenance (Revenue) may be insufficient to maintain the existing network to the expected standards, noting the future and expanding network as highlighted in this report. Without further resources, the condition of existing routes will deteriorate further, thus rendering them less usable, unsafe and not fit for purpose to encourage increased levels of Active Travel and meet the Council's duties under the Active Travel Act.

Gari Jones

Engineer – Safe & Active Travel

Highways & Environmental Services

12.08.21

Revised 05.10.21

Figure 1: Ystwyth Trail at Rhydyfelin May 2013:



Figure 2: Ystwyth Trail at Rhydyfelin July 2021:



Figure 3: Ystwyth Trail at Rhydyfelin May 2013:



Figure 4: Same location July 2021:



Figure 5: Ystwyth Trail July 2021:



Figure 6: Ystwyth Trail July 2021:



Figure 7: Ystwyth Trail near Tynygraig Jun 2013

This section was originally constructed as a 3 metre wide path provision, yet lack of adequate and regular maintenance has reduced this to single-track, because continual vegetation creep has forced users to the middle of the trail:



Figure 8: Rheidol Trail June 2021:



Figure 9: Rheidol Trail June 2021:

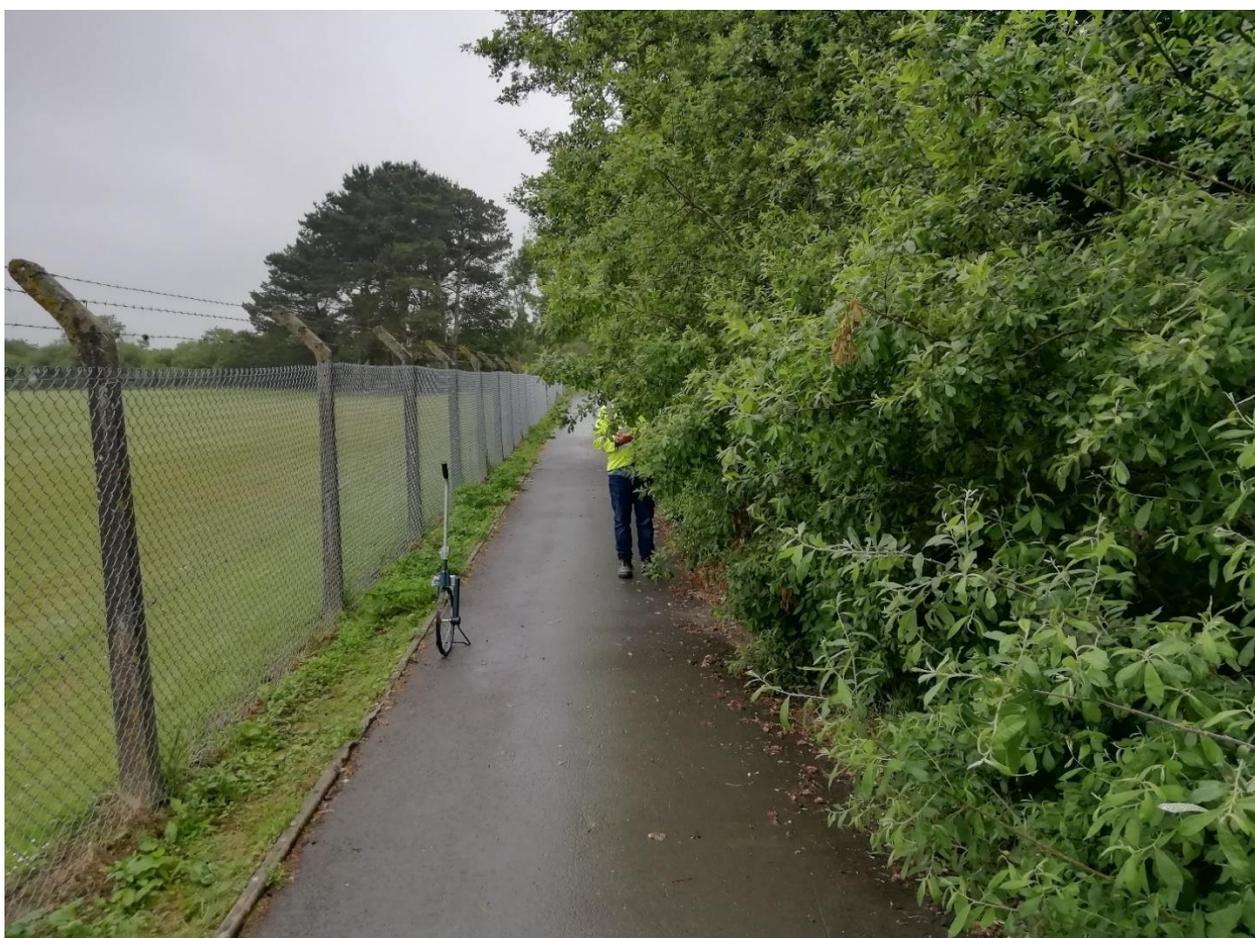


Figure 10: Bow Street to IBERS Shared Use Path

May 2021 - This path was constructed in early 2019 and is already showing signs of vegetation creep over the path edges:



Figure 11: July 2019 – Path edging visible below:



Figure 12 IBERS to Penrhyncoch Shared Use Path

Photo below demonstrates how quickly vegetation creep can occur as this path was recently constructed in 2020.



Figure 13: Cycle Shelter and Public Bike Repair Station and Cycle Pump near Aberystwyth Rail Station – May 2018:



Figure 14: June 2020:



Figure 15: Queen's Road, Aberystwyth Cycle Shelter – May 2018:



Figure 16: July 2021:



Figure 17: July 2021:



Figure 18: Baker Street Cycle Rack and Cycle Pump:



End.