

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Thriving Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 27/07/2022

LOCATION: Hybrid

TITLE:

- Active travel update April 2023
- Use of former railway lines for cycling / walking

PURPOSE OF REPORT: Update, developments since the previous report/ discussion

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION: As above

BACKGROUND:

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 places a duty on local authorities to plan for, improve, and promote routes for walking and cycling for everyday journeys.

Welsh Government Active Travel Guidance (published July 2021) is available to view at: <https://www.gov.wales/active-travel-act-guidance>

Officers attended the meeting held on 1st November 2021 meeting to advise the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the arrangements for the preparation of Active Travel Network Maps (ATNMs). An opportunity was also provided to inform the Committee of the increasing Local Highway Authority network of Active Travel routes and infrastructure to the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP), which they advised is likely to have additional resource implications for ongoing maintenance

Following extensive public engagement, Ceredigion County Council developed and following Cabinet approval (1st February 2022), submitted its draft Active Travel Network Maps (ATNMs) to the Welsh Government on 31 March 2022. The Minister for Climate Change approved the ATNM for Ceredigion on 3 August 2022 and the maps can now be viewed at: <https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/active-travel-network-maps/> This Datamap Wales site is hosted by the Welsh Government.

The Ceredigion County Council Active Travel Network Maps (ATNMs) include proposed Future Routes Maps which demonstrate ambitions for more safe walking and cycling in Ceredigion. These proposed schemes fit into either shorter, medium or longer term plans (up to 15 years). All proposed schemes require funding for scheme development and construction will be subject to the availability of funding and deliverability (such as the availability and cost of land).

Two of these Future Routes include proposed new or upgrade of existing routes along the track-beds of dismantled railway in Ceredigion:

At the 7th December 2022 meeting of the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and under Item 4 – Development Management, officers provided information including:

- Ystwyth Trail (Aberystwyth to Tregaron) – not all of the route is located on the dismantled railway track-bed due to complicated land-ownership issues and various attempts to fund upgrades and new sections have been pursued with scheme development ongoing. Planning permission exists for the Cors Caron to Tregaron section (A190729, approval date 26.09.2019). The Ceredigion ATNM Future Routes Map extends all the way to Tregaron:
 - CER-FR-AB-641 from Rhydyfelin to Llanilar
 - CER-FR-AB-641B from Llanilar to Tregaron
- Llanerchaeron Trail (Aberaeron to Lampeter) – various abortive attempts including a Cynnal y Cardi project to fund the extension of the route to Ciliau Aeron but route is now included in the Ceredigion ATNM Future Route Maps which may now enable it to attract Welsh Government grant funding in future years:
 - CER-FR-LA-317 from Aberaeron to Felinfach
 - CER-FR-LA-317B from Felinfach to Lampeter
- Lampeter to Llanybi –potential route reference CER-FR-LA-316 now included in the Ceredigion ATNM Future Route Maps which may now enable it to attract Welsh Government grant funding in future years. However, the section of former railway track between Llanybi and Tregaron was not included on the ATNM Future Route Maps.
- There are only three Welsh Government-designated Active Travel Settlements in Ceredigion under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013– Aberystwyth, Cardigan and Lampeter. Whilst there has been some relaxation recently, it remains the case that Welsh Government local transport capital grant (primarily Active Travel Fund) is still largely restricted to funding of schemes in these three towns, leaving out much of the rest of the County.
- There remains a focus within Welsh Government/ Transport for Wales Active Travel Fund on every day ‘utility’ journeys (to work, school, access day-to-day services etc.) rather than for leisure and recreation and where investment will generate higher levels of modal shift to walking and cycling.
- Albeit focused in or around the three WG-designated towns, the recently approved Active Travel Future Routes Maps make reference to aspirations to improving the Ystwyth Trail to Tregaron former railway track bed for walking, cycling and equestrian use as well as the former Lampeter to Aberaeron branch line (via Felinfach)

- Funding was previously secured for the 'Cardi Bach' walking and cycling route between Cardigan and Cilgerran. There remain significant sections of the former Aberystwyth to Carmarthen railway line route for which proposals have yet to be developed, e.g., from Tregaron to Lampeter and to the County boundary.
- As Local Planning Authorities, Dyfed County Council and more recently Ceredigion County Council, appear not to have chosen to preserve former railway track beds for future sustainable travel use though relevant UDP and LDP policies and over a number of years permitted commercial and residential development on them. Consequently, following the disposal of land by the former British Railways Board and its successors, most sections of former railway track beds in Ceredigion are now owned by multiple land owners with developments on some sections – including Ystrad Aeron and Felinfach. Alternative off-line routes will need to be found and consideration of using Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers may be required to acquire land for walking and cycling routes.
- There are inevitably a number of natural and man-made obstacles to overcome along some sections of route including road and river crossings, erosion due to regular flooding and structures requiring acquisition and restoration, such as the Tyn-y-Graig tunnel on the Aberystwyth to Carmarthen railway line.
- Whilst not necessarily mutually exclusive when identifying potential active travel routes, consideration should be given to the fact that Ceredigion County Council - and many town and community councils along the former railway line – have previously resolved to support the re-instatement of the Aberystwyth to Carmarthen railway line for passenger services.

Important to note,

Grant risks,

- Capacity to deliver.
- Land acquisition – recommend CPO process, acquisition by negotiation is considered to be ineffective.
- Lack of or uncertainty with appropriate funding streams from WG and/or Westminster.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Much of the previous information provided to this Committee (see above) remains 'current' and valid. However, following on from last Committee meeting in December 2022, the following updates are worthy of consideration:

- Welsh Government/ Transport for Wales Active Travel Fund (ATF) Core Grant funding of £0.5 Million has been utilised in FY2022/23 mainly for scheme design to enable future funding applications to be made for route construction or upgrades – see Appendix 1 - Table 1. Whilst there have been no schemes along dismantled railway lines, there has been joint working with the Welsh Government and its North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent (NMWTRA) to identify safer pedestrian and cyclist crossing opportunities over the A487 at Llanfarian which forms part of the Ystwyth Trail (Aberystwyth to Tregaron).
- The County Council submitted an ambitious but unsuccessful application for *Cylch y Cardi* Trail Phase 1 Levelling Up Fund 2 (LUF2) (Transport) to utilise and upgrade sections of the Ystwyth Trail (along Aberystwyth to Tregaron dismantled railway track-bed) and acquisition and construction of a shared use path along a section of the former Lampeter to Aberaeron branch line (Llanerchaeron to Felinfach). The application sought £16,854,495.12 as LUF2 grant funding towards a total project cost of £18,727,216.80 with £1.8 million of match-funding to be provided by the County Council. This was intended to complete some of the missing sections of the existing largely on-carriageway Sustrans promoted National Cycle Network (NCN) routes 81 (Lôn Teifi), 82 (Lôn Cambria) and 822 (Aberaeron to Llanerchaeron) in Ceredigion – see: <https://explore.osmaps.com/?lat=52.119619&lon=-4.214687&zoom=10.1019&overlays=os-ncn-layer&style=Standard&type=2d&placesCategory=>
- Despite the decision by the UK Government not to support the application, there may still be opportunities to deliver improvements in phases over a longer time-frame should funding become available.
- The County Council has been allocated £0.5 Million ATF Core Grant in FY2023/24 to fund scheme development and minor works and has also applied for ATF grant funding for construction of the first phase of the proposed IBERS (Aberystwyth University's Plas Gogerddan Campus) to Waun Fawr active travel path (£1.49 Million). The County Council currently awaits the outcome of this application. See Appendix 1 – Table 2.
- County Councillor Keith Henson, Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services and Carbon Management supported by Highways and Environmental Services officers met with Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Climate Change at Aberystwyth University on 1st December 2022 to provide an overview of Active Travel in Ceredigion and to discuss some of the specific challenges around delivery and meeting high levels of expectations in a deeper rural area of Wales such as Ceredigion.

Further information on Active Travel schemes delivered by Ceredigion County Council is available as follows:

- Under sections 7 (3) and 10 (2) of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, the County Council is required to publish annual Active Travel Reports. For the period FY2014/15 to FY2021/22 these can be viewed at: <http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/resident/travel-roads-parking/active-travel/>
- As a condition of Welsh Government grant funding, the County Council must also prepare and submit to the Welsh Government annual monitoring reports for a period of three years post-scheme delivery.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:

**Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed?
YES**

Yes. This is covered by the IAA prepared for CPMP

Long term:

- Complies well with the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act
- Complies well with Active Travel Act
- Complies well with Climate Change Act
- Complies well with Environment Act
- Helps to deliver *Llwybr Newydd* the Wales National Transport Strategy – One Wales Connecting the nations
- Helps to deliver the Climate Change Strategy for Wales
- Healthier Wales Objective
- Will assist in meeting Net Zero Carbon targets through transferring journeys from private car to walking and cycling
- Reduce traffic congestion through encouraging modal change (more Active Travel journeys, particularly shorter distance).
- Improve road safety for the most vulnerable road user groups, particularly children and younger people, pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities, less confident of all ages. Sections of route will meet modern design and accessibility standards with reference to the latest Welsh Government's Active Travel Design Guide. Help to provide opportunities within the visitor economy and wider economic generation sector within communities served by the route enhancements

Integration:

Positive - Reduce traffic congestion through encouraging modal change (more Active Travel journeys, particularly shorter distance and help to reduce carbon emissions across Ceredigion.

Collaboration: Positive - links to opportunities to work in collaboration with colleagues to improve sections of public Rights of Way, to achieve de-carbonisation of the transport/ travel sector, potential to promote new economic and community activities and contribute to the Well-being goals identified above

Involvement: Positive - There will be opportunities to work with Sustrans as part of its *Paths for Everyone* approach to provide a traffic-free, more consistent, and accessible Network for everyone.
The objective is to construct a traffic free facility that engages with local communities during its development and maximises opportunities to promote local services and opportunities to Ceredigion residents and visitors.

Prevention: Positive - Improve road safety for the most vulnerable road user groups, particularly children and younger people, pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities, less confident of all ages.

RECOMMENDATION (S):

Update only

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

Update only

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Date of Report: 05/04/2023
Acronyms:

Appendix 1 – Summary of Active Travel Grant Funding 2021/22 to 2022/23

ATF CORE ALLOCATION SCHEMES FY2022/23	
SCHEME	GRANT ALLOCATION
Plascrug Footbridge Study	£120,000
Waunfawr to IBERS AT Link	£179,977.00
St Dogmaels Road Footway	£17,000.00
Ystwyth Trail Crossings over TRA487 and connectivity improvements	£35,000.00
Heol y Bont Shared Use Path	£23,000.00
National Library of Wales path upgrade	£25,000.00
Rheidol Trail enhancement feasibility (Heol y Bont to Glanyrafon)	£9,000.00
Waunfawr Road	£16,828.00
Gwbert Road	£9,950.00
Monitoring and Evaluation	£14,245.00
School cycle shelters	£20,000.00
Cardigan Minor Works	£30,000.00
ATF TOTAL	£500,000

Table 1. List of schemes funded from Active Travel Fund in FY2022/23

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PROPOSED ATF CORE ALLOCATION SCHEMES FY2023/24	
PROPOSED SCHEME	FUNDING APPLICATION
Waunfawr to IBERS AT Link - Phase 1 - construction	£1,490,000.00
Waunfawr to IBERS AT Link - scheme development	£100,000.00
Plascrug Footbridge Study	£133,000.00
Ystwyth Trail Connectivity Improvements	£24,000.00
Rheidol Trail Enhancements	£19,000.00
Park Avenue Footway Enhancements	£53,000.00
St Dogmaels Road Minor Footway	£15,000.00
Ystwyth Trail TRA487 Crossing Trefechan and Gerddi Rheidol Link	£101,000.00
National Library of Wales Path Upgrade	£12,000.00
Cardigan Mesh Density Study	£43,000.00
ATF TOTAL	£1,990,000.00

Table 2. List of schemes included in grant applications for FY2023/24