

2nd September 1999

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Draft Guidance on Local Transport Plans in Wales

Summary

In July 1998 the DETR published the first comprehensive transport white paper for twenty years. Entitled *A New Deal for Transport; Better for Everyone*, the unifying theme was integration; meaning integrated thinking and action across all policy areas and at all levels of decision making, with the public and private sectors working with each other, not against each other. The Welsh Transport Statement *Transporting Wales into the Future* was also published at the same time.

The aim is to provide a transport system which is safe, effective, clean and reliable; one that will play a vital role in building better communities.

Unless something is done, road transport is set to grow by more than a third over the next twenty years, increasing congestion and pollution. Too many people currently have no choice but to rely on their cars. Those who cannot afford a car find that they have no choice and cannot take advantage of the benefits transport can give. People can't be forced out of their cars. What is needed is a range of measures that offers travellers genuine choice and encourages more sustainable transport decisions.

45% of journeys are 2 miles or less. Local communities, not central government are best placed to work out local solutions: to take direct action in some matters; to indirectly influence the behaviour of others, and to act as a catalyst or facilitator for the actions of others to local problems; for too long, local transport planning has taken place in isolation from planning in other areas.

Regional planning bodies, working with regional development agencies and other partners representing a broad range of interests, will prepare draft regional transport strategies as part of an integrated planning framework. These will provide the link between the national framework set out in the White Paper and local transport plans (LTPs) prepared by local authorities in the form of five year integrated transport strategies.

LTPs will mark a decisive shift in favour of public transport, walking and cycling. They will be a means of drawing together:

- an analysis of the current situation;
- the problems and opportunities this presents;
- the specific objective the authority is working towards;
- the implementation plan for delivering those objectives (including co-operative ventures with other authorities or public transport providers);
- the funding sources which have been identified, and
- the targets against which progress can be measured.

LTPs need to reflect sustainability, address accessibility and social exclusion, and achieve a balance between dealing with congestion and supporting economic development. Government intends making the production of LTPs a statutory requirement. In the meantime local authorities are asked to produce LTPs on a voluntary basis.

Local authorities in Wales have been invited to submit their progress reports in August 1999, as part of their 2000–2001 Transport Grant bids. They are not bidding documents in themselves but will be taken into account in the allocation process.

Completed LTPs will be required by August 2000.

Unitary Development Plans (UDPs), the mechanism for strategic and local land use planning produced by local authorities and National Parks, will be in place by the end of the year 2000. They will provide the means for examining the relationship between transport and land use planning and promoting strategies to reduce the need to travel.

LTPs will require the development of partnerships with other transport providers and those key sectors that use transport and generate traffic. It will require cross-departmental co-operation within authorities, and cross-border co-operation with neighbouring authorities. The Welsh Transport Advisory Group, established by the Welsh Office to develop a broader view of transport policy and to work to create an agenda for integrated transport is a model that local authorities may wish to adopt in setting up local arrangements for participation in formulating LTPs.

Examples of cross-departmental co-operation are taking into account health awareness campaigns for walking and cycling, and liaison with leisure and amenities departments.

Local authorities acting alone are unlikely to secure integrated transport in and for their areas. Cross-boundary movements between urban centres and across Wales for shopping and leisure purposes are substantial. Those living in rural areas often require access to key services which are, in some cases, located in other local authority areas. Similarly, unco-ordinated parking and traffic management approaches could lead to displacement of traffic flows to other areas, rather than to changing travel choices. Competition between neighbouring authorities, arising from differential approaches should be avoided.

Where local authorities have areas lying partly within a National Park, close co-operation will be essential. Responsibility for preparation of UDPs lie with National Park Authorities whilst local (unitary) authorities as highway authorities will be responsible for preparation of LTPs.

Providers of transport services, bus and train operating companies, taxi and private hire companies, sea-ports and airports will all need to be involved in the preparation stage. Local authorities will need to engage the community at large, as well as particular groups representing sectors of society to achieve an all-inclusive approach.

Interchange

To provide an attractive alternative to the car, public transport must operate as a true network with:

- more through-ticketing;
- better connections and co-ordination of services;
- wider availability of information, and
- improved waiting facilities.

The Government has commissioned the Chartered Institute of Transport (CIT) to produce an audit or check-list to address a wide range of possible interchange improvements (concentrating in most detail on physical aspects of interchange). Local authorities should, wherever feasible, seek to fund enhanced interchange facilities through public–private partnerships with operators and, where facilities give rise to commercial opportunities, with property developers. The checklist will build on the CIT report *Passenger Interchanges*, copies of which were sent to local authorities in January 1999. Amongst the main conclusions to emerge so far are:

- information is important at all stages. At the outset, users need to know the destinations which can be reached through interchange, where interchange occurs, and the timing of connections. Within interchange facilities, users need information on how to reach the next mode or other facilities, on delays or cancellations and alternative options. Clear information should be provided on the location of telephones, toilets, waiting rooms etc;

- passengers like staffed information. This may be achieved through combining with other facilities like tourist information bureaux. Much can be done by giving all staff a basic training in information provision, and
- it is important to consider walking and cycling as access modes with very different requirements and integrate them within the design and operation of interchanges.

Public transport information

Providing public transport information (PTI) is a very low-cost way to improve access to public transport. The Government's aim is that PTI should be available about all services through a variety of media, according to the choice and needs of the intending traveller. The Government is committed to providing a national PTI system by 2000 and work is in hand to develop a pilot system covering Wales which should be operational later this year (1999). PTI can be provided through a range of media including telephone enquiry bureaux (sic) and information in printed and electronic form. DETR will look favourably on capital expenditure proposals to establish and develop PTI facilities. This activity will be reinforced in due course by proposals to place a statutory responsibility on local authorities to ensure the availability of adequate bus passenger information in their areas.

The CTI operates an accreditation service for internet sites providing access PTI.

Information about public transport should be made available to prospective visitors from outside the area, including through travel agents and tourist offices.

Awareness campaigns

Awareness campaigns can increase public recognition that there is a need to reduce the environmental impact of car use and can also provide a climate in which specific measures aimed at achieving this, whether voluntary or through regulation or charging, can be accepted. Transport, linked with air quality and health, will be a priority area in a major national awareness campaign which the DETR will be developing over the next three years.

Rural bus services

The car will continue to be the main mode of travel in rural areas for the foreseeable future, but there is significant scope for improving travel choices in rural areas. DETR have made available £50m a year for improving rural public transport. LTPs need to explain how Rural Bus Subsidy Grant and any funds from the Rural Bus Challenge competition are being used in the context of a wider strategy for rural transport. The recent budget announced a further £10m a year for rural transport.

Bus Quality Partnerships could help authorities in bringing together the potential of commercial, subsidised and voluntary transport services in rural areas. The focus might be on:

- improved bus stops;
- waiting environment;
- information;
- high quality vehicles, and
- staff training.

Community-based rural transport

Additional support is provided by DETR for the Rural Transport Development Fund (RTDF) and the Rural Transport Partnership (RTP) scheme. Both are administered by the Rural Development Commission (RDC) and will be the responsibility of the new Countryside Agency. The objectives of the RTP will be to forge new partnerships to:

- ensure long-term enhancements to the quality of transport services;
- encourage integration of rural bus, train and taxi services, and
- reduce social exclusion.

Local authorities may wish to join with community groups in rural transport partnerships supported by RTP and to play a role in ensuring that partnership strategies are consistent with the wider LTP, and in particular with their strategy for using Rural Bus Subsidy Grant/Rural Bus Challenge funds.

Countryside traffic management strategies

Traffic management in rural areas should aim to help protect the character of the countryside and its communities.

For some roads in rural areas opportunities exist to improve conditions for vulnerable road users such as walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

DETR is working with the Countryside Commission's Countryside Traffic Management Group (CTMG) to research and develop good practice guidance on rural traffic management designed with sensitivity to the countryside environment.

Working in partnership

The LTP should be set in the context of wider objectives for the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and its integration with other policies. National Park Authorities, as the planning authorities for national parks, will also need to participate fully in the production of LTPs affecting their area.

Public participation

Wider participation in drawing up LTPs will be a key factor in raising travel awareness. LTPs should include a section which explains how the public (the consumer) was involved in the process of strategy development. Authorities might also consider making a free summary available on request, and posting the summary on their internet site.

Objectives

The objectives of LTPs are to:

- protect and enhance the built environment;
- to improve safety for all travellers;
- contribute to an efficient economy, and to support sustainable economic growth in appropriate locations;
- promote accessibility to everyday facilities for all, especially those without a car, and
- promote the integration of all forms of transport and land use planning, leading to a better, more efficient transport system.

Implementation programme

LTPs will need to include a 5-year implementation programme of planned transport capital investment, and to identify clearly the major projects and programmes which the authority is looking to the DETR/Welsh Assembly to fund, either with local transport capital or through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). But it should also include schemes funded through sources such as developer and operator contributions. ERDF grant, and, in due course, any revenue raised from road user and workplace parking charges.

Significant schemes costing more than £250k each need to be described in LTPs; schemes costing less should be described as part of a programme or package of related measures.

LTPs will not be used to allocate revenue resources to authorities, but should identify planned revenue expenditure (for as far ahead as these exist) and explain how this relates to the proposed capital programme. Planned revenue expenditure on training and publicity should be included.

Performance indicators

LTPs must include a set of indicators for measuring performance against targets. The annually-published compendium Transport Statistics Great Britain covers a range of available data.

Major local transport schemes

The threshold for major schemes will be raised to £5m. It will, however, be a prerequisite for acceptance of major schemes that they are essential to deliver LTP objectives.