

Report to: Conwy and Denbighshire Public Service Board

Title: Active Travel

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1. Situation

- 1.1 In 2021, the Welsh Government launched Llwybr Newydd, the Transport Strategy for Wales. The strategy aims to achieve a transferal shift by displacing private car journeys with walking, cycling and public transport. This strategy has been further supported by the Active Travel Act for Wales.
- 1.2 Due to the significant public health benefits of active travel the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) Public Health Team have led on the development of a Healthy Travel Charter for north Wales (see appendix a). The charter was developed in partnership with key organisations in north Wales, including the six Local Authorities, Sustrans, Natural Resources Wales and Transport for Wales. The charter provides organisations with a range of areas to take actions against, spanning leadership and communication, public transport, walking and cycling, agile working and ultra-low emission vehicles.
- 1.3 On the 8 July 2022 the Healthy Travel Charter was presented to the North Wales Regional Leadership Board. Member organisations were asked to support the adoption of the charter within their own organisations. Alongside this recommendation it was suggested that the Charter aligns well with the Public Service Board (PSB) Wellbeing Objectives. Raising awareness, supporting and promoting the adoption of the Charter across north Wales PSB partner organisations, alongside the offer of support to smaller organisations from those PSB partners that have already achieved significant progress against active travel priorities could be a key action for PSBs.

2. Background

- 2.1 Over the past 50 years, increased reliance on car travel has led to declining levels of physical activity, increasing levels of obesity, widespread air pollution, social isolation, and worsening health inequalities. In 2018, 58% of car journeys were under five miles, and in urban areas, more than 40% of journeys were under two miles. For many people, these journeys are suited to cycling and walking.

- 2.2 Active travel describes a shift away from car use towards 'walking and cycling'. Whilst walking and cycling are in themselves healthy activities that are to be encouraged, it is when they displace car journeys that they deliver significant benefits for health and well-being. The benefits are substantial, for people, it means cheaper travel and better health. For businesses, it means increased productivity and increased footfall in shops. And for society as a whole it means lower congestion, better air quality, and vibrant, attractive places and communities.
- 2.3 Whilst it has been long understood that changing the way we travel will have a dramatic effect on our health and our environment, we are now at a pivotal point, with a number of opportunities, in place across Wales, which have pushed this priority up the agenda including:
- Climate change emergency
 - Cost of living crisis
 - Declining mental health and wellbeing
 - Increasing levels of overweight and obesity

3. Assessment

- 3.1 Conwy and Denbighshire PSB are currently in the process finalising their wellbeing plan. The PSB have agreed the wellbeing objective for 2023-2025 is '*We want Conwy and Denbighshire to be a more equal place with less deprivation*'. The root causes of the inequities currently being experienced across Conwy and Denbighshire have been identified as:
- The cost of living
 - A need for greater physical and digital infrastructure
 - Lack of confidence and aspiration
 - Skill and employment opportunity gaps
 - The availability of healthy housing
 - Access to services
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - The impact of Covid-19
- 3.2 Prioritising the action of PSB partners adopting the Healthy Travel Charter and supporting wider partners in adopting and implementing the charter offers the PSB an opportunity to begin addressing some of these root causes.
- 3.3 Access to services can be improved if people have the ability to travel to services in a much more cost effective way. At a time when many families are unable to afford the increasing cost of fuel and running a car, supporting families to walk and cycle is a great way to make services more accessible.
- 3.4 Increase confidence and self-esteem through being active while travelling. Evidence suggests that physical activity can increase mental alertness, energy, positive mood and self-esteem, as well as reducing stress and

anxiety. Supporting pupils to walk and cycle to school has been found to boost self-esteem and confidence from an early age.

- 3.5 Creating employment opportunities in low emission vehicle industries. The purchasing power of combined public, private and third sector organisations across north Wales could create increased opportunities to negotiate and encourage companies within the supply chain for these vehicles to see north Wales as a viable location for production.
- 3.6 Encouraging citizens to improve their mental and physical health by replacing short car journeys with walking and cycling offers an opportunity to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on mental health physical health and wellbeing. Evidence suggests those from our most deprived communities were most adversely affected by COVID-19 (both directly by the virus and indirectly by national lockdowns). Walking and cycling offers the opportunity to practice the 5 ways to wellbeing as well as tackling unhealthy weight, Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions as well as improving many existing health conditions such as Type 2 Diabetes, Cardiovascular disease and MSK.
- 3.7 Conwy and Denbighshire PSB have also recognised the importance of **Social, Environmental, Cultural, and Economic** inequality. Air quality and road traffic collisions are the cause of many of these inequalities. Those living in the most deprived communities are more likely to be living in areas of low air quality. Rates of fatal and serious injuries among pedestrians aged 5 to 9 year olds are six times higher among children from the most deprived communities compared to those living in the least deprived communities. That is despite those people living in deprived communities being significantly less likely to own a car.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Conwy and Denbighshire PSB members provide shared leadership by supporting and working towards adopting the ethos and principles of the Healthy Travel Charter within their organisations.
- 4.2 Conwy and Denbighshire PSB members encourage and influence members of the wider system to raise awareness, and support and champion the Healthy Travel Charter.
- 4.3 For Conwy and Denbighshire PSB members to note there are existing staff, networks and resources available to work with and help develop the implementation of elements within the Healthy Travel Charter going forwards.