Road Safety Strategy

The Welsh Government has published a consultation document, outlined below:

Road Safety in Wales - A New Road Safety Strategy
Date of issue: 8 November 2023
Action required: Responses by 31 January 2024

Overview
We want to hear your views about the safety on and of our roads, to help us understand your priorities and how we can best make our roads safe for all.

We will use the responses to this consultation, alongside our engagement with stakeholders that work in the ambit of road safety, a randomised representative sample survey of the Welsh population and workshops that include marginalised groups, to create a new Strategy for Road Safety in Wales.

Introduction
We consider deaths and serious injuries on our roads to be morally unacceptable, and so we are committed to eliminating them (this is called "Vision Zero"), and we feel everyone should do their part in working towards that commitment.

This means a new, more proactive approach to road safety that aims to eliminate risks where possible and make our communities safer, healthier, and more sustainable places.

We will do everything we can and encourage our partners to make safety improvements to the road network, encourage the use of safe speed limits depending on the type and function of the road, encourage behaviour change, influence vehicle safety and an effective post-crash response by emergency services and meaningful victim support.

Find out more here.

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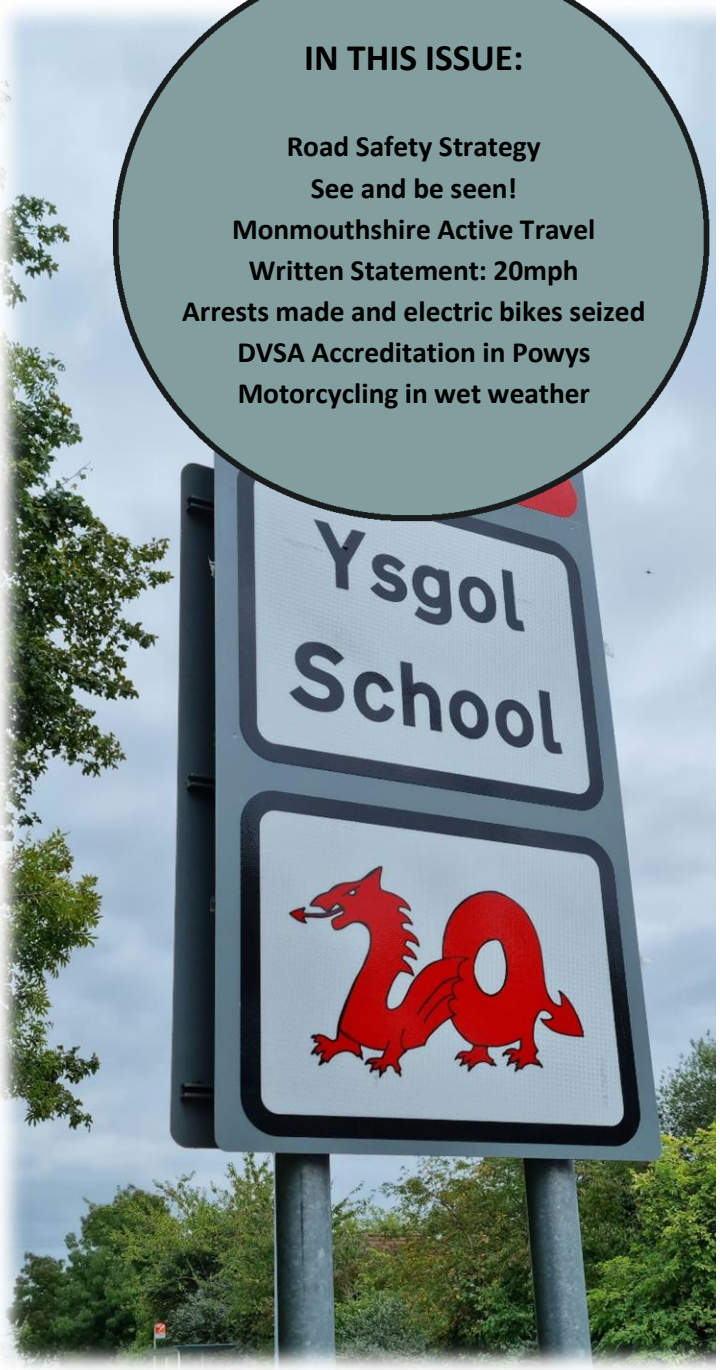

See and be seen!

As the clocks have now gone back, longer periods of darkness in the mornings and evenings, alongside worsening weather conditions, mean the risks of being involved in a road traffic collision can increase.

Road Safety Wales is advising road users of the need to prepare and to take extra care in darker conditions. In the dark it becomes even more important that drivers look out for all vulnerable road users, who should also consider how well they can be seen.

The new default 20mph speed limit in built-up areas across Wales means that drivers have more time spot hazards and to drive appropriately in the vicinity of others. Unfortunately, however, driver compliance cannot be taken for granted. Offending drivers still exist and each of us using the roads need to remain alert to poor and illegal driving behaviour to minimise our risk of being injured.

Teresa Ciano, Chair of Road Safety Wales, said, "At any time of year, drivers must always adhere to road traffic law and follow the rules and guidance within The Highway Code.

"In dark and changeable weather conditions it is vital that drivers are able to see vulnerable road users and can slow and bring their vehicle to a stop safely. We urge drivers to check that their vehicle is in a roadworthy condition. All tyres must be undamaged, with sufficient tread and inflated to the correct pressure.

"All lights must be clean and working properly, with washer fluid topped up to keep the windscreen clear; unobstructed all-round visibility is essential for safe driving and the protection of vulnerable road users.

"Pedestrians and cyclists can increase their conspicuity easily by wearing bright colours in the daytime, and in the dark choosing reflective accessories, shoes, or clothing that can be picked up in vehicle headlights. Crossing the road at dedicated crossing points whenever possible is always a safer option, especially when walking or wheeling in the hours of darkness."

Cyclists are reminded that when riding in the dark they must have a working white front light and red rear light on their bike, while pedestrians can make good use of a standard or mobile phone torch.

See and be seen on the road this autumn and play your part in reducing road casualties in Wales.

Get more from your journey when you active travel in Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire County Council is celebrating 10 years since the Active Travel Act was launched in Wales.

Cllr. Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment, said, "I would like to thank all of Monmouthshire's residents who actively travel, walking or wheeling for essential journeys such as the commute to work.

"People of all ages and abilities can wheel or walk, and every journey we take without the car contributes to making a real difference."

To find out about active travel projects in Monmouthshire visit: monlife.co.uk/outdoor/active-travel

Written Statement: Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Climate Change

Supporting highway authorities with the implementation of 20mph

Along with the Minister for Climate Change, I met with leaders, cabinet members and transport officers from across Wales to discuss the implementation of 20mph in their areas.

This was an opportunity to reflect on the nationwide roll-out, share good practice, and explore opportunities for collaboration.

I also placed on record my heartfelt thanks to our partners in local government for their continued support.

They have dealt with a colossal task: the culmination of years of debate and discussion, extensive trials, and many months of intensive preparatory work ahead of the Wales-wide launch on 17 September.

This is an important change, and it will take some time to bed in.

That is partly a logistical challenge. Changing road signs at this pace and scale is an unprecedented undertaking and that has been compounded by the totally unacceptable vandalism of signs we have seen in some places.

This action will not lead to a change in the policy and the default speed limit but is a waste of scarce resources and officer time when councils are contending with a range of different pressures.

Despite calls from some, the message from highway authorities in Wales has been very clear – we want to allow time for the new speeds to settle before making changes to the exceptions guidance.

We will respect that feedback and have agreed to work collaboratively with local highway authorities to reflect on the application of the guidance in different parts of Wales.

We will also look at the approach taken to roads on the threshold between 20mph and 30mph, as well as supporting councils where they are keen to rapidly address obvious anomalies.

This work, and our wider dialogue with local authorities on the implementation of 20mph, will help establish whether clarifications are needed to encourage greater consistency across Wales, and we will aim to share learnings and feedback by the end of the year.

I'm also grateful for the continued support of Phil Jones - and the expert panel he leads - for their offer to provide advice and support directly to local authorities, over this post-implementation period.

Finally, we have agreed to be flexible with the funding available to councils this financial year, and the next, so that they have the resources they need to continue supporting the delivery of this important change.

Arrests made and electric bikes seized in operation to keep Cardiff's city centre streets safe

Eleven electric bikes were seized and eight arrests were made in Cardiff city centre on Thursday, October 5, as part of a joint operation targeting people riding modified bikes which can reach speeds of more than 40mph.

Cardiff Council's City Centre Warden Team took part in the operation which saw South Wales Police make two arrests, and the UK Visas and Immigration Service arrest six people.

A spokesperson for Cardiff Council said: "As a council we actively encourage people to cycle bikes but what we can't have is people driving illegal, modified electric bikes in pedestrian areas putting pedestrians at risk.

"Each vehicle that was seized by South Wales Police could do speeds up to and beyond 40mph, yet they were all only fitted with brakes for a regular pedal cycle. It's unacceptably selfish behaviour and it's important we crackdown on it.

"During the operation one of our wardens was allegedly assaulted by a bike rider who has been charged with assault, carrying a bladed article and possession of a Class A drug with intent to supply. Moving forward we can see that episodes like this only reinforce the need for our City Centre Warden Team to wear body cameras and I will be taking this up with the relevant officers to authorise their use."

Electric bikes which have a maximum output of over 250 Watts, a hand throttle, or exceed speeds of 15.5mph are not classed as a pedal cycle, but a moped or a motorcycle, and must be registered with the DVLA, insured and taxed and the driver must wear a helmet.

These vehicles can only be driven on private land and not on the public highway as they are a danger to pedestrians, especially those with disabilities.

The operation followed on from reports across the UK of people being hit by these types and or suffering near misses.

The new City Centre Warden Team, funded by the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, patrols the city centre and works with the Emergency Services and Council service providers to clamp down on anti-social behaviour to keep the streets of Cardiff safe for everyone to enjoy.

Sergeant Gareth Davies, from South Wales Police, said: "While it's not illegal to own an e-bike with an electrical assistance or power output exceeding 15 mph and 250W respectively, you can't ride it on the public highway as a regular bike without registering and insuring it like a moped.

"This includes both off-road and road rights, such as byways and bridleways. You can only ride unregistered and uninsured electric bikes on private land with the landowner's permission.

"During Thursday's operation two people, initially stopped in relation to illegally adapted pedal cycles, were arrested on suspicion of drug dealing offences. Drugs and a large knife were seized.

"We will continue to work with our partners in this way to help keep Cardiff city centre safe."

Powys County Council vehicles are DVSA accredited

Powys County Council has become an accredited member of the DVSA Earned Recognition Scheme. The voluntary scheme, administered by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), is a way for vehicle operators, such as the councils fleet service, to prove the organisation meets driver and vehicle safety standards.

As an accredited member, the council have a strong track record of compliance and adherence to the regulatory requirements in running a fleet of vehicles and will regularly share performance information with DVSA.

Powys County Council is the first local authority in Wales and only the third in the UK, to achieve the standards required to become accepted into the DVSA Earned Recognition Scheme.

Cllr Jackie Charlton, Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys, said: "The number of vehicles that our fleet team manage and maintain across the county is staggering. Acceptance into the DVSA Earned Recognition Scheme just proves that despite being busy, we are committed to ensuring we always maintain a high standard of driver and vehicle safety."

Advice for motorcycling in wet weather conditions

Riding in the rain - it's probably fair to say that bikers in Wales will have lots of experience of this!

Traction is greatly reduced in the rain; it's especially important that tyres are undamaged, inflated to the correct pressure and with good tread depth. Ride as smoothly as possible with careful, progressive use of the brakes and throttle.

Wear proper rain gear, one or two sizes larger than you normally wear, so it fits over your normal PPE. Choose your lane position to avoid large amounts of surface water; look for dry tracks made by vehicles in front of you, as these sections allow greater grip for your tyres. Avoid puddles wherever possible - they may even be hiding a pothole.

Use common sense; slow down in the rain and keep a safe extended following distance - at least double the distance you allow in dry conditions. If they really can't be avoided safely, take slippery spots such painted lines and manhole covers as straight on as possible. A rainbow patch on the road surface could be oil mixed with rainwater so early observations will allow you to avoid this hazard.

Being tense on your bike affects control and puts you at greater risk; stay relaxed and if the weather really becomes too bad, pull over.

Bikers are even harder to see in the rain. Make yourself as visible as possible; hi-vis rain gear can be a good option. And remember to use your lights. Remember, when visibility is low it becomes even more important to ride so you can stop in the distance you can see to be clear.

Rain or shine, each ride should ideally be smooth, relaxed and confident. Look well ahead and try to enjoy the experience, even if you're soggy around the edges! For more motorcycling advice visit walesbybike.com.