

Travel Planning in Sewta

Introduction

Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) funded Regional Travel Plan Coordinators (RTPCs) have worked in South East Wales since 2002, initially within SWIFT and TIGER and latterly within Sewta. During this time, the profile of Travel Plans has developed and increased as part of the Smarter Choices Agenda in Wales. The RTP recognises the value of Travel Planning to its objectives and proposes an expansion of Travel Planning activity.

At present, two Travel Plan Coordinators cover the ten Sewta Local Authorities. In order to maximise the effectiveness of these limited resources, areas have been identified where some development and refocusing of activities is necessary.

Proposals

A more strategic approach is now required, placing a greater emphasis on coordination between the 10 Sewta authorities to develop a more uniform approach to promoting, developing and monitoring travel plans. Whilst the RTPCs have been involved in key elements of travel planning work, a more keenly focused and prioritised approach is required to make most effective use of the limited resources and to help to deliver Sewta's priorities and the Regional Transport Plan. To this end, initial work has been undertaken to develop a clear programme for future activities.

The proposed framework for a Sewta Travel Planning Strategy should provide a clear and complete strategic overview of the programme of work that the RTPCs should be involved in and its parameters. It should also set overarching regional objectives and short, medium and long term actions for the work of the RTPCs.

Such a strategic approach will allow for better planning, focus on key issues that are appropriate to each Authority in Sewta and allow the travel to work/school commuting behaviours of the population to be effectively targeted on a regional basis. This will also facilitate effective monitoring of the success of Travel Planning activity in the region by generating measurable outputs (such as active travel plans and modal shift figures).

There should be greater emphasis on co-ordination and monitoring e.g. supporting local authorities in adopting a monitoring tool, and liaising with colleagues in land use and transport planning to ensure that this area is properly addressed. RTPCs should ensure that local authorities are aware of and working effectively with other partner organisations (e.g. Eco Schools, Healthy Schools, Sustrans, Cycle Training Wales and Sports Council for Wales) to ensure that all available support is being utilised.

An initial area of focus should be assisting Local Authorities to put in place Travel Plans, or a structured roll out programme, for their own offices to use as best practice examples before rolling out the programme to a wider audience.

A key objective in the work of the RTPC should be raising profile of Travel Plans and Sustainable Travel Options by making links with 'new' audiences/partner organisations e.g. sustainability and business development officers and showing how Travel Plans can contribute to an organisation's environmental management system and to raising the 'green' profile. The combination of this and the economic benefits of an active travel plans in terms of savings to an organisation can therefore be an effective selling tool.

	Past	Current	Proposed
Area of TPC activity			
Working on travel plans	<p>Work on school Travel Plans – a great deal of work has been carried out on School Travel Plans. Given the area covered, and the 753 schools it holds, this would not seem to be the most effective use of limited resources.</p> <p>Much work with schools is also linked to SRTS scheme bids and not to developing STPs as useful educational tools.</p>	Finishing work handed over by previous incumbents. Developing contacts and reviewing approach to STPs.	<p>Focus in this area of activity should be on delivering group seminars (e.g. introducing Travel Plans, monitoring Travel Plans) as a way of accessing more schools in a consistent approach to Travel Planning. Local STP Working groups at multiple educational levels (i.e. feeder school/secondary level work) should be encouraged. Whilst on the whole there should be a move away from the focus on individual schools, support and guidance could still be offered on individual basis where appropriate and following attendance at seminars.</p> <p>Focus attention on Travel plans as a tool for managing the impacts of the school run and promoting healthy active travel, to further links with existing initiatives such as Eco/Healthy Schools.</p>
	<p>Work on Health Authority Travel Plans – Some involvement with NHS Trusts, attending frequent transport information days and providing support to the Royal Glamorgan</p>	Finishing work handed over by previous incumbents as well as new projects. Supporting travel planning activity and holding an NHS Travel Plan Toolkit Workshop.	This is seen as a key area for development, particularly for staff employed by local health authorities. A rolling programme of Workshops is likely to be developed in conjunction with Welsh Health

	Hospital. Also contributing to the development of the NHS Travel Planning Toolkit.		Estates. Links with representatives at the local level will continue to be developed and maintained.
	<p>Work on Organisational Travel Plans –</p> <p>A large amount of promotional activity appears to have been undertaken with regard to organisational travel plans, with substantial involvement in some individual organisations e.g. conducting travel surveys and inputting data for external organisations.</p> <p>Progress in this area is frequently slow, across the board, and therefore it is difficult to establish what the impact of the work has been.</p>	Limited work has been undertaken in this field due to the lack of complete information from Local Authorities re: key organisations operating within their boundaries. Some contact with business parks, particularly in Newport and Caerphilly, has been established but overall progress has been slow. Planning applications and Travel Plans are being received from some local authorities, and comments are being provided on these.	<p>Initial focus should be on building up local authority databases and developing travel plan resources for Sewta area.</p> <p>RTPCs should work with Local Authorities to identify key areas of focus.</p> <p>Cross border working between Local Authorities should be established where organisation are multi site.</p> <p>A proper framework for responding to requests to comments on Travel Plans and planning applications needs to be developed. In addition, contacts within local authority planning departments should be identified in order to ensure awareness of Travel Planning is raised within this key audience.</p>
Travel plan co-ordination and monitoring	Previous status assessments of the progress of the Travel Plans of individual local authorities have taken place. In general, this area of activity appears to have received little attention to date with the focus primarily having been on promoting Travel Plans.	Work is underway to introduce a Sewta-wide system of monitoring the take up of school Travel Plans and other organisational travel plans (both voluntary and required). Selected school Travel Plans are currently monitored as part of the Safe Routes in Communities funding process.	This area of activity is felt to be in need of development. Supporting a more consistent approach throughout the region in how travel plans are dealt with e.g. through planning process, particularly with regard to monitoring, is seen as key.

		<p>Information gathering has been taking place in order to ascertain how individual authorities currently process Travel Plans, and where the relevant officers are located (e.g. within transportation/development control).</p>	
<p>Enabling and supporting travel plans</p>	<p>As discussed above, much of the travel planning work to date in the Sewta region would fall under the heading of ‘enabling and supporting’ travel plans. The role has primarily had a focus on promotion/marketing of travel plans, particularly on attending events (e.g. to market Sewtacarshare.com). Some information resources have been developed.</p>	<p>Some promotional activity has been carried out (e.g. targeting key organisations, attending events). New/additional information resources and a library of information are also in development and a process of identifying and documenting good practice established. Identifying partner organisations and developing links (e.g. Eco Schools, Healthy Schools, Green Dragon/Arena Network) has also been a primary task.</p>	<p>Provision of information needs to be more effective e.g. developing a suite of resources about different elements of travel planning (car sharing, physical activity development etc), ensuring that contact with appropriate bodies and partner organisations is established (e.g. sports development officers, Sustrans, cycle to work schemes etc). Similarly, liaising with appropriate officers in local authorities to promote a consistent approach and to develop Sewta-branded guidance (e.g. on School Travel Plans, for developers etc) should be a priority.</p> <p>Provision of appropriate training and information on a larger scale (e.g. through seminars and workshops) should be a medium-long term goal. With regard to Sewta carshare, guidance on how much of a priority this is would be helpful when allocating time/resources.</p>

<p>Other tasks</p>	<p>Involvement in events such as In Town Without My Car day was a prominent feature. Relevant training e.g. OU Travel Plans courses has been available to previous RTPCs. Additional 'other tasks', often being 'ad hoc', are difficult to establish for previous RTPCs.</p>	<p>Requests have been made for TPC involvement in initiatives such as the Valleys Regional Park and the Sustainable Travel Towns. Relevant training has been undertaken e.g. Residential Travel Plans, Sustainable School Transport Conference, Facilitating Groups. There has been some limited involvement with ACT Travelwise. Commenting on planning applications is becoming an increasing part of RTPCs workload. Attention has been given to developing work programme and carrying out a review of the role.</p>	<p>RTPCs should continue to support ad hoc tasks where core work programme permits. Maintaining and developing knowledge and expertise will be an on-going process. Sewta-level guidance on how planning applications are to be processed by the RTPCs is needed and may be addressed during a wider review of the Sewta work programme. Further attention should be given to developing a strategic, coherent work programme, and maintaining this will be an ongoing process.</p>
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