

COUNCIL: 25 NOVEMBER 2021

STRATEGIC PLANNING & TRANSPORT STATEMENT

Travel Trends

Currently traffic in Cardiff is around 90% of levels pre-pandemic with traffic in the city centre around 80% of the levels prior to Covid-19. Commuter journeys (by all transport modes) are at 56% of trips pre-pandemic. However, peak time congestion has increased, and journey times are typically taking 7% longer than they did in 2019.

Nevertheless, air quality remains improved, and the proportion of journeys made sustainably is higher than in 2019. Notably, walking has seen substantial increases at around 50% higher than prior to the pandemic. Cycling is estimated to be more than 10% higher than in 2019; and public transport patronage (bus and rail combined) is beginning to recover at over 80% pre-pandemic levels, with rail patronage at Cardiff Central specifically now around 70%, and both bus and rail use rising to pre-Covid levels during the weekends.

City Centre Developments

Castle Street re-opened to general traffic on 31 October 2021 in conjunction with the provision of a new bus gate on Westgate Street. In line with the decision taken by Cabinet in June 2021 to re-admit traffic to Castle Street, the effects of this measure will be closely monitored and assessed through modelling and analysis of its impacts of on clean air, congestion and the wider city recovery and renewal.

Bike Sharing Scheme

A temporary suspension of the OVO Bikes (Nextbike) scheme has taken effect from 15 November 2021. Regretfully, this has become necessary due to the very significant levels of vandalism on the system. The Council is working closely with Nextbike, South Wales Police and other key partners to try to understand what is prompting this senseless activity by a small number of people.

This pause will allow the operator to repair the damaged bikes and put in place additional measures to protect the scheme going forward. It is anticipated that the scheme will relaunch early in the New Year. Nextbike has made a commitment to getting the scheme back on the street, and work to complete the installation of the e-bike rental stations is continuing in the interim period.

COP26 Cymru Roadshow

I was pleased to join the panel on decarbonisation of transport at the Welsh Government's COP26 Cymru regional roadshow. The event which focused on the transport sector was aimed at involving people in some of the big challenges faced by the transport sector in helping nations to meet their net zero targets.

Members of the Active Travel Schools Team also joined the roadshow on 10 November 2021 to give a live presentation as part of the session on Clean Transport. Presenting jointly with Living Streets Cymru, the team showcased the integrated approach being taken to promoting active travel journeys to school by combining infrastructure improvements with support to enable travel behaviour change.

The session highlighted the impressive results of the Living Streets 'WOW Tracker' scheme since its introduction in 42 Cardiff primary schools at the beginning of the autumn term. From a baseline of 57% of pupils in WOW schools travelling actively at the beginning of term, percentages have increased over the last three months, from 76% during September, to 79% in October, and 80% this month.

Traffic and Tunnel Control Centre

The Traffic and Tunnel Control Centre located in County Hall is dedicated to ensuring the safe, expeditious and efficient travel experience for the people of Cardiff and the surrounding districts. It constantly monitors the flow of traffic and where necessary, takes steps to improve and rectify any network problems as they occur using traffic signals and electronic signs.

The months in the run-up to Christmas are always busy; however, the additional challenges of multiple roadworks and the dynamic of changed road layouts have made this year particularly challenging. The Control Centre is committed to meeting these challenges and doing all that it can to assist the travelling public. This is particularly relevant to public transport, where both permanent and temporary adjustments are being made to systems to ensure that the public of Cardiff have a reliable, timely and safe bus service.

Extra resources have been committed on Saturdays when traffic is particularly heavy to better manage the network when there are many competing demands including events, concerts and sports matches in addition to increased shopping and leisure. The Control Centre is mitigating the negative effects of high traffic flows to support public transport in particular.

Replacement Local Development Plan – Consultation on Strategic Options

Work continues on preparing the Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) for the city with the next stage of consultation due to be launched on 30 November 2021. The consultation will run for 10 weeks from 30 November to 8 February 2022 and will seek feedback on options for housing and jobs growth over the next 15 years and possible ways this growth can be provided for.

A virtual launch event will take place on 30 November and the consultation will be widely publicised on social media. The consultation documents will be available to view on the Council's website and residents will be encouraged to fill out an online survey to give their views. In order to engage with a wide range of interest groups, targeted workshops will be held to gather feedback and officers will be available to discuss the consultation with residents and ask any questions. The feedback from the consultation will inform the preparation of the Preferred Strategy, which is due to be considered by Cabinet and Council in September 2022.

Millennium Walkway

The replacement of the timber decking and structural members at the city centre Millennium Walkway with a recycled composite material product is now substantially complete. The walkway has re-opened to public use and thanks to the improvement in skid/slip resistance from the introduction of the new material, will now be open to cyclists for the first time. This route will give a useful daytime link between Castle Street Bridge and the new developments at Central Square, giving an alternative to busy Fitzhamon Embankment and the pinch point by Nos Da. There are minor works to be undertaken to renew the signage; this work will be undertaken in the coming weeks.

Highway Operations

The Highway Maintenance Operations Team is now in full swing with the delivery of the winter service. The Council has re-stocked its salt pile and currently holds approximately 2,500 tonnes of rock salt at the Brindley Road depot. Highway engineers are continuously monitoring weather conditions and a workforce is on standby 24 hours a day, to deliver the service as and when the conditions dictate that salt treatment is required. On a local community level, a programme of grit bin filling has been carried out and will continue throughout the season. Reports of empty bins can be made directly to the Highways Team through the CardiffGov app and arrangements will then be made for them to be replenished.

Councillor Caro Wild
Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Transport
18 November 2021