

Roads

Introduction

There are 33,100 kilometres of highway in Wales, of which 4,300 kilometres are principal and trunk roads and motorways. 75% of households in Wales have one or more cars/vans available, with a higher proportion in rural Wales. Some 70% of personal journeys in Wales are by car, slightly above the GB average.

The Assembly Government's Trunk Road Forward Programme lists major improvement and new road schemes. This includes the new M4 from Magor to Castleton and improvements to the A465 Heads of the Valleys road.

The Assembly Government pays Transport Grant to local authorities for a range of transport schemes, including building new roads and improvements to existing roads.

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

"Highways and Transport" is field 10 of Schedule 5 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. This means that the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers over highways and transport matters through Legislative Competence Orders.

Responsibility for roads is devolved to Wales. Highway authorities are responsible for road maintenance and repairs, and building new roads. The Assembly is the highway authority for trunk roads (motorways and some A roads) and the 22 unitary authorities are the highway authorities for all other roads.

Other powers devolved to Welsh Ministers include:

- ◆ Powers to regulate traffic using highways (*Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984*)
- ◆ Power to promote road safety (*Road Traffic Act 1988*)
- ◆ Traffic management measures (*Traffic Management Act 2004*)

Matters reserved to the UK government include: policing; national speed limits; road signs; vehicle construction and use regulations; vehicle testing and licensing; driver testing and licensing; the Highway Code.

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

A draft Road Transport Bill to tackle road congestion and improve public transport is to be published in 2007. The UK Government has said that this is in response to increased road congestion, and would make available additional powers for local authorities to develop road pricing pilot schemes.

Existing EU legislation applying to road transport services establishes common rules on access to the market and to the profession, sets minimum standards for working time, driving and rest periods, sets minimal annual vehicle taxes and common rules for tolls and user charges.

EU policy

The EU adopted its transport policy White paper in 2001 and carried out a review of this policy in 2006. It has identified roads that form part of Trans-European Networks (TENs). In Wales the TENs are the M4/A48/A40/A477 corridor to the ports of Pembroke Dock and Fishguard in South Wales and the A55 to Holyhead in North Wales.

Key Assembly Government strategy documents and action plans from the Second Assembly:

A consultation draft of the Wales Transport Strategy *Connecting Wales*ⁱ was published in July 2006.

The Welsh Assembly Government set out their plans for the future maintenance and improvement of trunk roads in Wales, in the March 2002 report, *Trunk Road Forward Programme*. Following a review of Transport Policy in 2004, the Assembly Government issued updated information on the programmesⁱⁱ

This updated information was integrated into four priority phases as follows:

- ◆ 'Phase 1' – programmes due to start by March 2007;
- ◆ 'Phase 2' – programmes that could be ready to start by April 2010;
- ◆ 'Phase 3' – programmes that are unlikely to start before April 2010, and;
- ◆ 'On hold' – recognised programmes that have no proposed start dates.

The new M4 Magor to Castleton scheme is currently in Phase 2.

Legacy issues from the Second Assembly

In its legacy paper the Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee agreed that its successor may wish to consider the following roads related issues during the Third Assembly:

- ◆ Monitoring the development of Road Pricing in the UK and its possible impacts on Wales.
- ◆ Scrutiny of the Assembly Government's Transport Strategy (Connecting Wales), and the Regional Transport Plans.
- ◆ Implementation of the Trunk Road Forward Programme.

Useful links

Welsh Assembly Government website transport pages:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/?lang=en>

Traffic Wales (Assembly Government's traffic information service):

<http://www.traffic-wales.com/>

Department for Transport:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/>

South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA)

<http://www.sewta.gov.uk/>

South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH)

<http://www.swwitch.org.uk/default.asp?id=1>

TraCC (Mid-Wales)

<http://www.tracc.gov.uk/>

Taith (North Wales)

<http://www.taith.gov.uk/>

Further information

For further information about transport matters, please contact:

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ⁱ Welsh Assembly Government, *Connecting Wales*, July 2006
[Connecting Wales](http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/roads/?lang=en)

ⁱⁱ Welsh Assembly Government, *Trunk Road Forward Programme*
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/roads/?lang=en>