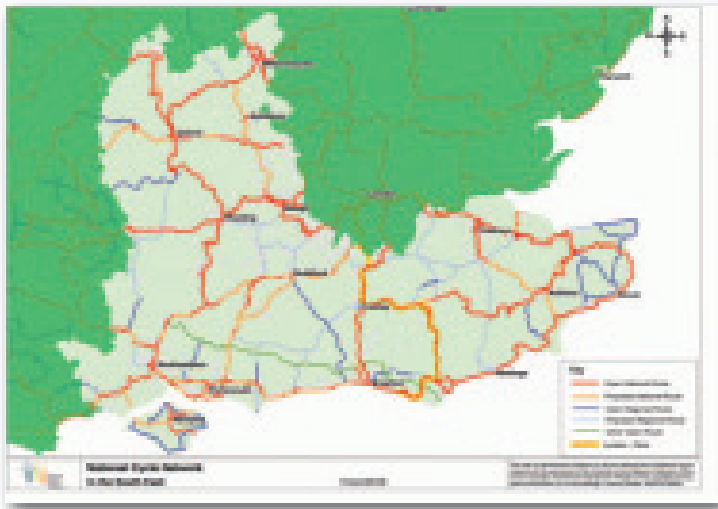


Sustrans in the Regions

Sustrans is a UK-wide organisation with offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as most regions of England. Each office is headed by a Director or Manager working with our many partners on the National Cycle Network and other Sustrans projects including Safe Routes to Schools, Liveable Neighbourhoods and Active Travel. In each issue of *The Network* we will focus on a country or region in which we work, to show the variety and breadth of Sustrans' activities, from creating outdoor art galleries to working with European partners on tourism initiatives. Case studies will show just how many partners are involved in the building of a route and how hands on our staff are in delivering the practical, innovative solutions to transport challenges for which Sustrans is best known.

Region of the issue - South East



Sustrans works with a wide range of partners in the South East, including the Government Office for the South East; South East England Development Agency; Countryside Agency; Tourism South East; Sport England; South East Physical Activity Co-ordination Team and Local Authorities. These working relationships have given us an excellent understanding of both the mechanisms, and constraints, to improving the environment for walking and cycling in the region.

We are about to publish a 5 year regional plan for Sustrans' work in the region which will provide the structure and priorities for project work for the next decade as well as informing us of the need for new partnerships and sources of funding.

It will ensure that all our work is focused on achieving Sustrans' mission of working on practical projects so people can choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment, as well as contributing towards wider regional and national government policies and objectives.

Active travel

In October 2004 Sustrans received an Active England Big Lottery Fund grant of £290,375 towards the construction of 6 miles of National Route 6 between Milton Keynes and Leighton Buzzard. A revenue grant of £58,075 was also provided to part-fund an Active Travel Manager in Milton Keynes for 2 years. The route was completed in June 2005 and James Hardie has now been in post as the Active Travel Manager on the Lakes estate in Bletchley since September. James' brief was to work with the community to increase levels of physical activity and to also promote use of National Route 6 from Bletchley to Leighton Buzzard. Since starting he has been working on several initiatives with the community on the Lakes Estate both directly and through local organisations and schools.

His work is very hands on and he currently holds three walks a week for groups. On Mondays he takes a half-hour, post lunch walk with people from the local sheltered

accommodation – most of whom are over 80. On Tuesdays he walks with the Children's Society – initially it has been with the staff who feel they aren't getting enough exercise but the plan is to extend the walk to families the Children's Society work with. On Wednesdays there is a general walk for anyone on the estate to come along and stretch their legs.

He has also set up a bike club for people in the community – the Water Eaton Wobblers – aimed at people who aren't used to cycling. James has had support from staff at the Open University, based in Milton Keynes who have been donating bikes for the rides. Phil Corley Cycles, a local bike shop have ensured the bikes are in good working order, providing maintenance at a reduced rate.

James says of the job "It is changing all the time. The key aim for me is to build relationships through working with partners and the community. Initially it has been quite hard to engage with the community but the walks and all the schemes we are promoting are getting more popular all the time."

A week in the life...

Simon Pratt is the regional manager for Sustrans in the South East and has worked for Sustrans since 1997. He is based in the Oxford office.



Monday

Telephone updates with regional staff. David still working hard with East Sussex County Council to get leaflets and promotional material for National Cycle Network routes out for the Summer. Liz is trying to persuade Worthing that cycling on the promenade makes perfect sense - look at Brighton. Arranged a meeting with Nick in Southampton. Must remember to look at the route he's proposing between Winchester and Otterbourne. Meeting with Oxfordshire County Council to discuss signing schedule for Route 57 - we will order the signs and they will install them.

Tuesday

Off to Aylesbury, one of two recently announced Cycling Demonstration Towns in my region along with Brighton. I'm working closely with Paul Osborne, Director of Sustrans' Safe Routes to Schools, to appoint Bike It officers in the two towns. Today I am there for a meeting of the Bucks Local Access Forum for an update on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Called in at Thame to check on progress with construction of the Phoenix Trail that connects Thame and Princes Risborough. Seems to be going well. Chatted to a dog-walker who's happy with the work so far. On to Staines for a meeting with the County Council, Borough Council and Groundwork to look at cycle

and walking routes from Staines to Heathrow. Parked outside the town so that I could look at potential routes on my bike, some good possibilities just needing minor works to link them up. Now that the National Cycle Network is so well established, creating the local networks that link people to their shops, schools and jobs, and which increase access and usage is crucial.

Wednesday

Day in the office to catch up on e-mails and phone calls and to feedback progress to head office in Bristol. Getting better at cataloguing photos taken on site the day before which I then send off to Bristol to include in the photo library Sustrans holds. Revised signing schedule for Route 57 then faxed off amendments to the supplier.

Thursday

Train to London for meeting with the Countryside Agency to discuss our draft Regional Plan. Useful exchange of information, I think we all learned something. I love the train - time to catch up on work with no interruptions or e-mails! Evening meeting in Henley, so I stopped at my mother's for tea. More work on the laptop before she arrived, preparing my presentation.

Onward train journey to Henley for presentation to the Town Council on my recently published Cycling Strategy for the town. Lukewarm reception and some critical questions, which I countered positively. Support from one Councillor as I was leaving, offered to help progress our proposals, might even come up with some funding!

Friday

Early train to Guildford then cycled to site meeting with County Council on a bridleway. They have money to spend and are keen to upgrade the route. On to Woking for a brief meeting with Helene Raynsford at the Primary Care Trust to discuss opportunities for joint working on the promotion of cycling and walking as physical activity.

Cycled along Basingstoke Canal to Mytchett for a meeting with Tony Beecher, Operations Manager for the canal. He is very open to improving the surface for walking and cycling, especially if we can find the money. This would make a superb traffic-free route and would serve business and leisure journeys in Woking and the Blackwater Valley. Back on train from Blackwater to Oxford.

Sunday

A busman's weekend, walking along the Phoenix Trail. Stopped and chatted with people using the Trail. Very gratifying to know that the project I have been working on for 6 years is well used and loved by the locals!

How the Phoenix rose again

The Phoenix Trail passes through the countryside on the border between Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. This traffic-free path between Princes Risborough and Thame is an excellent example of how Sustrans works with many different partners to bring a stretch of disused railway to life again.

The branch of the Great Western Railway between High Wycombe and Thame was first opened in August 1862. The line closed to passengers in January 1963, but freight trains continued to use the section between Princes Risborough and Thame until April 1991. The only passenger service was a charter operated under the name The Thame Phoenix for one day only. It seemed possible that additional passenger services might be available in future, but this was not to be, and the track was finally lifted in the mid 1990s. Aply, the Phoenix has risen again as a cycling and walking route, and is once again making a useful contribution to the transport infrastructure of the area.

The line from the eastern edge of Thame to the outskirts of Princes Risborough was bought from British Rail by Sustrans in 1997. Initial clearance of part of the byway link to Horsenden was organised by Buckinghamshire County Council in February 1998, with the help of local volunteers. The first major funding for conversion of the railway line into a Greenway was provided by English Partnerships through the Derelict Land Grant and construction work on the cycling and walking route started with a volunteer work camp in June 1998.

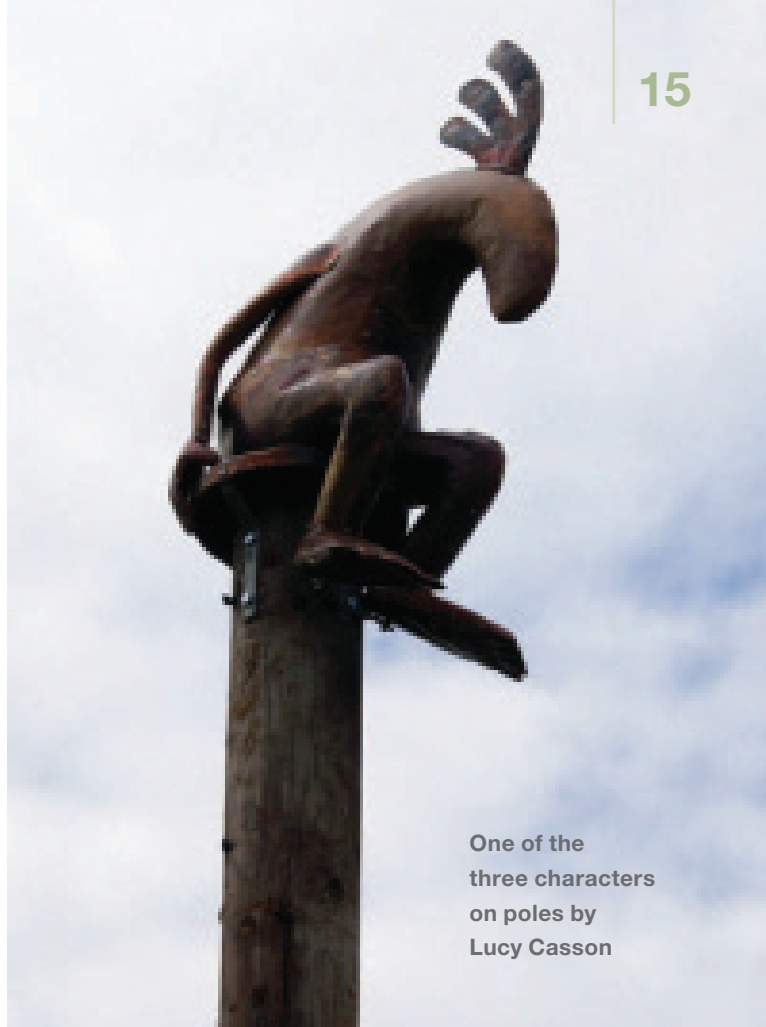
Following the award of a grant from South Oxfordshire District Council, a tarmac surface was laid on part of the route and a parallel grass surface was provided for horse riding in February 2001. Land was acquired from six different landowners in Thame and the tarmac path was extended with funding from the District and County Councils in February 2002.

Further negotiations with private landowners secured land to extend the route through Thame, and with funding from the Department for Transport Links to Schools programme, a second grant from the District Council and additional support from the County Council, the route was extended towards Lord Williams's School in January and October 2005.

The Phoenix Trail has also benefited from a generous donation of a supporter in Wheatley, who has helped finance the latter stages of this major project. Other partners have included Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway Association and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Trail is also an award-winning outdoor art gallery, with seating and sculpture designed by students at Rycotewood College in Thame under the guidance of Lead Artist Angus Ross. Opened in spring 2002, it comprises a series of 30 artworks sited over 5 miles along the Phoenix Trail.

The theme was inspired by the old railway environment and the landscape of the Chiltern Hills. Lucy Casson was commissioned to make three copper characters on poles and to run educational projects at John Hampden and Princes Risborough schools. The project was an overwhelming success, winning the 2002 'Arts, Business & Community' Award from Arts & Business. The arts project was a partnership between Sustrans, Rycotewood College, The Arts Council, Ercol Furniture Ltd, the Transnational Woodlands Industries Group, Arts and Business and Wycombe and South Oxfordshire District Councils.



One of the three characters on poles by Lucy Casson

Cycling in East Sussex is put on the map

East Sussex is a diverse county and a popular tourist destination attracting visitors from all over the UK and abroad, particularly France.

To inform all visitors, including those who live in the south east, of the great cycle routes in the county, twelve easy to use, inspirational maps/guides have been produced. The maps were made possible by a combination of INTERREG 111A funding and a good working relationship between East Sussex County Council and David Young of Sustrans.

The first set of six maps features National Route 2 from Brighton to Lydd, and five spectacular circular routes along the way. The area is home to some of the most dramatic chalk cliffs in the world, the stunning South Downs, quiet beaches, beautiful riverside and woodland tracks, picturesque villages and the austere beauty of Romney Marsh and its many medieval churches.

The second set feature National Route 21 from East Grinstead to the port of Newhaven via the famous Forest Way and Cuckoo Trail featuring five more circular routes. These explore the rolling High Weald, the gentler landscape of the Low Weald and the Pevensy levels, which really live up to their name.

INTERREG 111A funding also allowed for the production of French language editions of the 12 map/guides to promote French tourism in the county.

The map/guides can be viewed at www.sustrans.org.uk/southeast and hard copies of the maps can be obtained by emailing davidy@sustrans.org.uk

