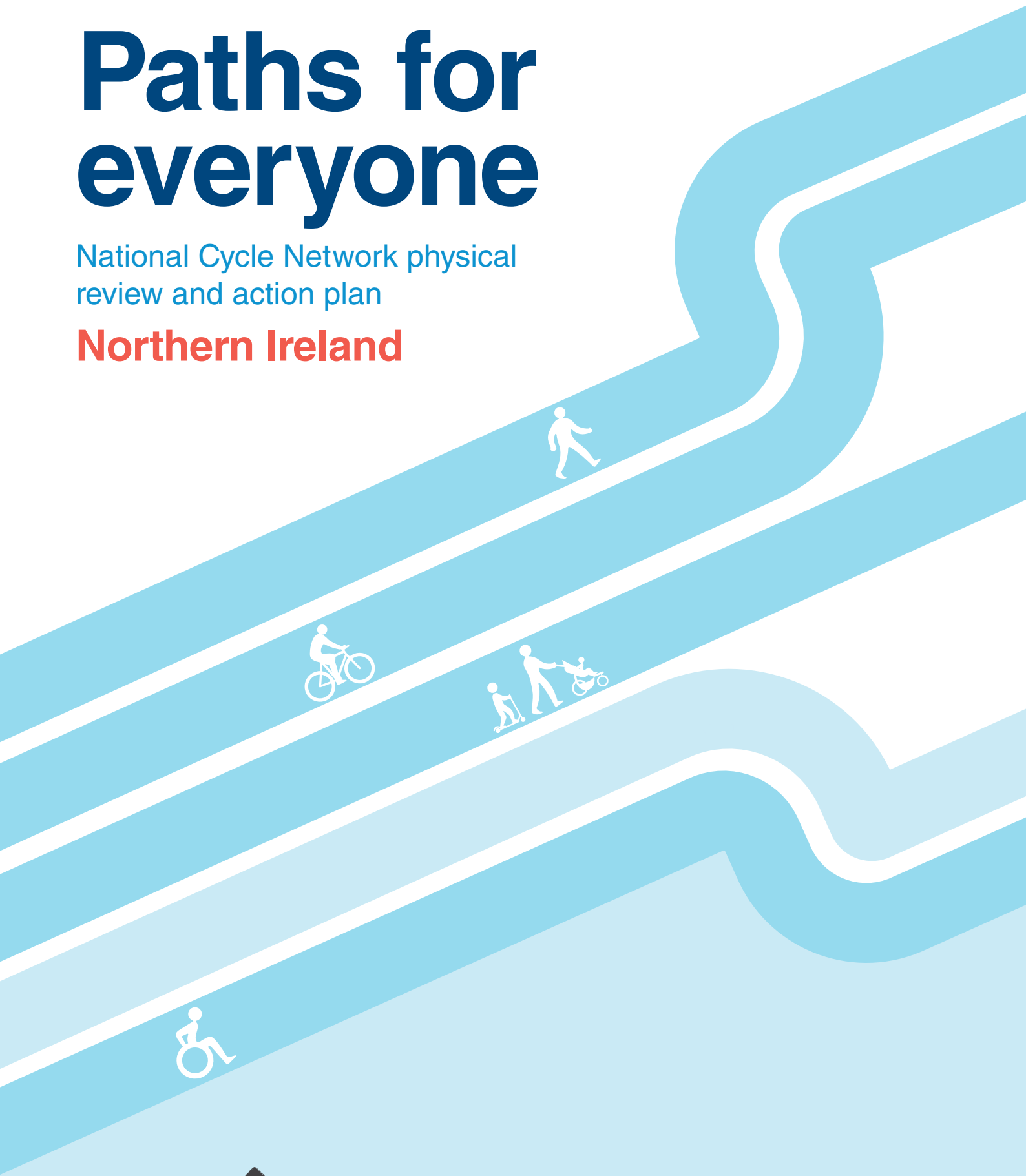


Paths for everyone

National Cycle Network physical review and action plan

Northern Ireland



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Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute.

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1. Introduction to the National Cycle Network

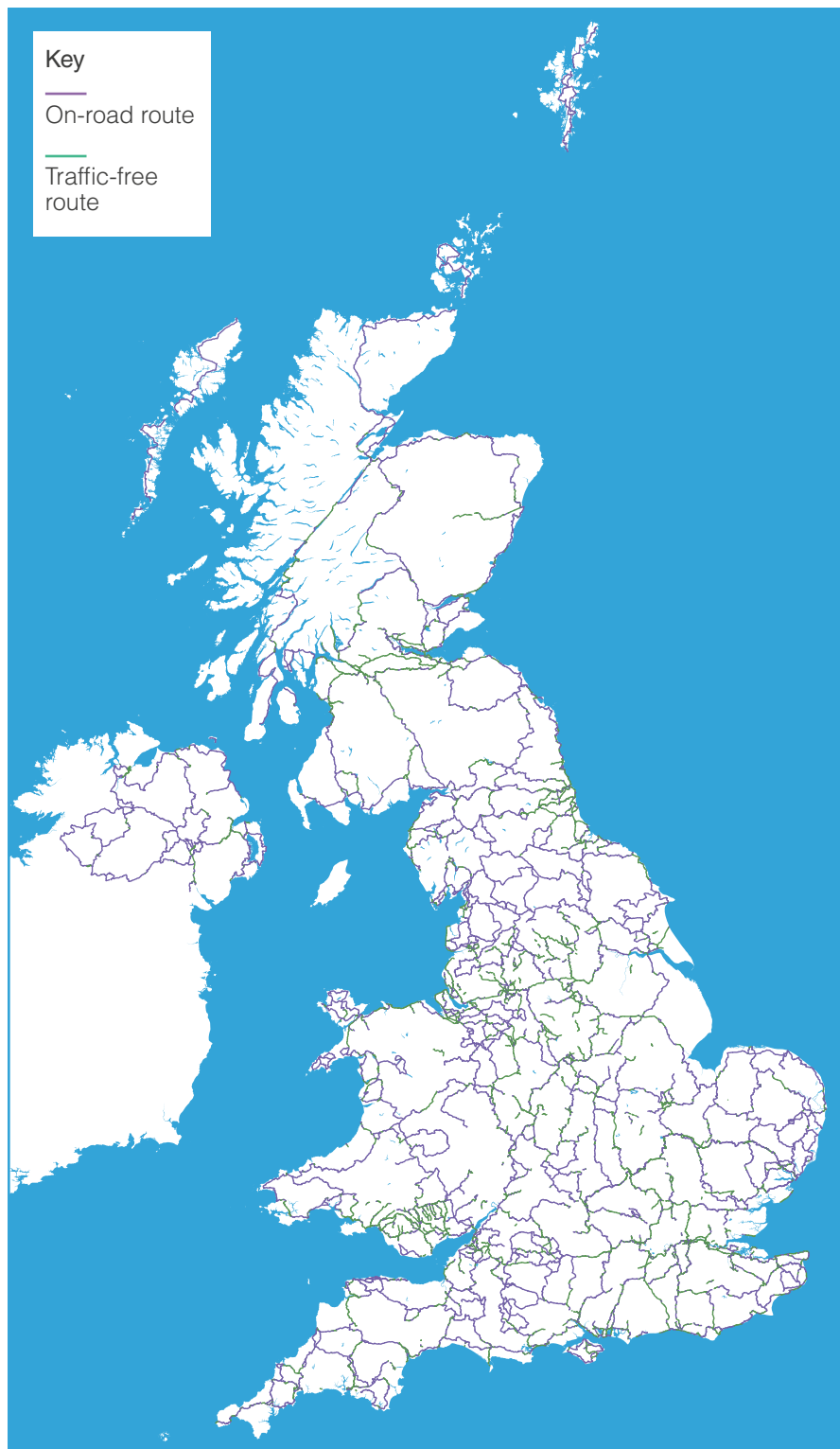
The National Cycle Network is a 23-year-old network of 16,575 miles of signed routes spanning the UK. It is used by walkers, joggers, wheelchair users and horse riders, as well as people on bikes.

It began with a National Lottery Grant (via the Millennium Commission) in 1995 and a pioneering vision to create high-quality, convenient routes for walking and cycling. Since then, we have worked with hundreds of partners to grow the Network into every corner of the UK.

Sustrans has worked with partners, stakeholders, staff and volunteers to conduct a comprehensive review of the entire Network.

A new shared vision has been agreed that will define the revitalised National Cycle Network:

A UK-wide network of traffic-free paths for everyone, connecting cities, towns and countryside and loved by the communities they serve.



The physical audit of the Network

All 16,575 miles of the National Cycle Network were surveyed by a team of independent assessors during 2015 and 2016 and all key characteristics recorded, including surface type, width, lighting, barriers and signage, as well as road classification for on-road sections.

The data was captured in the field on hand-held devices, then uploaded to our online geographic information system (GIS) for analysis.

The audit data has created a snapshot of the condition of the Network and provides a level of understanding and

overview for the Network that has never been available before.

In order to compare different sections of route, Sustrans has developed a Level of Service Measure scoring system based on four route quality indicators:

- Surface quality
- Way-finding and signage
- Flow
- Traffic-related safety

Surface quality

Is the surface smooth enough for all types of cycle to be used here?

All on-road sections are scored relatively high as they generally have a smooth surface. Traffic-free sections do have poor surfaces in some locations and this is reflected in the score for this measure.

Way-finding and signage

Can this route be followed without a map?

The score reflects whether a section is signed in both directions, one direction or not at all.

Flow

Can a relaxed speed (typically around 8 mph) be continually and safely maintained here?

Path width, pinch points and restrictive barriers are the main constraints under this measure. (A relaxed speed may be lower than 8 mph in some circumstances.)

Traffic-related safety

The question our surveyors had to answer was:

Would most people allow an unaccompanied 12-year-old to cycle here?

This is the most subjective measure as it is based on the surveyor's assessment of whether a section of road is suitable. Due to inconsistencies between surveyors, Sustrans has acquired INRIX traffic data, which gives an objective measure of traffic volume and speed, based on information from commercial fleets, GPS, cell towers, mobile devices and cameras.

This means that we can set threshold criteria for on-road sections and define what would be acceptable for a quiet-way section. The INRIX data was validated

using actual traffic count data for all roads in Cornwall, with thanks to Cornwall Council.

Weighting is applied to the safety measure in order to recognise that a traffic-free route should have a higher traffic-related safety score than an on-road route.

- Traffic-free route +6
- On-road section meeting quiet-way traffic criteria +4
- Other roads -4

Urban Rural Classification	Section Average Speed ¹	INRIX Volume Index ²	Equivalent AADT ³ traffic volume
Urban	<=15 mph	<=11	2,500
Rural	<=25 mph	<=9	1,000

Scoring

Each measure has a four level scoring system either Yes, Perhaps, Probably Not or No, with a score of 3, 2, 1 or 0 assigned.

Score	3	2	1	0
Level	Yes	Perhaps	Probably Not	No

Classifications

The highest possible score for a high quality traffic-free section is 15 points and this is considered to meet the Very Good standard. Lower scores are classified as Good, Poor or Very Poor as below:

Score	15	10-14	6-9	0-5
Classification	Very Good	Good	Poor	Very Poor

1. It is recognised that the use of average speeds only provides an approximate indication of the speed characteristics of a road. As part of the improvement of sections of National Cycle Network designated as quiet-way it will be a requirement for there to be a speed limit of 40mph in rural areas (or 20mph in built-up areas).

2. INRIX Traffic Volume Index - measured on a scale 1-16 with 1 being very low traffic volume and 16 very high traffic volume

3. AADT - Annual Average Daily Traffic is a measure of traffic flow and is the total volume of vehicle traffic of a highway or road for a year divided by 365 days.

Physical review and action plans

Seven physical review and action plans have been developed, one for each of the Sustrans geographical regions and nations of the UK, as a key element of the 'Fix it' strand of the review.

Each action plan defines the state of the Network for its area, outlines the strategic priorities identified for the region or nation and shows the number of miles that need to be improved in order to get the Network in the area to Good and Very Good.

A number of activation projects are identified in each of the plans, chosen to reflect a range of project types (upgrading existing on-road sections, improving traffic-free routes, dealing with dangerous crossings and junctions, creating new route corridors) as well as geographical diversity and deliverability within a tight timescale.

The implementation of the activation projects will build the momentum of the revitalisation of the Network resulting from the review.

Network development plans

The action plans will be backed up with full Network development plans that set out long-term, detailed plans for the entire regional/national network.

These plans will be developed by the Sustrans Network development teams in each area, in consultation with the advisory panels, volunteers and other stakeholders, and will be live documents that are continually updated, becoming the blueprint for the development of the Network.

Design principles for the National Cycle Network

A key objective for each physical review and action plan is to detail what is required to achieve a Very Good standard for the whole of the Network – that is a standard that offers users a consistent, safe, and fully accessible

experience. This will require the essential elements of a route – good signage, a smooth surface, sufficient width, no barriers to interrupt continual movement and safe interfaces with motorised traffic – to be upgraded where this is not currently the case.

The preference for on-road sections will be to create alternative traffic-free routes. These sections will be either off-road (away from the road) or on fully separated infrastructure within the road corridor, with all routes being suitable for an unaccompanied 12-year-old to use.

Where the creation of traffic-free routes is not viable, it may be possible to change the road character to create quiet-way sections. Quiet-way sections will have a speed limit of 40mph or less and a traffic flow below 1,000 AADT in rural areas (20mph and 2,500 AADT in built-up areas). In addition, they will include traffic signs and road markings to highlight the speed limit and to inform people driving a vehicle that they should expect to encounter people walking, cycling or riding a horse in the road and they should provide good visibility to enable all users to see each other.

Where traffic-free routes cross roads, or other busier roads in the case of quiet-way sections, these crossings or junctions will need to allow safe movement for people using the Network.

To achieve the Very Good standard a set of design principles has been created to guide the design of all new and improved sections. These design principles are set out in the National Cycle Network: Paths for Everyone report.

Where it is not possible to improve an existing section of Network it may be necessary to consider de-designation. This process will involve engagement with key stakeholders and reasonable steps would need to be taken to ensure route continuity for the Network as a whole.

2. Overview of the Network in Northern Ireland

The National Cycle Network in Northern Ireland (NI) is a geographically diverse amenity, extending to 1,030 miles across the region. It connects major population centres on waymarked, mapped routes that meander through some of the best that cities, towns and the countryside in Northern Ireland have to offer.

The development of the National Cycle Network in NI has, throughout its 20-year lifespan, been something of a catalyst for quality walking and cycling route development. However, across its lifespan the National Cycle Network has arguably been a neglected resource with only piecemeal investment and no regional approach to maintaining and improving the asset.

In its current condition, 14% of the Network is classified as traffic-free. Whilst this is a small proportion of the overall Network it accounts for the largest proportion of usage due to the connectivity of many of these routes to major urban centres.

The Comber Greenway in East Belfast (National Route 99) is a significant and growing walking and cycling corridor linking Belfast to the town of Comber via the suburbs of East Belfast and Dundonald. The Lagan Towpath (National Route 9) meanders from Lisburn to Belfast through Lagan Valley Regional Park and is a truly tranquil corridor with high amenity value, additionally serving the very practical purpose of connecting two cities and their suburbs. The Waterside Greenway in Derry/Londonderry (National Route 93) is a route ever-growing in popularity and is just one of a growing network of similar traffic-free routes serving the city and its suburbs North and South of the Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland border. The remaining 86% of the National Cycle Network is on-road.

The National Cycle Network in NI includes mapped regional routes including Belfast to Ballyshannon with its coast-to-coast span, Ballyshannon to Ballycastle taking in the beautiful Sperrin Mountains and the North Coast of Northern Ireland, and the Kingfisher Trail that takes you on a journey through the Fermanagh Lakelands and mountains.

The rural nature of many of these routes makes them perfectly enjoyable for all but the inexperienced, but some roads are simply no longer appropriate for the standard that Sustrans is aspiring to achieve for the National Cycle Network.

The time is right to address shortfalls in the condition of the National Cycle Network to truly make it easier for people to walk and cycle.

Governance

All on-road sections of the National Cycle Network within public ownership are governed by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). The DfI is divided into four divisions (North, South, East and West) with a central Walking and Cycling Unit who oversee the implementation of a variety of walking and cycling strategies and programmes.

Some traffic-free greenway routes are also owned and maintained by DfI but typically canal, parkland and greenway-type infrastructure is owned and maintained by 11 local authorities (councils).

Unlike in the rest of the UK, Sustrans in Northern Ireland does not own any National Cycle Network land.

Council boundaries and DfI divisional boundaries are aligned, so governance between the various bodies can be streamlined. To date, and looking to the future, the National Cycle Network serves as a common amenity providing the basis of a regional masterplan for walking and cycling.



Future of the Network in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Government's DfI sets out a high level Bicycle Strategy (published in 2015), that envisages 'a community where people have the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle for everyday journeys'.

One of the commitments within this is the development of greenways, for which the DfI further published 'Exercise-Explore-Enjoy – A Strategic Plan for Greenways' . This strategy outlines the plan to develop over 1,000km of greenways. The aspiration for greenways is to encourage more people to commute to work by foot or bicycle, encourage more children to walk or cycle to school, and to provide a major leisure and recreation resource for local people and visitors alike.

In the delivery of the Strategic Plan for Greenways, DfI have set out the following specific targets:

- To have 75% of a Primary Network delivered by 2026.
- To have 25% of a Secondary Network delivered by 2026.
- To increase the number of journeys made on the Greenways Network and the National Cycle Network to 50 million by 2026.

The priorities as set out within DfI's Strategic Plan for Greenways are aligned with Sustrans' strategic priorities for the National Cycle Network and as such, the strategy provides a mechanism that has the potential to truly transform the Network in Northern Ireland. As the strategy is realised over the coming years the diversion of on-road routes to these new traffic-free options will be assessed and delivered.

In addition to central governmental strategies, local councils are drawing up Community and Development plans which will provide an opportunity to further explore, plan and zone the development of cycling, walking, and greenway networks that will provide future opportunities to improve the National Cycle Network.

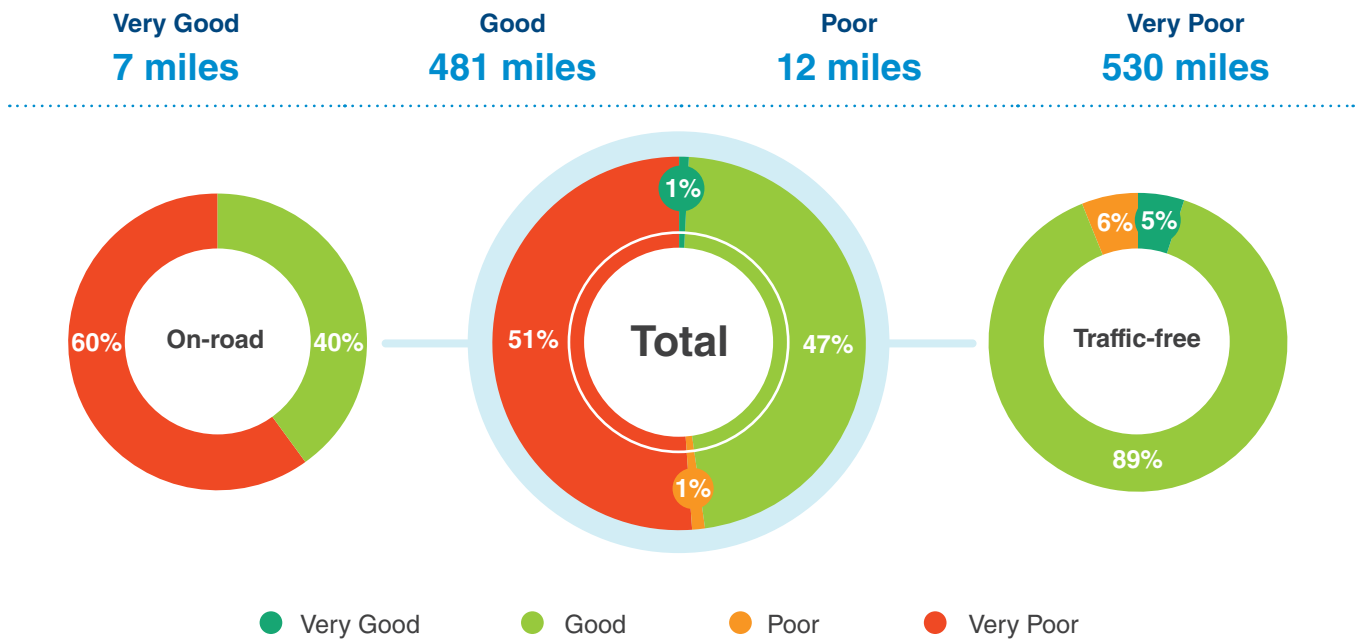
¹<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/bicycle-strategy-northern-ireland>

²<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/exercise-explore-enjoy-strategic-plan-greenways>

Condition of the Network

The audit has provided a snapshot of the condition of the Network in Northern Ireland, with all sections of the Network rated as Very Good, Good, Poor or Very Poor. Using the audit data the condition of the on-road and traffic-free sections can also be viewed independently as shown below.

In Northern Ireland the National Cycle Network audit ratings are as follows:



Identifying the issues

Of the 86% of the Network that is on-road, 60% is classified as 'very poor'.

The remaining 40%, however, is classified as 'good'. It's worth noting that the 60% classified as 'poor' is due to user safety and that even if other characteristics such as signage and surface were improved, this classification would remain the same.

Traffic-free routes on the Network score significantly higher - 94% is classed as Good or Very Good.

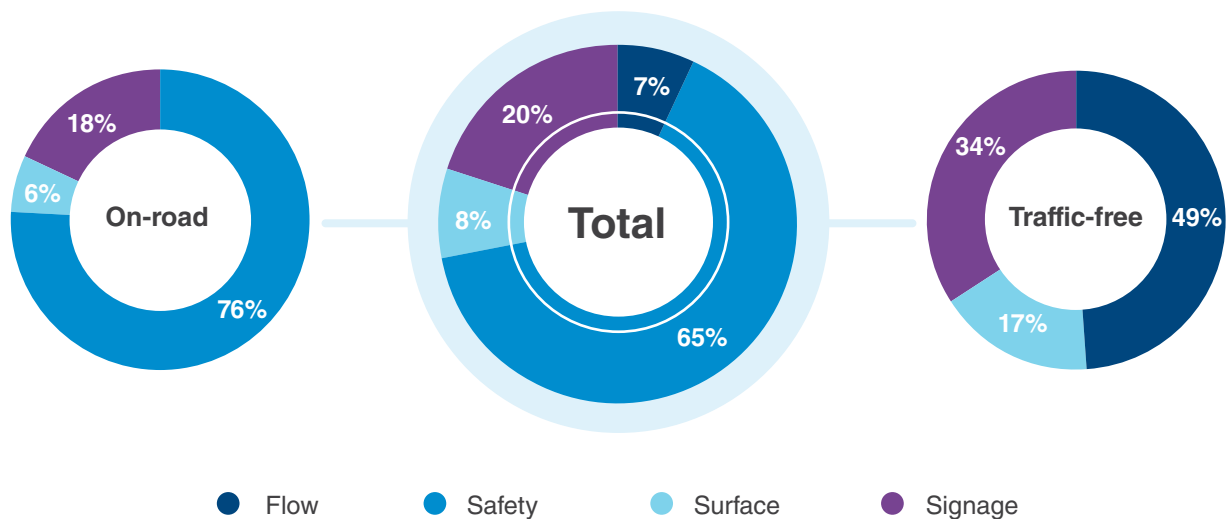
Further reports can be run at a variety of geographical

scales including at council and divisional level.

It is possible to run reports that show which of the main issues – traffic safety, surface, signage, flow - are causing the routes and paths to under-perform.

65% of the issues on the Network in Northern Ireland are due to traffic safety concerns, followed by 20% relating to poor signage, 8% relating to surface and 7% relating to flow.

These reports have also been run for the on-road and traffic-free sections of the Network.



3. Strategic priorities for Northern Ireland

The priorities for the improvement of the National Cycle Network in Northern Ireland are as follows. These are in addition to the UK-wide strategic priorities of increasing accessibility and improving signage that are outlined in section 5.

Improving the existing routes

Safety first

The first priority will be to deal with sections of the Network that are a safety concern and that includes very busy and fast roads, including all A and B roads, and improving dangerous junctions and crossings.

Consistent user experience

The second priority is to ensure a consistent standard of experience for users of the Network. Initially focus will be on improving the traffic-free sections that receive the most complaints and impact on the reputation of the entire Network. Emphasis will be placed on improving the surface, repairing missing or damaged signage and removing restrictive barriers and pinch points.



One Path Initiative: Share - Respect - Enjoy

The removal of restrictive barriers is a progressive step towards making a route accessible to all – a strategic priority of the National

Cycle Network review. However, user conflict on popular routes is a recognised concern amongst National Cycle Network stakeholders.

The improvement that barrier removal brings to a place, when complemented properly with behaviour change and consistent messaging, can conversely improve social safety and route user behaviour by minimising sources of frustration and hostility. Many routes now omit barriers altogether with positive results for users.

The One Path Initiative is an effective approach developed by Sustrans to tackle conflict on paths and promote positive actions and behaviours by all users. The Initiative requires the full support of the managing body of a path and to date has been supported by DfI and some councils in Northern Ireland. The One Path Initiative's core objective is to improve communications and understanding between the various people who use the path.

It achieves this goal by:

- Avoiding physical interventions and/or permanent signage and the resulting expense

- Ensuring all agencies involved in the management of the path deliver a consistent message.
- Understanding who uses the path and their individual needs
- Improving relations amongst the users
- Reducing conflict and thereby complaints

Creating new routes

Embracing the Department for Infrastructure's Strategic Plan for Greenways

As new traffic-free routes become available in line with DfI's Strategic Plan for Greenways, the National Cycle Network will re-align to follow those and in doing so will supersede the current on-road Network option.

Creation of new routes to improve connectivity

In some cases new routes or corridors will be required to ensure that the aim of 'connecting and crossing settlements and countryside' is achieved.

All new sections of the Network will meet the National Cycle Network quality standard.

De-designation of routes

Route assessment and de-designation

Of the Network in Northern Ireland 530 miles (52%) is classified as Very Poor. These sections are all on-road and most are on busy roads with high traffic volumes and speed.

Where the National Cycle Network is not likely to be superseded by a greenway route, an option for the on-road routes on the Network is the creation of Quiet Lanes and Home Zones. This is driven by an existing legislative framework that allows on-road interventions such as reduced speed limits and infrastructure designed to reduce speeds and create a better place for National Cycle Network users to walk and cycle.

Very Poor and Poor sections of on-road Network that cannot be improved, particularly where the usage is low and where other routes exist or become available through the DfI's strategic Plan for Greenways or other opportunities, will be considered for de-designation from the Network.

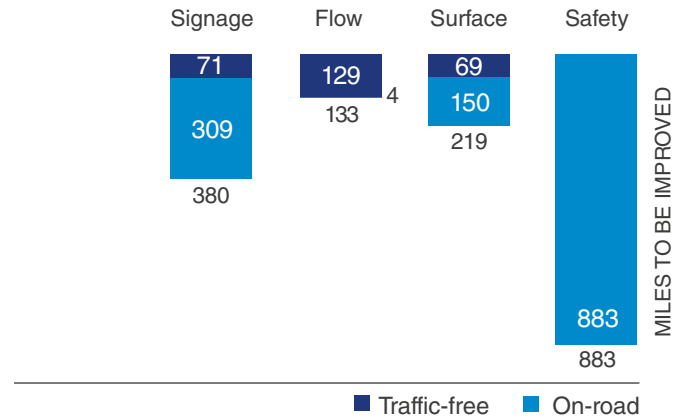
4. Quantifying the ambition for Northern Ireland

Closing the gap to Very Good

The focus of the action plan is to bring all of the Network in Northern Ireland up to a consistent Very Good standard.

The graph below shows the minimum number of miles, in each category, and for on-road and traffic-free sections that must be improved for the entire Northern Ireland Network to qualify as Very Good:

The gap to Very Good



On-road improvements required to be classed as Very Good:

<p>883 miles</p> <p>of on-road Network need to be re-routed onto alternative traffic-free routes or have the characteristics of the road changed to create quiet-way sections.</p>	<p>309 miles</p> <p>need signage improvements.</p>	<p>150 miles</p> <p>need surface improvements.</p>
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Traffic-free improvements required to be classed as Very Good:

<p>71 miles</p> <p>need signage improvements.</p>	<p>69 miles</p> <p>need surface improvements.</p>	<p>129 miles</p> <p>need flow improvements.</p>
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Junctions and crossings

14 crossings

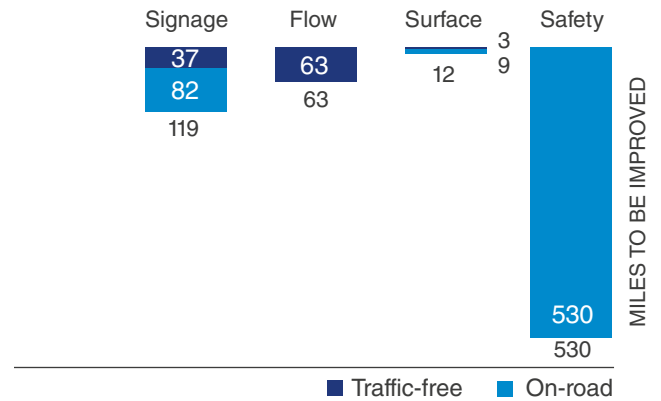
identified in Northern Ireland requiring attention to make safe based on a comprehensive dangerous crossings/junctions assessment carried out in 2017.

These crossings will be included as projects in the Network development plans, with very high priority improvements included in the physical review and action plans as activation projects.

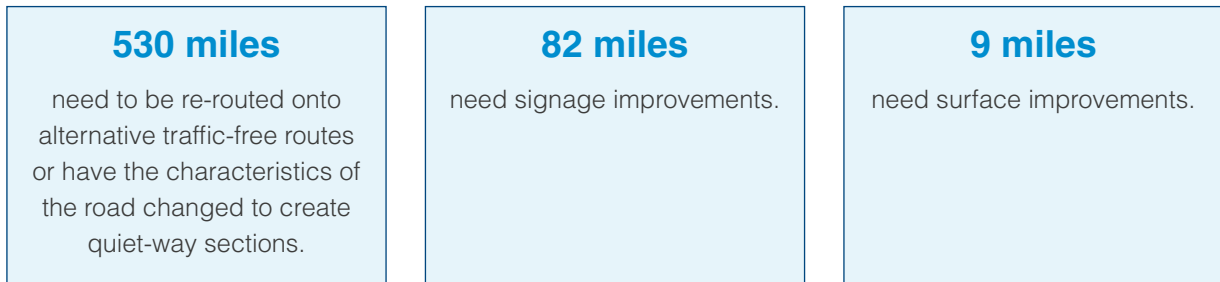
Closing the gap to Good

The focus for the first stage of improvements will be to get the Network to a Good standard.

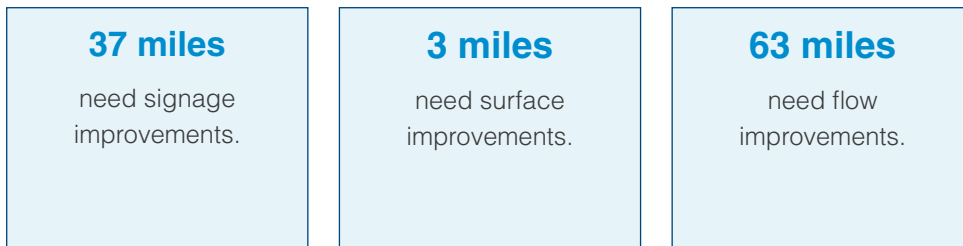
The gap to Good



On-road improvements required to be classed as Good:



Traffic-free improvements required to be classed as Good:



5. UK-wide priorities

Accessibility

The ability for all users of the Network to be able to access the Network is very important and forms a key element of the vision. We want the entire Network to be suitable for everyone and cater for all types of cycles including trikes, cargo bikes, hand-bikes, trailer bikes, tandems as well as being accessible for those on foot and users with pushchairs, wheelchairs, buggies and mobility scooters.

Restrictive barriers, steep ramps, high kerbs and width issues on the Network itself are recorded in the physical audit under the service level measure 'Flow'.

- **65 miles** of traffic-free routes and paths in Northern Ireland have barriers issues that impede flow and in many cases prevent access for all.
- **48 miles** of traffic-free routes and paths in Northern Ireland have width issues that impede flow and in many cases prevent access for all.

However, this does not take into account any barriers or impediments on connections onto the Network.

As a first step to addressing this it is recommended that an accessibility working group is established to focus on accessibility issues across the Network. This will involve experts in the field as well as local volunteers and community groups.

Signage

Signage issues are common to the whole Network and will be addressed through national and regional programmes.

Signage issues can be split into three main areas:

- Signage issues on the Network itself that need fixing or amending including missing, obstructed or damaged signing or unclear, confusing or misaligned signage
- Signage that promotes the Network including educational information, local maps, distances to attractions, local services and other user information.
- Signage that directs users towards the Network – from town centres, train stations, linking routes and other places of interest.

6. Activation projects

Identification process

It is important that the results of the National Cycle Network review are backed up by immediate and visible action.

The results of the physical audit have enabled Sustrans teams to identify a number of activation projects that can be delivered by 2023.

These activation projects will become the focus of attention following the publication of the action plans and will be central to the push for the further resources and time that is required to deliver the improvements to the Network.

In addition the projects will allow for testing of new governance systems, the marketing strategy, funding mechanisms, community and volunteer involvement, maintenance and monitoring developed as part of the National Cycle Network review.

The activation projects have a good geographical spread from across the region or nation and will cover the full range of strategic priority categories identified in consultation with review advisory panels and other partners.

It is expected that where the activation projects successfully resolve key issues within each category they can be used as a blueprint for improvements that will be rolled out across the Network.

The selection process for the activation projects has included consultation with the regional and national advisory panels as well as the volunteer groups and Sustrans staff working on and using the Network.

A prioritisation checklist has been used to help with the identification and prioritisation of the projects:

- Is the project **deliverable** by 2023?
- Does the project support the **strategic aims** of the National Cycle Network in the region?
- Does the improvement support **access for all**?
- Does the project support the delivery of a **traffic free network**?
- Does the project improve the **safety** of the section of National Cycle Network it deals with?
- Does the project improve a section of National Cycle Network that has **high current usage**?
- Is there **good potential for increased usage** in the future?
- Is there land **funding available** for this project?
- Is there **land owner support** for this project?
- Is there **community support** for this project?

Strategic priority categories



Activation projects for Northern Ireland

Category A3: On-road re-routed to an alternative traffic-free route



All National Cycle Network in Northern Ireland

86% of the National Cycle Network in Northern Ireland is on-road. The Department for Infrastructure's Strategic Plan for Greenways provides the framework for region-wide re-alignment of National Cycle Network to traffic-free routes in the longer term.

Between now and 2023 Sustrans will develop a National Cycle Network Re-alignment Plan to better understand how the National Cycle Network will look in the future in light of DfI's strategy. This will facilitate the identification of any remaining gaps between critical nodes and will consider the detail of any possible de-designation of routes.

The National Cycle Network Re-Alignment Plan will be a live system to take account of plans as they develop through various phases of delivery. This will assist the DfI at central and divisional levels, and provide a framework for councils to plan cycling routes in their jurisdictions.

Category B4: Improve quality of route (surface, signage, width)



All signage Northern Ireland

380 miles of the Network in Northern Ireland requires signage improvements. 309 miles of this is on-road, with the remaining 71 miles on traffic-free sections. Signage will be reviewed on a route-by-route basis in line with the National Cycle Network Re-alignment Plan. This will facilitate the identification, costing, and prioritisation of signage improvement programmes for delivery by 2023 to ensure consistent and enjoyable user experience on the National Cycle Network.

All National Cycle Network dangerous crossings

The National Cycle Network Review audit identified 14 dangerous crossings on the National Cycle Network. Sustrans will work with the relevant governing bodies to advocate for immediate improvements at these crossings.

Category B4: Improve quality of route (surface, signage, width)



National Route 99 – Comber Greenway

PROBLEM The Comber Greenway is a very popular and high quality traffic-free commuting and leisure route in East Belfast. The 'gateway' to the greenway from the Belfast side is often considered to be C.S. Lewis Square, a high quality social space with a cycle hub, cycle hire, and cafes. However, between C.S. Lewis Square and the greenway lies 'Bloomfield Walkway' car park. Greenway users are expected to travel through the centre of this car park to access the path.

SOLUTION Reconfigure the car park layout to eliminate user conflict with moving vehicles, and improve readability through innovative use of surfacing and signage.

Key	Condition of the Network		— — — —	Proposed route realignment
	—	Very Poor	—	Very Good
	—	Poor	—	Good
			● / ✕	Crossing/barrier for improvement
			—	Scope for improvement measures

Category B5: Existing traffic-free route – improve road crossings

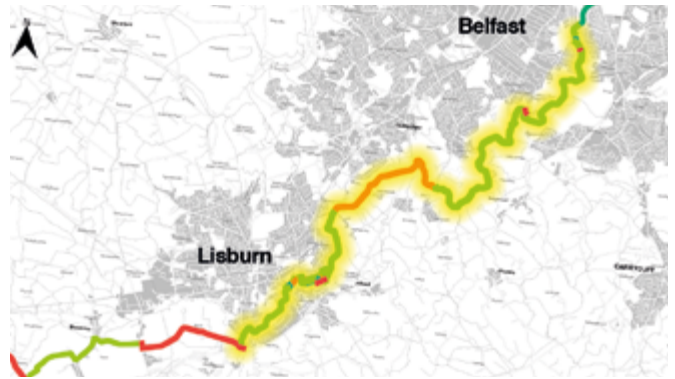


National Route 93 – Clarendon to Duncrue

PROBLEM National Route 93 is one of the main arterial National Cycle Network routes linking into and out of Belfast City. This specific stretch of National Route 93 is also a designated Eurovelo Route (EV1) and is the first ‘off the ferry’ experience for users of the popular route. National Route 93 in Belfast is very popular with commuting cyclists and while it is technically off-road at this point, the number, scale, and inconsistency of user priority of industrial side-road crossings leaves room for conflict.

SOLUTION Develop a consistent approach to the design of side road crossings with a preference for pedestrian and cyclist priority.

Category B6: Existing traffic-free route – accessibility improvements



National Route 9 – Lagan Towpath between Belfast-Blaris

PROBLEM The Lagan Towpath (also EuroVelo1) has seen significant accessibility improvements in the years since the National Cycle Network was first developed with the removal of gateways and barriers at key points. However, there still remain a number of width-related ‘pinch points’ that affect flow and restrict wheelchair and adapted bicycle users. These points include; Lock bridge at Drumbeg, Red Bridge at Lockkeeper’s Inn, Hillsborough Road underpass in Lisburn (width and head height restriction), and an underpass adjacent to Malone Golf Course.

SOLUTION All solutions should be considered, to include replacement bridges and locally widened quay walls.

Category B6: Existing traffic-free route – accessibility improvements



National Route 9 – Portadown-Newry Canal

PROBLEM The Newry Canal Towpath underwent a significant upgrade between 1998-2000 which saw a tarmac path created between Newry and Portadown. Since then it has grown in popularity and has seen improvements taking place including seating, signage, and artworks. As well as being popular with cyclists, it is a way-marked walking route and sections are part of the Ulster Way. There are a number of barriers along the route, some of which present an inconvenience for users at best, and excluding some users of wheelchairs or adapted bicycles at worst.

SOLUTION The removal of or change in design to any of the barriers which are inconvenient or restrictive to any legitimate users. This may require innovation and collaboration with the surrounding communities and the Police Service of Northern Ireland to ensure the upkeep of bylaws where there is a problem with motorbikes or quads.

Key		Condition of the Network		Proposed route realignment	
	Very Poor	Very Good		Proposed route realignment	
	Poor	Good		Crossing/barrier for improvement	
				Scope for improvement measures	

Category C: Complete gaps in routes and/or add new routes



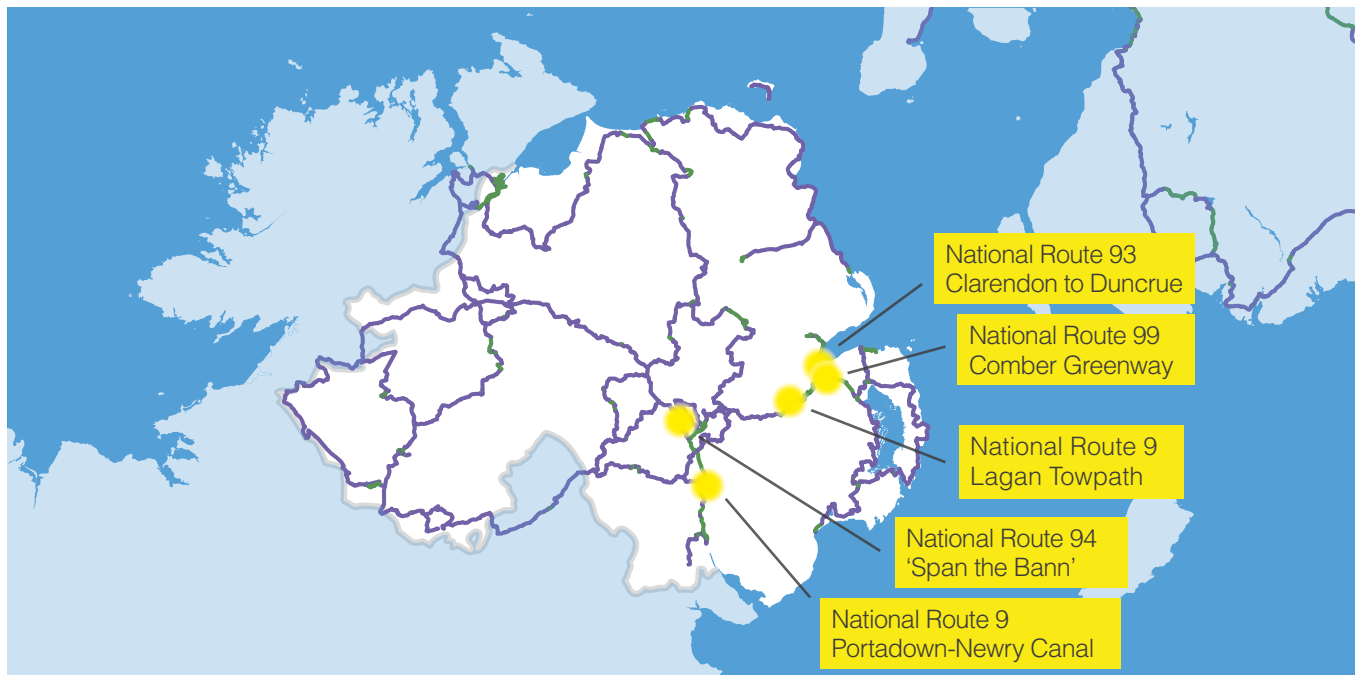
PROBLEM The round-the-lough National Route 94 is popular amongst day-trippers and recreational cyclists. The West-East flow of the mostly on-road route is disrupted by both the Blackwater River at Maghery and the River Bann between Columbkille Road and Bannfoot Road. The Blackwater River has already been spanned by a pedestrian/cyclist bridge, but to cross the River Bann requires a significant diversion into Portadown town where users are subjected to typical urban vehicular traffic and busy on-road sections.

SOLUTION A roughly 60m pedestrian and cyclist bridge spanning the River Bann is likely to be a much more cost-effective and popular solution than improving the current on-road route.

National Route 94 – ‘Span the Bann’



Activation project map



7. Conclusion

The National Cycle Network in Northern Ireland is an asset with significant potential to transform the landscape for recreational, commuting, and visitor travel in Northern Ireland. The National Cycle Network, across its 20-year lifespan in the region, has been a catalyst for the development of more, better quality routes for all users but has arguably fallen well short of its full potential.

The aspiration of Sustrans in Northern Ireland is to advocate for, encourage, and help set priorities for continued development of the National Cycle Network to ensure all users have an enjoyable experience on the Network.

The time is right for a commitment from Sustrans, in partnership with all government departments, councils and stakeholders of the National Cycle Network, to improve conditions on the Network. The Department for Infrastructure's Strategic Plan for Greenways provides a means to truly transform the National Cycle Network in Northern Ireland in such a way that sets a standard for the rest of the UK and beyond.

The quality of the National Cycle Network will be dependent on a consistent application of standards across all local authorities and government bodies who will govern the Network. Sustrans' role in facilitating this consistency will become increasingly important as the greenways strategy is realised, all with a common vision to make it easier for people to walk and cycle.

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