

Paths for everyone

3 Years On | 2018–2021 Progress Update



An iconic asset for all

→ 1

The National Cycle Network is made up of **12,786 miles** of signed routes spanning the UK.

→ 7

Local businesses benefitted by an estimated **£1.7 billion** in 2019 from people using the Network for leisure and tourism.

→ 6

...which boosted the UK economy by an estimated **£2.1 billion** in 2019 through health, congestion and environmental benefits.

→ 5

The Network passes within one mile of around half of the UK population. In 2019 it carried an estimated **764.8 million trips**...

→ 2

It is used by walkers and people cycling, as well as joggers, wheelchair users and horse riders.

→ 3

It began with a National Lottery Grant from the Millennium Commission in **1995** and a **pioneering** vision to create high-quality, convenient routes for walking and cycling.

→ 4

Since then, we have worked with hundreds of partners to grow the Network into every corner of the UK.



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Introductions



Xavier
Brice

Three years ago we set out a vision for the National Cycle Network. A Network that should connect people to the places around them. That unites communities and bolsters local economies.

A path that truly is for everyone – those walking, wheeling, cycling, horse-riding and more. A Network which allows more people to access nature and beauty on their doorstep.

As we recover from a global pandemic and face the real threat of climate change it is vital to reimagine the way in which we move around, connect with people and explore our natural environments.

And so this iconic asset has never been as relevant as it is now. Especially when over 60% of journeys under two miles are still made by motor vehicle.

We have made huge progress in improving the Network over the last few years. We have removed hundreds of physical barriers to accessing the Network. We have improved signage and surfaces on large stretches. And we have made difficult decisions, such as removing or reclassifying 3,733 miles of the Network to make it safer for everyone.

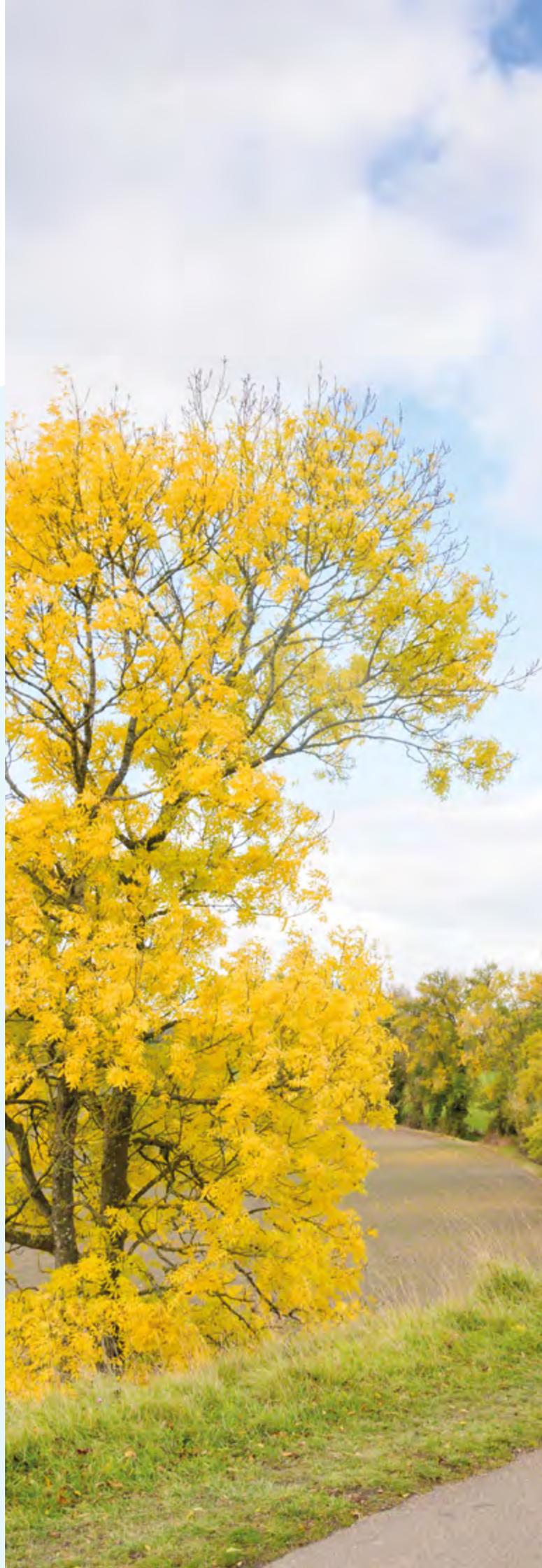
We have also seen increased recognition of its importance and support from national governments across the UK.

But as this progress report shows there is still so much more to do.

The Covid-19 pandemic changed the way we view our health, the spaces around us and the way we travel.

More people than ever discovered the National Cycle Network and the benefits it provides to them and their communities.

But this wasn't felt equally.





We must have a Network which is accessible to everyone across the UK and that truly levels-up access to nature and the things we need for all communities.

And we won't stop until we are confident that the Network is the absolute best it can be for everyone.

Xavier Brice

Chief Executive, Sustrans



Dame Sarah Storey

There's no better and more cost effective way to make a short journey for work or pleasure than to walk, wheel or cycle. Over the past three years, Sustrans has completed 27 improvement projects across the UK to make the National Cycle Network safer and increase the number of miles people can walk, wheel or cycle without encountering vehicle traffic. Creating a connected and inclusive network is the driving force to continuing the much needed work, with investment and support of partners and other stakeholders pivotal in establishing the strategy for achieving this vision.

The National Cycle Network master plan will ensure the Network connects communities and expands to better connect urban areas with a focus on improving connectivity for people living in more deprived areas.

Ensuring that everyone who wants to cycle has the opportunity to do this safely and without inconvenience is at the heart of the work. This Paths for everyone report not only recommends the removal or redesign of 16,000 barriers on the Network, but also pledges to accelerate progress via the barriers strategy that is in place.

Dame Sarah Storey

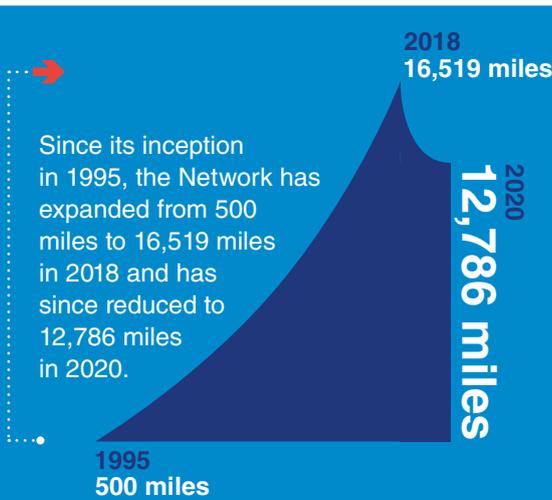
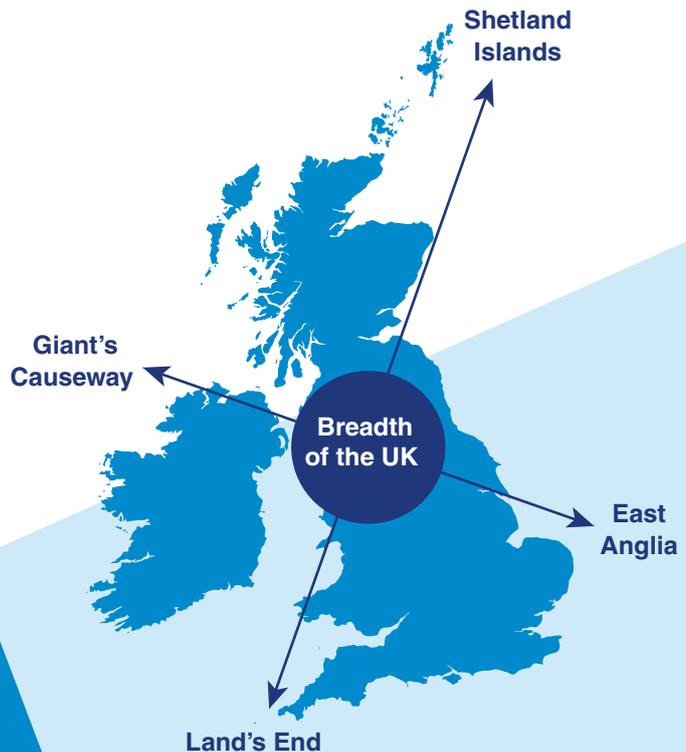
Active Travel Commissioner, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority

Executive summary

What we've achieved in the last three years

The National Cycle Network is a local asset with incredible reach, connecting people and places across the UK and providing traffic-free spaces for everyone to enjoy.

Three years ago we set out a vision for improving the Network up to 2040 so that it can be used and enjoyed by all. Over the past few years we have worked hard to start to make that vision a reality.



3,733 miles removed or reclassified to create a smaller but safer and better quality National Cycle Network.

As we own little of the land that the Network runs through, our work is not possible without working in partnership with stakeholders, volunteers, supporters and landowners to make the changes needed.

We removed or reclassified the most inaccessible parts of the Network in 2020 to create a safer Network overall.



We have worked with others to improve stretches of the Network through improved signage, surface and width.

315 barriers removed

315 barriers removed or redesigned and a barriers strategy in place to accelerate progress.

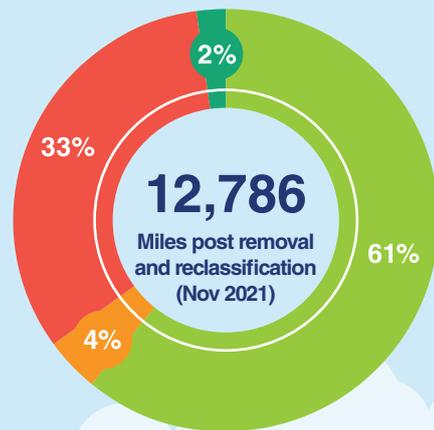
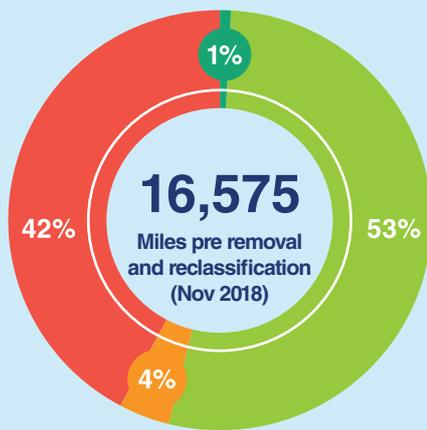
27 UK activation projects completed. With a further 28 projects in progress, we are on track to deliver 55 by 2023.



We have started to remove physical barriers so, for example, people with buggies or wheelchair-users can access the Network.

This has led to an overall improvement in the quality of the Network.

● Very good
 ● Good
 ● Poor
 ● Very poor



→ The total of Network miles by quality rating.



Executive summary

An iconic asset for the future

The role of the Network during the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in more of us getting outside locally for regular exercise, while others looked towards alternatives to public transport for their commute and everyday journeys.

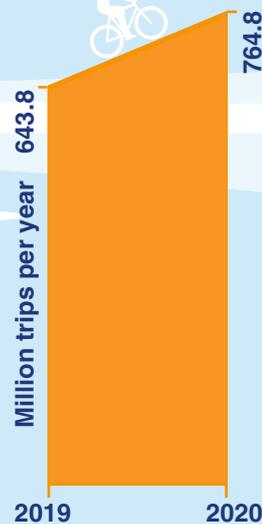
The Network played a vital role for people across 2020 with trips increasing by 19% in comparison to 2019. That is despite the Network reducing in size over 3,500 miles following our removal and reclassification work between 2019 and 2020, to make it safer and more accessible for everyone.

The pandemic clearly showed there is huge potential for even greater growth in walking, wheeling and cycling across the Network.

→ An unprecedented year - In 2020, at the height of the pandemic, the Network carried an estimated:

4.9 million
users

764.8 million
trips



← There were 121 million more trips on the Network in 2020 than in 2019, a 19% increase.



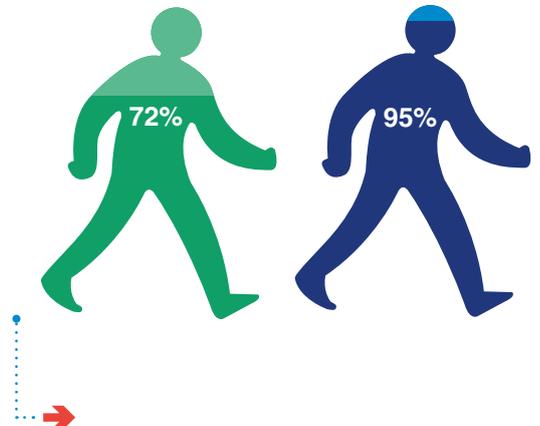
The role of the Network to fight climate change

As we recover from the pandemic and face the threat of climate change it is vital to reimagine the way in which we move around, connect with people and explore our natural environments.

The Network is an iconic asset that has never been as relevant as it is now. Especially when over 60% of journeys under two miles are still made by motor vehicle.

We have also seen increased recognition of its importance and support from national governments, landowners and communities across the UK, although progress is too slow.

Studies show cycling and walking infrastructure projects could create 32 immediate jobs per £1 million invested¹. Increasing investment in the Network not only helps fight climate change, it also provides jobs and supports levelling up.



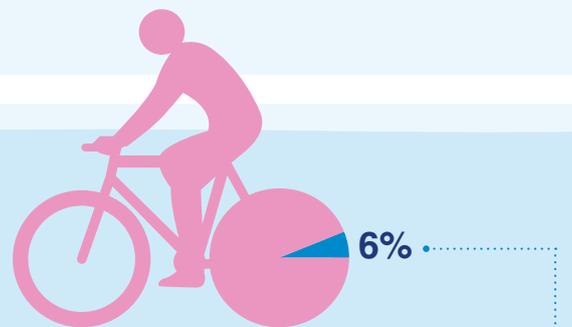
72% of users felt it was the best transport option for their trip, while 95% of users said one of the reasons they were using the Network was to get exercise.

A Network for everyone

The Covid-19 pandemic changed the way we view our health, the spaces around us and the way we travel. But this wasn't felt equally. We know many groups are underrepresented in their use of the Network and these same groups are often marginalised in society.

We know that many parts of the network can attract new people to walk, wheel and cycle – it can provide a safe and welcoming space for people.

We will continue to address physical barriers while working harder in partnership with communities to address other barriers people face. We will not stop until the network is truly inclusive and an asset that helps reduce wider social inequity.



Of those who cycle on the Network, 6% are new or returning to cycling – up from 4% in 2018.



¹ TUC, 2020. <https://transitioneconomics.net/uk-covid-recovery-infrastructure-jobs-tuc>

A living master plan

We are planning for the future of the Network by delivering a three-stage master plan. We're working with our partners to align our national plans for the Network with their regional and local plans for walking, wheeling and cycling wherever possible.

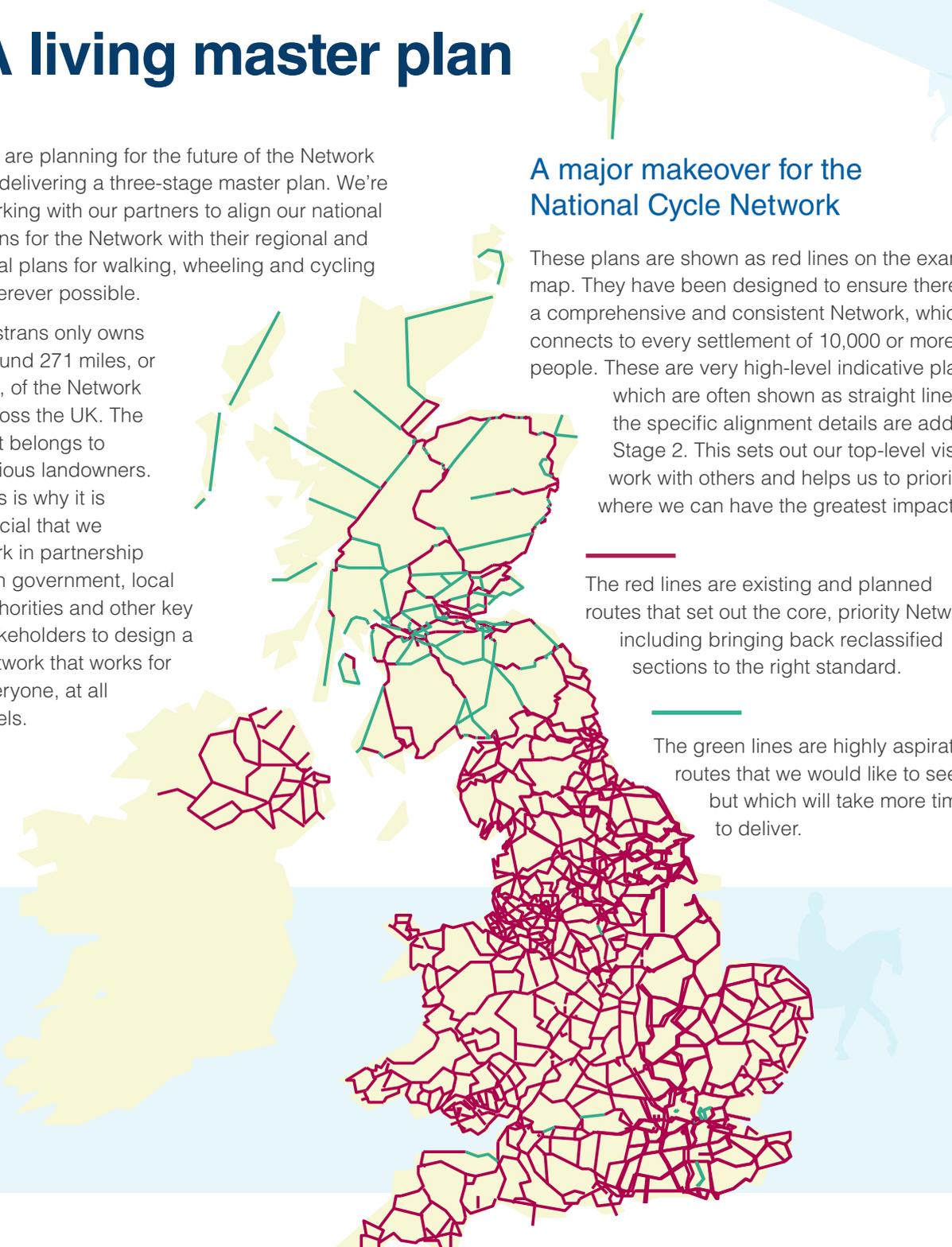
Sustrans only owns around 271 miles, or 2%, of the Network across the UK. The rest belongs to various landowners. This is why it is crucial that we work in partnership with government, local authorities and other key stakeholders to design a Network that works for everyone, at all levels.

A major makeover for the National Cycle Network

These plans are shown as red lines on the example map. They have been designed to ensure there is a comprehensive and consistent Network, which connects to every settlement of 10,000 or more people. These are very high-level indicative plans, which are often shown as straight lines as the specific alignment details are added at Stage 2. This sets out our top-level vision to work with others and helps us to prioritise where we can have the greatest impact.

— The red lines are existing and planned routes that set out the core, priority Network, including bringing back reclassified sections to the right standard.

— The green lines are highly aspirational routes that we would like to see, but which will take more time to deliver.



Assessment and plans for every mile of the Network (Stage 2)

In our Paths for everyone report we said we would develop a detailed Network development plan for every section that requires improvement by 2023. These sections are shown as blue lines on the example map.

These high-level solution plans form the basis for creating more detailed plans for every section of the Network. The more detailed plans set out exactly what the problem is and how we will fix it – mostly by improving the existing route or moving it to a safer alignment. Of course many routes are already good enough, so we will be working with partners to make sure that they are well maintained.

Detailed and specific plans for priority sections (Stage 3)

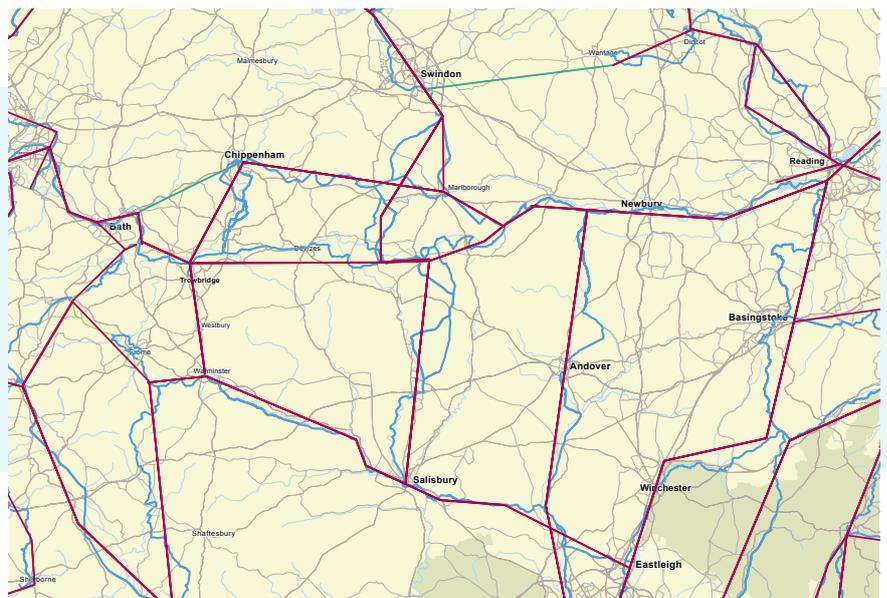
Once we have successfully made a business case for funding, we then create full and detailed designs that are ready to be built. This includes extensive

local consultation with stakeholders, volunteers and communities to ensure we make each section the best it can be within the local context. We want to make sure these routes make the right connections to the right places and that they work for everyone in the community.

At all levels, these plans are a living document. We can only deliver our strategic vision for the Network by working with governments, local authorities, key local stakeholders, our volunteers and communities to make sure these deliver nationally, regionally and locally.

We are working with our stakeholders to align with their plans and opportunities, especially highways authorities and other landowners. The maps, at every level, are constantly evolving thanks to the help, knowledge and input of our partners and volunteers. The National Cycle Network should be a spine that provides connections to the places around us and links up with local walking and cycling networks. This will create the best possible Network which we can all be proud of.

Example of a Stage 2 high-level solution plan: The blue lines show the proposed alignments in more detail. In some places this includes both a quiet-way and a traffic-free option.







1

OUR
VISION
FROM 2018

NATIONAL
CYCLE
NETWORK



Our vision

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

We want to create a safe and accessible traffic-free Network. A Network that could be used by a sensible 12-year-old travelling alone. A Network without barriers preventing people using a wheelchair or mobility scooter, on adapted cycles or tandems, or people with pushchairs, from using the routes. A Network for people walking, cycling, wheeling, or riding a horse.

Currently, only a third of the Network is traffic-free and we know that these are the most valued routes, providing safe spaces to move and be.

The Network is for everyone, not only for those cycling – indeed, more than half of journeys are made on foot. Our shared vision for the Network must speak to all users, and in particular those who face mobility challenges and the less physically active.





Traffic-free paths designed for cycling are ideal for pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility scooters. The unique nature of these mostly quiet spaces connecting countryside with towns and cities makes them useful for those traveling in ways where separation from traffic is welcome, or even life changing.

The National Cycle Network is, without question, the people's Network, benefitting from the investment and support of partners, stakeholders, users, volunteers and local communities to grow into every corner of the UK.

In addition to the immense contribution from local authorities, councils and statutory and government grants, philanthropy has been pivotal in realising the vision of the Network. To successfully create paths for everyone we need to ensure that more people are involved in, and inspired by, the future of the Network.





Highlights of our progress so far



Fixing the Network

To achieve our vision for the Network, and as its custodian and champion for the users, we set out five things that Sustrans needs to do. One of these is to work with our partners to ensure it is safe and accessible for everyone.

We now have a living master plan for the National Cycle Network across the UK. The master plan outlines how we'll ensure that the Network connects communities and helps people get to where they want to go. It includes information on how we can expand the National Cycle Network to better connect urban areas, with a focus on improving connectivity for people living in more deprived areas across the UK.

We are working with partners to develop detailed plans for every mile of the Network, outlining the issues and proposing solutions on how we get these routes up to our high standards. These plans also include information

on how we'll work with our partners to transform current on-road sections into traffic-free routes, and where we can implement quiet-ways with traffic calming measures.

So far, we've delivered 27 projects across the UK to make the Network safer and increase the number of traffic-free miles. There are a further 28 projects in progress that will be completed by 2023.

One of these projects saw us working with local authorities, landowners and local police to remove or redesign 51 barriers on routes across the Greater Manchester area.

We also worked with West Sussex County Council and Christ's Hospital school to extend the popular Downs Link, National Route 223, so that people no longer need to use busy country roads. The work included repairing two bridges and improving the surface and drainage of the route.



A major makeover for the National Cycle Network

In our Paths for everyone report, we identified 15 recommendations for Sustrans, local authorities and partners to follow to achieve our vision of a traffic-free, accessible and more consistent Network for everyone.

One of these recommendations was to introduce a process for 'de-designation of parts of the Network that cannot be improved'.

During 2019 and 2020, we carried out a major project to remove or reclassify the fastest and busiest on-road sections of the Network as a first step in improving it.

Our Network Development teams used objective traffic speed and volume data alongside the information taken from our 2018 review of the audit data to assess each on-road section of the Network. This allowed them to identify routes where motor traffic speeds exceeded a median of 35mph in the case of A-roads (where a high

volume of traffic can be assumed) and 40mph for all other roads.

As a result, 3,733 miles were removed or reclassified. Sections that were removed are now no longer part of the National Cycle Network. Sections that have been reclassified are still signed but are not part of the Network. These sections do not meet the high-quality standards for everyone that we aspire to, but they form part of important named routes. We therefore continue to promote them to experienced users.

Following the changes, we now have a smaller but safer National Cycle Network.



A new strategy to remove barriers and improve accessibility

One of the recommendations outlined in our Paths for everyone report is to 'Remove or redesign all 16,000 barriers on the Network to make it accessible to everyone, with no barriers in place for continuous travel'.

We have seen a rise in the number of people using non-standard cycles and other non-motorised vehicles to make everyday journeys, explore their local areas and get active.

However, the presence of restrictive barriers makes it impossible for many of these users to access and enjoy the Network. This includes, although is not limited to, people using:

- mobility scooters and wheelchairs
- buggies and prams
- adapted cycles
- handcycles
- tandem bikes
- trikes
- cargo bikes
- running frames
- horses.

In the three years since the publication of our Paths for everyone report, we, together with our partners, have removed 315 barriers. But there is still a long way to go.

That's why we have developed a barrier removal strategy.

Our strategy outlines the problems we need to solve, the principles that will guide us and the activity we will undertake in partnership with others. It requires us to take a firm line on accessibility and insist that all National Cycle Network routes are fully accessible to all legitimate users.



Barriers before, Marsh Mills. Photo: Sustrans



Barriers after, Marsh Mills. Photo: Sustrans





The role of the Network during the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about measures to help keep people safe, including instructions to socially distance from others and to stay at home unless going out locally to exercise.

This resulted in more of us getting outside for regular exercise, while many people looked towards alternatives to public transport for their commute and functional journeys.

“In times of public health crisis and the climate emergency, travelling actively has never been more important.

The National Cycle Network is a vital part of the UK's green infrastructure, connecting people to places and to one another, providing family-friendly spaces and boosting local economies.

We saw a significant increase in the number of people using the National Cycle Network during lockdown. There were 121 million more trips made on the Network in 2020 than in 2019, an increase of 19%. That is despite the reduction in size of the Network following our removal and reclassification work between 2019 and 2020 to make it safer and more accessible for everyone. This increase in trips suggests the potential for even greater growth than we have previously forecasted.



The huge increase we've seen in the number of people relying on the Network for exercise and travel proves just how crucial these routes are. We will continue our work to make it easier for people to travel safely and actively as we rebuild after the Covid-19 pandemic.”

Sustrans CEO, Xavier Brice

Realising the vision: our progress to date

Our 2018 review made 15 recommendations
that fit within our five themes:

 **Run it**

Fix it



Grow it

Love it



Fund it





Run it

Recommendation #15

Establish clear governance to bring together land managers, funders, users and others to deliver these recommendations in partnership.

Progress

To achieve our vision of Paths for everyone, we bring key partners together in UK-wide and regional stakeholder groups. These include landowners and highways authorities, user group representatives, and national and local governments.

To create a Network that is accessible, more consistent and useful for all users, it is particularly important for us to seek out the opinions and advice of groups that may have had difficulties accessing the Network in the past.

At a UK-level, we have established an accessibility working group that includes representatives from Wheels for Wellbeing, Disabled Ramblers, the British Horse Society, the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) and a representative from our volunteers. This group has been instrumental in ensuring that the changes we are making to the Network and the information we are providing meet the needs of all user groups. Critically,

the group has steered the development of our strategy to remove or replace barriers to make the Network accessible.

We are working strategically with key landowners. In November 2019, Canal & River Trust and Sustrans signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing how we will collaborate to make canal towpaths accessible for all visitors.

What we've learnt

Our work on governance has emphasised the fact that our vision for the Network can only be achieved in partnership with others.

Next steps

We are focused on how we can work with a wide range of partners to ensure that the Network is welcoming for everyone, particularly disabled people, women that cycle and people of colour, who remain under-represented among users.

We will also work with partners to look beyond road safety and determine what we can do to improve personal safety on the Network. This will ensure the Network is more welcoming for all.



Fix it

Recommendation #9

Introduce a process for de-designation of parts of the Network that cannot be improved – and a clear process for incorporating new routes that fill gaps or make new connections.

Progress

Our November 2018 audit of the Network identified several high-speed on-road sections. After much consideration, we took the decision in 2019 to prioritise addressing the status of these sections. This was so that we could expedite Network accessibility and provide a more consistent user experience for everyone.

We engaged openly with our partners, supporters and volunteers on why and how we would go about this work. Informed by data on the speed and volume of traffic, we removed some sections (no longer mapping or signing them) and 'reclassified' others as being appropriate for more experienced cyclists (still mapping and promoting them but with an alternative branding to the National Cycle Network red number patch).

In July 2020, we publicised the reduction of the Network from 16,519 miles to 12,786 miles – a major step towards an improved Network that is suitable for a sensible 12-year-old to navigate alone. The overall feedback and media coverage was positive.

What we've learnt

Being custodian of the Network means that we sometimes need to take difficult decisions. We learnt the importance of continuing to be open and honest with people about what we want the Network to be. As Xavier Brice, Sustrans CEO, said: "This isn't about experienced cyclists; this is about it being for everyone. It's about making sure people can trust the Network."

Next steps

Removal and reclassification left a legacy of signs that are no longer accurate, so our focus now is working with our volunteers to address these. We are mapping all the signs that are no longer part of the Network so we can provide highways authorities with asset data.

Recommendation #2

Remove or redesign all 16,000 barriers on the Network to make it accessible to everyone, with no barriers in place for continuous travel.

Progress

Since November 2018, we have been working with local authorities, the Canal & River Trust and other landowners to review, redesign and remove barriers in line with design guidance in all nations. We have also opened constructive dialogue with Police Crime Prevention Initiatives. So far, we have worked with our partners and stakeholders to remove 315 barriers.

Examples include over 100 barriers removed or redesigned between Edinburgh and Glasgow on the Forth-Clyde and Union Canals, National Routes 7 and 754.

28 barriers were redesigned or removed on the Taff Trail, National Route 8 in Wales and 51 barriers were removed in Greater Manchester, creating a more accessible environment for all users.

The British Horse Society (BHS) works with Sustrans to make sure that horse riders' needs are included where possible whenever routes are being upgraded. In 2021 on the Lias Line, National Route 41, the BHS provided

£7,000 from their Ride Out Fund to support the removal or redesign of all seven barriers that were restricting access for people using non-standard bikes on this disused railway line in Warwickshire. This redesign also helped horse riders to use the path safely. Riders and their horses are now welcome to enjoy Warwickshire's longest traffic-free greenway, connecting Leamington Spa with the Grand Union Canal towpath.

In January 2021, we were recognised for our contribution to improving disabled access across Yorkshire by the disability charity Open Country. This was thanks to our work between Thorp Arch and Newton Kyme and on Castleford Greenway, National Route 69.

In summer 2021, we launched our Accessibility Fund in Scotland, allocating £150,000 to partners for barrier removal or redesign along the Network. In the financial year 2021/22, the overall pot of £400,000 will be available to carry out individual projects which remove or redesign restrictive barriers of all kinds on the National Cycle Network, making the Network more accessible for everyone who chooses to walk, cycle or wheel.





Barrier before, Hereford National Route 46. Photo: Sustrans



Barrier removed Hereford National Route 46. Photo: Sustrans

What we've learnt

Our ambition is challenging. To achieve recommendation #2 by 2040, we need to remove or redesign 800 barriers per year. Since 2018, we have had funding to remove 315. And though we have significant successes to celebrate, we know that in some places new barriers are still being specified, designed and installed, often by local authorities and landowners, contrary to government guidance.

To achieve the scale of change we want to see and to ensure that this change is sustained, a strategic approach is required, with buy-in and support from a wide range of stakeholders and users. We need governments across the UK to ensure guidance on barrier removal is fully enforced and we need to see funding to address this. We also need local authorities to systematically undertake equality impact assessments and we need funding to address this too.

Next steps

Together with stakeholders and Sustrans volunteers we are measuring and mapping all barriers on the Network. Whilst we address the issue, we'll share more comprehensive information about their location and dimensions with users to help with route planning and access.

We have developed a barrier removal and redesign strategy, with a focus on opening up accessible end-to-end journeys, rather than simply removing individual barriers.

Recommendation #3

Transform the Network by replacing existing on-road sections with new traffic-free paths or by creating quiet-way sections so it is safer for everyone.

Progress

We have a master plan that outlines our ambitions for the Network. By 2040, we want the whole of the UK served by quality paths.

So far, we've delivered 27 projects across the UK to make the Network safer and increase the number of traffic-free miles. There are a further 28 projects in progress that will be completed by 2023.

In April 2019, we celebrated an important milestone: the completion of our first activation project. The project was a traffic-free link between the rural communities of North Connel and Benderloch, Argyll and Bute, on Scotland's Caledonia Way, National Route 78.

In June 2020, major improvement works were completed on National Route 5 at Kennington, Oxford, providing people with an alternative to joining traffic on the busy A34. In February 2021, we won an Oxford Preservation Trust award in the Landscape and Public Realm category for this work.

In October 2020, our team in the north of England worked in partnership with Wakefield Council and Leeds Council to complete a new 0.8 mile section of walking and cycling route, part of National Route 69 between Castleford and Green Row at Methley Junction.

In Pembrokeshire, a new route, National Route 440, has been created between Narberth and Haverfordwest, which includes traffic-free and quiet-way sections.

We are always improving the quality of the existing Network. In June 2021, we reopened a 1.9 mile stretch of the popular Trans Pennine Trail in Barnsley, National Route 62, with an all-new environmentally-friendly surface. This will make the trail accessible to many more users in all weathers. In October 2021, construction began on the Lias Line project in Warwickshire. 2.5 miles of on-road route will be replaced with 3.4 miles of good quality off-road path. This will improve the safety of the route, part of Warwickshire's longest traffic-free greenway.

What we've learnt

As we move forward with our Network development plans and prioritisation process, we are generating a much better picture of what the long-term needs and costs of the Network are.

There are many more miles that we need to replace with new traffic-free routes.

Next steps

We are using our master plan to develop a strategy for every mile of the Network. This will outline where we plan to create new traffic-free sections of the Network and where quiet-ways are appropriate.



Photo: Rebecca Hills/Sustrans



Recommendation #4

Ensure that where the Network is on a quiet-way section the speed limit is 20mph in built-up areas and 40mph in rural areas.

Progress

Chilton Road in Upton, Oxfordshire, part of National Route 544, was temporarily closed to motorised vehicles from August 2020. After an overwhelmingly positive response to a public consultation, Oxfordshire County Council decided to make the road closure permanent.

Residents have spoken warmly of the trial closure, recounting the increased use of the road by cyclists, walkers, horse riders and children. They've also mentioned that the area is now safer for wheelchair-users.

The permanent closure will improve the quality of life for residents of Upton and is an excellent example of the benefits Sustrans' partnerships with key stakeholders can bring.

Hollywood Lane, part of National Route 4, was also closed to through traffic after a public consultation process run by South Gloucestershire Council. Local residents also benefit from the reduction in traffic flow on this previously busy cut through at Cribbs Causeway near Bristol.

We have also worked with Perth and Kinross Council to introduce reduced speed limits along the route between Killin and Kenmore, National Route 7, to create a quiet-way and provide safer and more conducive conditions for walking and cycling. The speed limit has been reduced to

40mph for much of the route, but where there is housing and trip generators which increase levels of walking (eg Scottish Crannog Centre), the speed limit has been reduced to 20mph. To reinforce this, gateway signing and regular repeater signage has been installed at regular intervals along the length of the route. These signs have been designed to slow down motorists for the benefit of Network users.

What we've learnt

We have learnt how difficult quiet-way implementation can be for local authorities, despite supportive guidance from the UK Government.

Sustrans wishes to fill the current gap in up-to-date guidance on implementing quiet-ways. We plan to do this by reviewing evidence of what works.

Next steps

While progress has been made on delivering quiet-ways, we are still some way off from the volume that will be required to fulfil the vision of Paths for everyone. The current official guidance can make them hard to implement, especially in rural areas. We know that 40mph is still a dangerous speed and can make people feel unsafe. Wherever possible we will push for speeds below 40mph on quiet-ways.

We will consciously evaluate and learn from the quiet-ways we deliver and use this to create best practice guidelines for future projects.

Recommendation #5

Improve safety where the Network crosses roads or railways.

Progress

Our 2014 audit of the Network identified 457 sub-standard crossings, which we have committed to improving. We immediately made a plan for addressing each of the crossings. So far, 118 of them have been addressed.

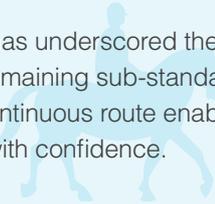
One of these improved crossings is in south-west England. A new toucan crossing has been installed on the Festival Way, which runs between Bristol and Nailsea, National Route 33. The new crossing has made it safer for people walking, cycling and wheeling across the high-traffic B3128.

What we've learnt

The success of this project has underscored the importance of tackling the remaining sub-standard crossings. Having a safe, continuous route enables all users to enjoy the Network with confidence.

Next steps

Working with our partners, we aim to address the remaining 339 sub-standard crossings, to create a Network that is safe and accessible for everyone.



Recommendation #6

Adopt a new quality standard to ensure path widths and surfaces are suitable for everyone.

Progress

We follow a series of design principles that set out the standards for routes on the National Cycle Network. These include guidance on aspects such as the width of the route, maintenance, signage and surface type.

These design principles are available on our website and we ensure that they are referenced in feasibility reports for Network improvements.

We regularly review our standard to make sure it remains fit for purpose. This includes reviewing our principles against new official design guidance.

We have developed an exceptions process to enable designers to document where it is not possible to meet the standard, assess the impact of not doing so and reach a decision as to whether the exception is acceptable.

What we've learnt

Since we published the Network design principles, design guidance across the UK has been significantly improved. Local Transport Note 1/20 has been published for England and Northern Ireland, the Wales Active Travel Act Design Guidance has been revised and Cycling by Design in Scotland has been updated. This means that the underlying design guidance that all designers should be using is of a far higher standard than it was in November 2018.

Next steps

We will continue to embed Network design principles in the development of improvements and keep them under review to ensure that they remain relevant and continue to drive the quality of infrastructure that is required for the Network.

We will issue more guidance on barriers and barrier removal.





Recommendation #7

Improve signage so everyone can use the paths without a map or smartphone.

Progress

We have been working on improving signage across the UK. Some of our work includes:

- highlighting shared use paths and managing conflict during Covid-19
- working with our volunteers to address signs that are no longer accurate following removal and reclassification
- improving signage along the route from Lincoln to Humber Bridge, National Route 1, completed in April 2020
- improving signage on Hadrian's Cycleway, National Route 72, completed in September 2019.

These last two projects were undertaken by our fantastic volunteers, using signs provided by Sustrans.

After a period of development and testing, we have created a new app so that our volunteers can easily order signs and tell us which sections they have improved.

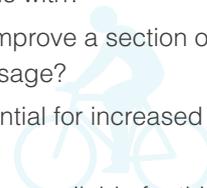
What we've learnt

We have learnt that online tools can make it much easier for volunteers to support the vision for the Network and how important it is to engage volunteers in the development of these tools.

Next steps

We will provide Local Highways Authorities with a Geographic Information System (GIS) dataset of all the cycle route signage that is no longer being cared for by Sustrans or volunteer groups because it is on a removed or reclassified section of route.

We will have completed a signage and wayfinding strategy by the end of 2022.



Recommendation #8

Deliver over 50 activation projects across the UK by 2023 to improve the Network and demonstrate change.

Progress

As of September 2021, we are proud to have delivered 27 improvement projects with our partners and stakeholders. We are on track to deliver our target of 55 by 2023, and meanwhile are delivering many other projects.

These projects activate and test new governance systems, the marketing strategy, funding mechanisms and approaches to volunteer, community and user involvement. They also test new ways of capturing data from a wider range of users. Their implementation helps us to garner the profile, support and resources required to mobilise the wider improvements to the Network.

The activation projects have a good geographical spread from across the UK and cover the full range of recommendations. 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:

- Does the project support the strategic aims of the 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 the Network it deals with?
- Does the project improve a section of the 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 landowner support for this project?
- Is there community support for this project?

Many activation projects are featured throughout this document and further detail is available on our website.

What we've learnt

Our Paths for everyone projects to improve the Network are subject to post completion monitoring and evaluation and usually produce post-completion reports that include lessons learnt. All learning is fed back into the process.

Next steps

Twenty-eight activation projects are currently in the pipeline and we are on track to deliver 55 by 2023. More detail on the activation projects can be found on our website at www.sustrans.org.uk/pathsforeveryone.

Love It

Recommendation #1

Set the tone for harmonious use of the Network by everyone.

Progress

During the Covid-19 pandemic, people were looking for ways to get outside and look after their physical and mental wellbeing. The National Cycle Network provided an important place for people to exercise and enjoy fresh air and a change of scenery. During this time, we launched Share, Respect, Enjoy, a new digital campaign aimed at encouraging people to be considerate of other users on the Network during the pandemic.

Working with our partners and stakeholders, we have delivered community engagement projects to set the tone for harmonious use on some of our most popular paths. For example, we have been working to make our flagship Bristol and Bath Railway Path, National Route 4, a safer, more inclusive space. We have also worked with partners in Northern Ireland on a campaign to give practical guidance on path etiquette.

In January 2019, we created a Facebook group for users of the Network, which now has approximately 50,000 members. Here, we encourage harmonious use

of the Network by everyone. In 2020, we collaborated with our partners Canal & River Trust to promote a Stay kind, slow down campaign which encourages considerate shared use of canal towpaths. Stay kind, slow down supplements the Better Towpaths for Everyone policy - a policy we created with the Canal & River Trust that is endorsed by 15 other national bodies.

What we've learnt

Since launching our National Cycle Network Facebook group, we have shared tips for users on how to respectfully share the routes. These posts were well-received, with 200 likes across 10 posts and lots of positive comments. From this, we learnt that users of the Network are receptive to advice and tips on how to co-exist with other users.

Next steps

We'll continue to promote the harmonious use of the Network by consistently sharing this message on social media and in our newsletters. We'll also explore how we can continue to collaborate with our partners and community groups to encourage users to respect one another when using the Network.





Recommendation #10

Make it easier for people using the Network to feed back on its condition and use this insight to improve it.

Progress

When we launched the Network vision in November 2018, we also set up a website where users of the Network can share feedback on routes. The map has received 32,000 visitors and 2,000 comments, with the most commonly reported issues being traffic-related safety, accessibility and surface quality.

All of this feedback has been captured and is serving as a very useful reference for informing our Network development plans.

With the help of some external funding, Sustrans colleagues in the South of England completed the plans in December 2020 and volunteers were then invited to comment on the proposals. We have received 571 comments, stored on a GIS map. This means that each comment, along with the location it refers to, will be available when a project goes live and we can use these comments to shape our plans.

Volunteers and other route stakeholders have also been involved in giving comments via GIS to create a route action plan for the Deeside Way, National Route 195, in Aberdeenshire.

Every day we monitor our social media channels, including our National Cycle Network Facebook group. Any National Cycle Network issues that are raised are flagged with local teams and responded to promptly.

Users can report issues on the Network by emailing supporters@sustrans.org.uk, which is clearly signposted on our website. These emails are monitored daily, issues are passed on to local Network teams and responses are sent to users within two days of receipt.

We created longer-form content to show the process we go through to improve the Network and explain how the public can help. The article included a section on how users can report restrictive barriers on the Network.

Alongside encouraging users to report issues on the Network, we have also received a large number of positive comments celebrating the Network.

What we've learnt

By inviting this feedback from members of the public, we've learnt about people's day-to-day experiences of the Network: the wide range of users and uses, and the issues they sometimes face on routes.

We've used this insight to better understand users and their needs and to provide clearer content and information on route pages, blogs and route collections on the Sustrans website.

Next steps

Our Network development plan, stage two of the master plan, is a live document which will continue to evolve as we co-create it with our partners and stakeholders.

We want to learn from our experiences of gathering map-based feedback and use these lessons when monitoring and improving the Network in the future.





Recommendation #11

Promote the Network to new users.

Progress

In July 2019, we published a new, user-friendly online National Cycle Network map with our partners at Ordnance Survey, to help more people discover and access the Network.

We regularly publish inspirational and motivational content in the form of blogs and videos to encourage users to discover routes across the UK. Since July 2019, our route collections have had almost 323,000 views, many of them new visitors to the website.

From May to October 2019, we ran a campaign entitled Everyday Adventures. The campaign aimed to promote traffic-free paths to new users of all ages and abilities. We reached nine million people through media, email and social media. There were 36,000 views of our campaign videos and we engaged 7,700 people on social media.

Through daily monitoring, we've seen an increase in the number of people who are new to the Network joining our National Cycle Network Facebook group. We used the increase in walking and cycling during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown to promote the National Cycle Network, whilst also encouraging social distancing. The

number of users in our Facebook group has more than tripled since lockdown began in March 2020, increasing from 13,300 to approximately 50,000.

What we've learnt

We have learnt that the map is popular; the Network has been viewed on the OS Map over 2.6 million times between July 2019 and September 2021.

A post on Facebook in July 2021 promoting the National Cycle Network OS Map reached 32,000 people, with over 4,100 engagements.

We've also learnt that linking our content up with the National Cycle Network is particularly useful for new users. Our Bike shops near me campaign, which launched at the end of April 2021, has mapped all of the local independent bike shops open across the UK. This interactive map also shows National Cycle Network routes, so users can find bike shops during their journeys on the Network. The page has had over 2,500 pageviews since it launched, 1,700 of which are from new users.

Next steps

We will continue to create rich content for users of our mapping and other online information to make it easier for them to plan a journey on the National Cycle Network.





Recommendation #12

Encourage greater community involvement in designing, developing and maintaining the Network.

Progress

We have put community involvement at the heart of the Network and in England, we have embedded it as a small proportion of capital budgets where possible.

In October 2019, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of our flagship Bristol and Bath Railway Path, National Route 4. The celebrations started with a workday on the path at Staple Hill, where volunteers and Sustrans staff cut back overgrown hedges, picked litter along the route, and cleaned signage and benches.

In October 2020, with support from Sustrans Scotland's ArtRoots fund, the community of Colinton transformed a 140-metre traffic-free former railway tunnel along National Route 75 by bringing to life Robert Louis Stevenson's poem 'From a Railway Carriage'. The mural has been a huge success with count data showing a double, or on weekends a quadruple, foot/wheel fall when compared to data from before the mural was created.

In spring 2021, thanks to the support of local community groups, thousands of spring flowers were blooming on the Chester Millennium Greenway, National Route 5, as part of our project to attract more people to the traffic-free path.

Our work also inspires and empowers our community of volunteers. During summer 2021, we pledged to Keep

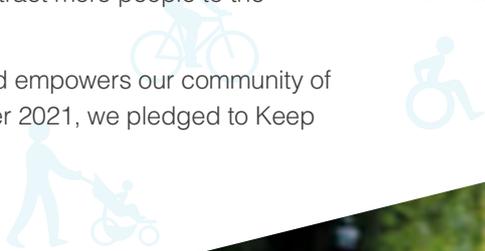
Britain Tidy by cleaning up 5,000 traffic-free miles on the National Cycle Network. A huge 1,794 hours were pledged by volunteers and members of the public over a two-week period. We actually beat our target with almost 6,000 miles cleaned up across the UK.

In 2021, volunteers committed to audit all the 990 Millennium Mileposts on the Network to ensure they are still safe and to identify whether they need repainting. Between June and August, 922 were audited and 461 were identified as needing repainting. Each one of these is now a candidate for local community engagement to redesign and redecorate.

What we've learnt

The connection and long-term commitment to place and local knowledge that volunteers bring has always been valued. Since the launch of our vision, we have been more structured in bringing this voice forward, with volunteers playing a key role in shaping decisions as part of the Network development plan process.

A clearer vision for Paths for everyone has meant that we have been able to align volunteer activity and involvement to our objectives. Focused calls for action have generated a huge response from volunteers. We have learnt that short-term opportunities or ad hoc calls to action attract a larger and more diverse group of volunteers.





Next steps

We want to continue to create ways for our volunteers to offer feedback and provide a local point of view. We will also continue to provide accessible short-term and 'small-action' opportunities. We want to work with other organisations to improve the under-representation of some groups of users and volunteers on the Network.

Recommendation #13

Provide open data on the Network.

Progress

In the past, we were working with seven different GIS solutions, which stored data in a variety of file formats. The system was complicated to use and only a small group of Sustrans employees were able to access it.

The migration from legacy GIS solutions to Esri's ArcGIS transformed the way we work. More than a third of our employees now regularly use ArcGIS to develop new routes, engage volunteers to survey route signs, present data on our impact, and even to collect information on the condition of trees on Sustrans' property.

In October 2020, we published our National Cycle Network route data and data about which sections of the Network had been removed and reclassified on the Esri Open Data Portal. Since then, the data has been viewed by partners, stakeholders and the public more than 12,000 times.

What we've learnt

We learnt that by publishing Network data openly, we are making it easier for people to walk and cycle. For example, our data has found its way into Google Maps, Ordnance Survey Maps, Open Street maps and HERE WeGo Maps.

Next steps

We will develop and openly share further datasets relating to the National Cycle Network and make it easier for volunteers to report where there are inaccuracies on our online maps.



Recommendation #14

Report regularly on the impact of the Network in improving everyone's lives and places.

Progress

In a YouGov survey from 2018/19, 89% of users told us that improving their wellbeing is a factor in deciding to use the Network. This underscores the importance of the Network to the nation's health.

We saw an increase in the number of people using the National Cycle Network during lockdown. There were 121 million more trips made on the National Cycle Network in 2020 than in 2019, an increase of 19%. A large part of this was due to pandemic restrictions, with people looking for a way to get out in the fresh air, keep active and look after their mental and physical wellbeing.

We installed 21 new automatic cycle and pedestrian counters on the Network. They provide valuable information that can be used when creating plans or assessing routes. We are securing their operation until at least 2025 to provide long-term data on network usage.

What we've learnt

We are always seeking ways to make our tools more effective. We have updated our methods to ensure that our data represents all types of Network users and identifies potential barriers to enjoying the Network.

We have added questions to our on-route surveys to identify which aspects of people's experiences on the Network can be most improved. Reaching out to specific groups in communities around the Network, whose voices might not otherwise be heard, can take more time, but is an essential part of ensuring we create paths for everyone. New tools we have developed ensure that we identify which projects offer the greatest potential for positive impact and alignment with our strategic goals.

Next steps

We are strategically expanding the number of automatic counters to give the fullest possible picture of usage of the Network. We are designing a website to openly share data from our automatic counters with partners, stakeholders and the public.

We are monitoring projects from 2021 as they come to a close. This will help us understand how best to direct our future efforts and funding.



Grow It

Progress

While our primary focus is to improve the 12,600+ existing miles of the Network, our master plan has also identified gaps in the Network which we want to fill with high-quality new sections of route.

In Northern Ireland, we worked with the Department for Infrastructure on the extension of National Route 9 from Blaris to Halftown Road. A new 1.5-mile traffic-free section replaced a section of legacy Network route that was on a busy road.

We are working to help deliver the Northern Ireland Greenways strategy that will transform the Network there.

Next steps

By 2023, we will have detailed plans for every mile of the Network in place. At this point, we will look at the business case for new sections, including some aspirational routes that are currently not a priority.

We will be using lessons from the stage one master plan to design and roll out a quality assurance process for stage two plans.



Fund It

Progress

Since we released the Paths for everyone vision, Sustrans and our partners and stakeholders have benefited from significant government funding support:

- England: £52 million from the Department for Transport. £5 million from Highways England.
- Scotland: £20.4 million from Transport Scotland. Sustrans administers these funds to local authorities, working in partnership to ensure the development of a high-quality strategic Network across the country.
- Wales: £350,000 from Welsh Government. £50 million has been made available by Welsh Government for local authorities to access directly in support of strategic cycle infrastructure. We anticipate that several million will support National Cycle Network development.
- Northern Ireland: Department for Infrastructure has made £20 million available to local authorities in a Blue/Green Infrastructure Fund, which local authorities are encouraged to access to develop new greenways.

We have attracted sponsorship support for the Network

In 2021, we established a partnership with Bosch with an ambition to install free to use electric bicycle charging facilities across the National Cycle Network. The pilot stage has seen charging stations installed along flagship parts of the Network in England and Scotland, with plans to install a larger number across the UK in 2022. The roll-out of charging points helps people to feel confident in choosing an electric bicycle for their commute, leisure, or general transport by reducing 'range anxiety' around battery life, making safer cycling routes more accessible to everyone.





4

**WHAT
WE HAVE
LEARNT**

NATIONAL
CYCLE
NETWORK





What we have learnt

While we're very proud of the National Cycle Network, we are also acutely aware that there are many areas that fall short of our vision of Paths for everyone. We've learnt so much in the three years since we started working towards this vision. The more we learn, the more we realise that the scale of the work we need to do is vast, complex and time-consuming. But we also know it is essential. We're a committed and ambitious team of experts and we won't stop until we're confident that the Network is the best it can be – a national asset enjoyed by people of all ages and confidence levels.

Partnerships and collaboration

The National Cycle Network covers the length and breadth of the UK, on land owned by many parties, and on the doorstep of millions of people. As such, it would be both impossible and inappropriate for the Paths for everyone vision for the Network to be delivered by Sustrans in isolation. As custodians of the Network, we must engage and galvanise local authorities, community organisations and the public to trust and buy into the vision and to work closely with us to make it a reality.

Being custodians of the Network means balancing the views and opinions of others. We have learnt that by engaging stakeholders regularly, openly and honestly,

it is easier to reach consensus and make difficult decisions. To achieve appropriate collaboration, we understand that clear governance and a strategic approach is essential. We encourage stakeholders and delivery partners to participate in planning, delivery and maintenance of the National Cycle Network. This is done through seven national and regional advisory panels comprising a diverse range of advisors, including from all four UK national governments as well as multiple local authorities and community-based organisations. These panels supported Sustrans in the development of the Paths for everyone vision and they now provide ongoing assistance in delivering it.

A detailed Network development master plan is in place. Going forward, it will be vital to communicate challenges and priorities with the advisory panels and wider stakeholders to align with their plans and get the best return on investment. This will enable us to generate solutions and achieve consensus with relevant voices.





Funding, policy and standards

We have learnt that a key challenge to delivering the Paths for everyone vision is working alongside the competing budget priorities of our partners and stakeholders. Bringing in funding from other sources has helped us to overcome this, and in some cases it has even allowed us to influence and change other agencies' priorities to align more closely with ours.

We are aware that there is still a huge amount of work to do to realise the Paths for everyone vision. However, we are pleased that all four UK national governments recognise the scale of the challenge and the opportunity. These governments have all significantly increased their funding for the National Cycle Network in recent years, including multi-year funding for its continuous development.

Guidance for local authorities in England and Northern Ireland (Local Transport Note 1/20), the Wales Active Travel Act Design Guide, and Cycling by Design in

Scotland have all defined key design principles and minimum standards for high-quality, safe walking and cycling infrastructure. These have helped to consolidate our own standards.

'Gear Change', the Department for Transport's bold vision for walking and cycling in England, explicitly includes the National Cycle Network, with a commitment to financing and supporting Sustrans to improve and extend it. The 2021/22 Programme for Government pledged that the Scottish Government would increase funding for active travel from £100 million a year to £320 million a year by 2025/26. This equates to 10% of the national transport budget, or £64 per person per year. It also includes a commitment to deliver investment in the Sustrans 30-year National Cycle Network Plan.



Data collection

Data is crucial for us to understand people's day-to-day experiences of the Network and what needs to be improved and where. Involving communities in data capture means we get this information quickly and accurately. We have learnt that online tools and mobile phone apps directly linked to our GIS platform make it much easier to engage volunteers. We believe it is also important to consult volunteers in the development of these tools.

As such, we are in the process of building a comprehensive system linking our GIS with other databases that capture information on the National Cycle Network. This will enable us to fully understand the condition of the Network and be able to communicate this effectively with the public. This data will also underpin the challenges and priorities outlined

in our Network development plan and mile-by-mile plans, which we are on track to deliver by 2023, as promised in the Paths for everyone report published in 2018.

Public and volunteer feedback on individual projects, and in some areas the Network development master plan, is already captured on our GIS platform. Data captured so far has allowed us to learn about the breadth of users and the ways people use the Network. Our aspiration for the integrated system is for the public to be able to provide feedback on any part of the Network by clicking on a map and inputting information that will assist with network maintenance – such as potholes and encroaching vegetation.









Photo: Colin Hattersley/Sustrans



5

**LOOKING
AHEAD**

NATIONAL
CYCLE
NETWORK





Looking Ahead: Fund It

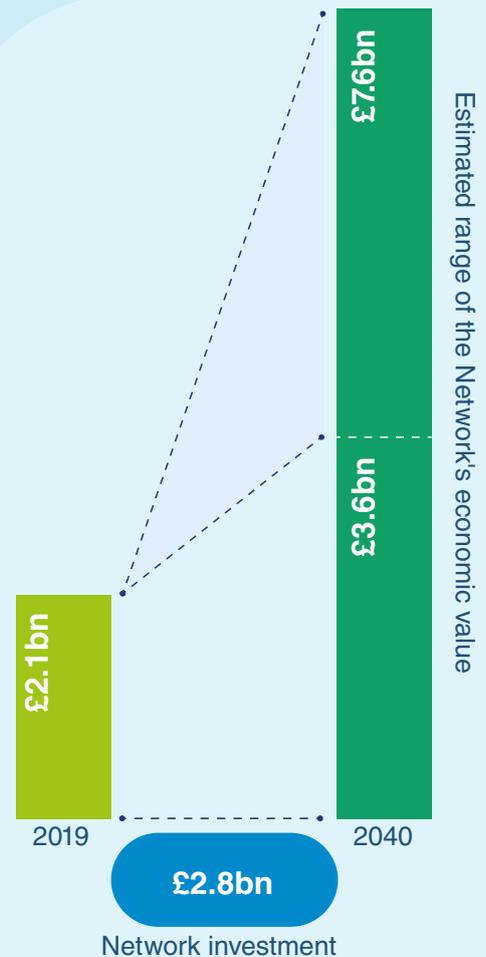
How much will be gained when we realise our vision?

Our economic modelling using AMAT² suggested the Network was worth £2.1 billion to the UK in 2019. We believe that this is extremely conservative. If we make two thirds of the Network traffic-free by 2040 and make the Network accessible to all, we estimate that the 2019 contribution of £2.1 billion per year will increase by 67% to £3.6 billion per year by 2040. Our modelling has taken the estimated 644 million trips on the Network in 2019 as its basis and forecasts from this the number of users and journeys that could be seen by 2030 and 2040, if our vision is achieved.

Previous modelling in 2017 using HEAT³ found the economic contribution would be closer to £7.6 billion a year by 2040. **The Network could therefore contribute between £3.6 billion and £7.6 billion of economic benefit every year by 2040.**

We have estimated that it will cost £2.8 billion to realise our vision for the Network by 2040.

Therefore the return on investment would be significant.



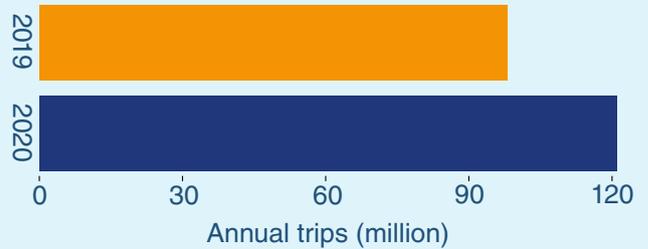
² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888754/amat-user-guidance.pdf

³ <https://www.heatwalkingcycling.org/#homepage>



How the Network can contribute to the Covid-19 economic recovery

Analysis by Transition Economics⁴ compared the job creation potential of 23 different infrastructure projects that governments could invest in as part of a Covid-19 economic recovery. The modelling undertaken estimates that cycling and walking infrastructure projects could create 32.6 immediate jobs per £1 million invested per year, mostly in construction and in the supply chain that supports it.



⁴ Transition Economics, June 2020, Can an infrastructure stimulus replace UK jobs wiped out by COVID19 crisis?

Photo, top left: Andy McCandlish/Sustrans; above: John Linton



Levelling up

24% of households do not have access to a car, with lower income households the least likely to own a car. Women, older people, young people, ethnic minorities and disabled people are concentrated in this group. Lack of car ownership can make it more challenging for people to access employment and key services. This can lead to a risk of transport poverty if other forms of transport are not available to them. Investing in the National Cycle Network can provide a more inclusive and low-cost way for people to access the things they need and participate in society. Making it easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle can help to avoid the risk of transport poverty.

Decarbonisation of UK transport

The UK Government has pledged to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Surface transport is the single largest contributing sector to the UK's carbon emissions, with cars contributing to 55% of domestic transport emissions in 2018. Approximately 619 miles of the Network are within Air Quality Management Areas. Investing in the National Cycle Network can help reduce carbon emissions from private transport and is key to reaching net zero.





Opportunities and next steps

England

The next Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) is due out in spring 2022 and will cover a three-year period from 2022 to 2025. Depending on the spending review, we are hopeful for three years of funding from the Department for Transport over this time, following a successful partnership with them over the last few years. This will allow us to continue our Network improvement works in England and help us achieve our vision for 2040.

As Environmental Land Management (ELM) pilots take place ahead of their full launch in 2024, we will continue looking for opportunities to work with partners to create traffic-free stretches by using ELM. We will also advocate for access to, and enjoyment of, the environment to be a key feature of ELM budgets. We will look for opportunities to work with partners to advocate for slower rural speeds and will continue to push for

the Network to be recognised as a strategic piece of infrastructure by the UK Government, akin to the coastal path network.

London

Since our Paths for everyone vision was published, some improvements have been completed in London, including resurfacing of a stretch of National Route 1 in Hackney and a small rerouting in the Olympic Park in Stratford. Our strategic plan for Network development comprehensively sets out the upgrade requirements for the Network in the capital. We will be taking this plan to London boroughs to discuss how we can work in partnership to take forward improvements. Our focus will be on increasing accessibility through activities such as barrier removal and resurfacing, and working with our volunteers to better maintain our landholdings.





Scotland

In Scotland, the opportunities have never been stronger. In September 2021 the Programme for Government pledged that the Scottish Government would increase funding for active travel from £100 million a year to £320 million a year by 2025/26. This equates to 10% of the national transport budget, or £64 per person per year. It also includes a commitment to deliver investment in the Sustrans 30-year National Cycle Network Plan.

In parallel, local authorities have shown commitment to delivering better conditions for walking, wheeling and cycling throughout the pandemic. The £30 million Spaces for People project, funded through our annual grant from Transport Scotland, was delivered throughout 2020/21 and saw temporary infrastructure to socially distance and get about on foot or by bike being delivered across Scotland. Many of these temporary schemes are now being made permanent.

In October, Glasgow launched a comprehensive active travel network strategy and Edinburgh increased its commitment to active travel. Both cities have Sustrans Places for Everyone schemes on the ground, funded by our annual grant from Transport Scotland.

Looking ahead, the 2021/22 Programme for Government is a step forward for cycling and walking in Scotland.

Wales

In Wales, the Welsh Government is investing in active travel and, for the first time, has provided £350,000 funding for maintenance of the National Cycle Network. This is in addition to the £75 million Active Travel Fund and £2.5 million invested into rural routes. At approximately 1,500 miles, the National Cycle Network in Wales is roughly the same length as the trunk road network and every bit as valuable to people and communities. We hope that the Welsh Government will continue their commitment to ensure this important national asset is protected for future generations.





Northern Ireland

The Department for Infrastructure's strategy, 'Exercise - Explore - Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways', provides a solid basis and rationale for greenway development across Northern Ireland. The Blue/Green Infrastructure Fund, which they launched in 2020, offers a significant opportunity for local authorities to access funding to deliver greenways in their local area.

Sustrans will be working with the Department for Infrastructure to develop a co-ordinated and robust

approach to greenway development across Northern Ireland, alongside providing practical support to local authorities to ensure delivery progress. Local authorities saw the popularity of safe, pleasant walking and cycling routes during the Covid-19 lockdown, resulting in an increased appetite for greenway development. We hope that this will lead to an enhanced National Cycle Network, accessible for everyone in Northern Ireland.





A vertical blue sign with white icons and text. At the top is a white silhouette of a person walking. Below it is a white silhouette of a bicycle. Underneath the bicycle is a red square with a white number '6'. Below the number is a white rounded rectangle containing the text 'THANK YOU' in bold. Below that is another white rounded rectangle containing the text 'STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS'. Below that is the text 'NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK'. At the bottom of the sign is a large white arrow pointing to the right.

Photo: Jon Bewley

Thanking our partners and stakeholders

Our stakeholders and partners include landowners, local and national governments, our supporters and volunteers, funders and other non-governmental organisations who promote walking, cycling and improved public spaces.

We have been delighted by the commitment shown by stakeholders since we conducted the National Cycle Network review in 2018, not least the significant financial support from the UK and Scottish governments.

This has given a clear signal that the National Cycle Network is seen as a valuable asset at the highest levels across the UK and that there is a strong commitment to delivering our long-term plan to improve it.

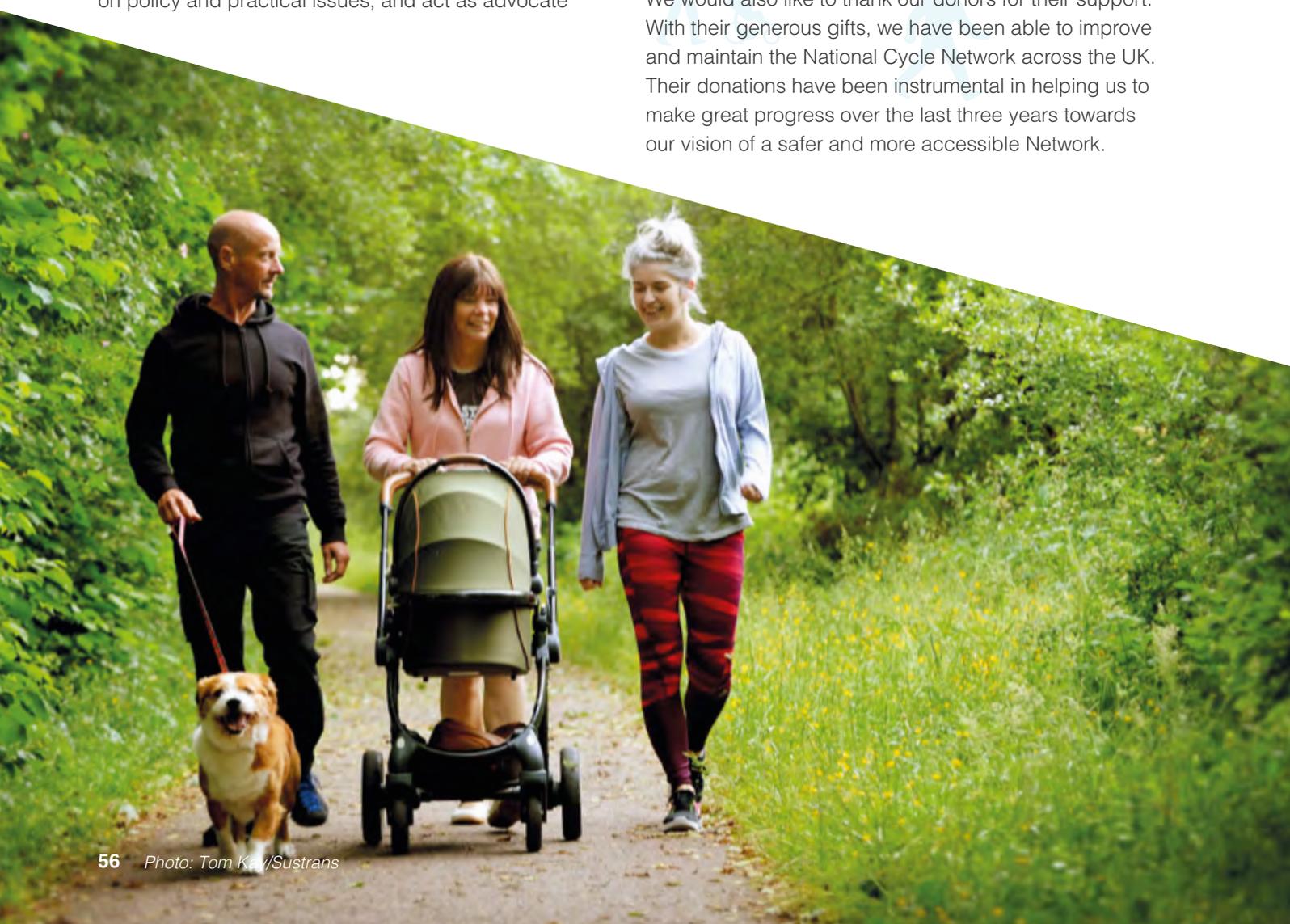
Representatives of all four governments have joined many other stakeholders at our UK Steering Group, which has met regularly since 2018 to oversee implementation of Paths for everyone, provide advice on policy and practical issues, and act as advocate

for the strategic vision we created together during the initial review.

This strong backing at a UK level has been just as evident in the devolved national and regional steering groups, which have also met regularly, with a particular focus on the physical Network in their areas. This collaboration has culminated in the delivery of multiple activation projects and the creation of a master plan for development.

We would like to thank our 3,500 volunteers for their support and commitment. From updating signs so routes are easy to navigate, gathering information on barriers and mileposts, to promoting the National Cycle Network to local communities and everything in between. Their dedication to maintaining and improving routes so they are safe for everyone to enjoy all year round has been crucial in making our vision for the Network a reality.

We would also like to thank our donors for their support. With their generous gifts, we have been able to improve and maintain the National Cycle Network across the UK. Their donations have been instrumental in helping us to make great progress over the last three years towards our vision of a safer and more accessible Network.



Our advisory panel



About Sustrans

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle. We are engineers and educators, experts and advocates.

We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Sustrans works in partnership, bringing people together to find the right solutions.

We make the case for walking and cycling by using robust evidence and showing what can be done.

We are grounded in communities and believe that grassroots support combined with political leadership drives real change, fast.

Join us on our journey.

www.sustrans.org.uk

Contact us

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