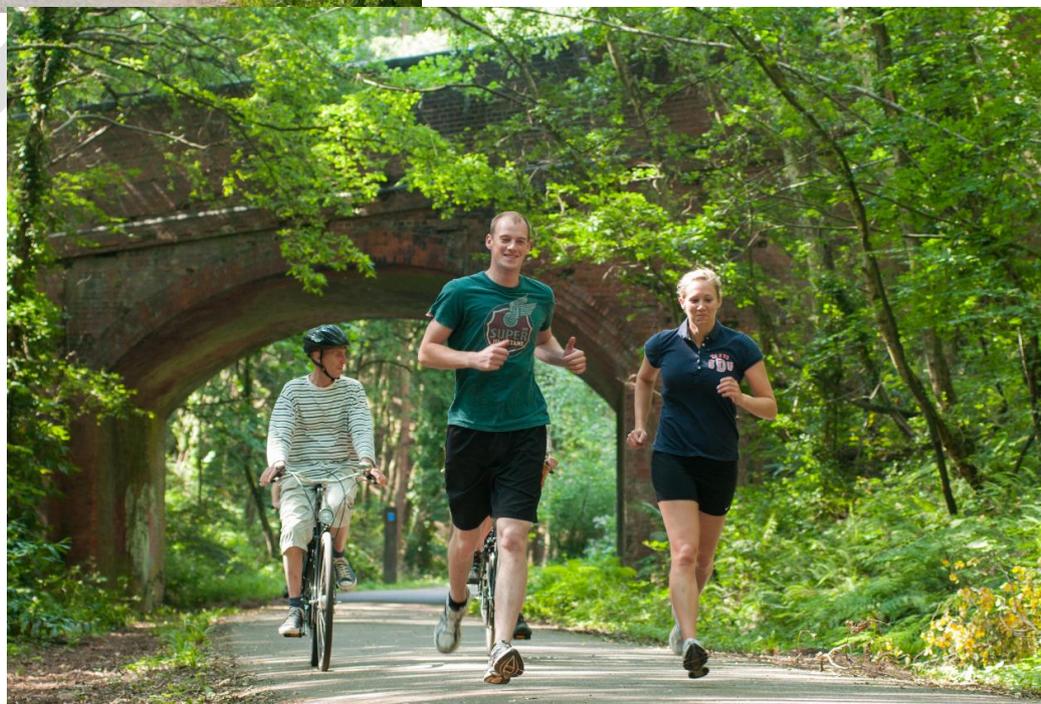


# Cycling and Multi-Use Trail Network Strategy

March 2015



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## Introduction

Increasing the uptake of cycling is a key Government aspiration; there is a wish to make it easier and safer for people who already cycle as well as encouraging far more people to take it up. Businesses, local government, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), developers, landowners, road users, the transport sector and the public all have a role to play in making this happen.

Investing in cycling extends the travel options available to people for journeys to work, school, business and shopping purposes. Our walking and cycle network supports our economy and enables people to enjoy being active for leisure and sport. Cycling supports the local economy in urban and rural areas; supports local businesses and property values by reducing vehicular traffic and congestion; it boosts the economic productivity of a healthy and satisfied workforce, and enables disadvantaged groups to gain access to training and employment opportunities.

Devon is a beautiful county and has a global appeal for its high quality coastal and countryside environment. Exeter is the major economic hub for the county and has proven resilient through the recession, with continued growth in houses and jobs and more planned for the future. Devon's stable and successful economy and good quality of life makes the county an attractive place to live, work and invest. Cycling, multi-use trails and public open space are seen as an intrinsic part of the solution for a modern growing economy. There is a growing demand for a network of segregated high quality cycle paths and trails for use by a variety of users and for a variety of purposes including work, education and leisure trips.

One of the greatest challenges facing the County Council is the significant cuts to the Local Transport Plan integrated block funding, which will be reduced from £6.2m to £3.6m in 2015/16. Instead, Government department capital funding will be delivered through the Growth Deal process, which will be managed by the Local Enterprise

Partnerships (LEPs). The LEP's interpretation of Government policies on economic growth will influence what future cycle schemes the County Council prioritises. Responding to this new agenda and the different financial challenges ahead is the driver for DCC producing a Cycle Strategy.

This "Cycling and Multi-use Trail Network" Strategy sets out how we will prioritise our plans and proposals for developing the cycle and leisure route network against changing and challenging financial circumstances. We will develop a segregated, high quality multi-use network of routes and trails that provide access for all and promote healthy, active lifestyles in Devon.

## Background

Devon's walking and cycling network offers the opportunity for all to be active and enjoy the outdoors, whether this is walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users or horse riders. Devon's population is ageing, which presents challenges, and healthy living and obesity has become one of the UK's major public health issues with the numbers of people who are obese doubling in the UK within the last 25 years.

Walking and cycling can contribute to physical and mental health and wellbeing among the older population by providing an active means of independent mobility. Improved access can help people better connect with their communities and engage in social activities.

Devon is recognised nationally as a prime location for walking and cycling holidays and breaks. It has a number of branded trails providing for a variety of non-motorised users. The Exe Estuary, part of Route 2 of the National Cycle Network<sup>1</sup> (see Figure

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<sup>1</sup> The National Cycle Network (NCN) is a series of traffic-free lanes and quiet on-road routes that connect to every major city and passes within a mile of 55 per cent of UK homes. There are a number of NCN routes in Devon. Sustrans developed the concept and coordinates the development of the NCN, working with Local Authorities and partner organisations to identify future routes and, in some cases, providing the funding to build extensions. NCN routes can be viewed at [www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/national-cycle-network](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/national-cycle-network)



Figure 1: National Cycle Network Coverage (as of 2014)

1), is a 26 mile trail running along both sides of the Estuary. This route currently records over 500,000 trips per year. The Tarka Trail (part of NCN 27) has an estimated 1 million users per annum.

In addition, numerous cycle events take place across the County, showcasing Dartmoor, the coast and the outstanding countryside of the county. These attract thousands of competitors both local and national as well as thousands of supporters from Devon, which contributes to the local economy. The showpiece is the Tour of Britain which according to an independent report brought an additional £6m spend to the county in 2014. In the last three years Devon has hosted this event, which has highlighted Devon’s impressive natural environment and inspired and created excitement around cycling. We are keen to maintain that momentum and build on the rising national profile of cycling in order to inspire people to cycle more.

Devon has had significant success in encouraging increased cycling levels through its investment in rural cycle trails and within its major urban areas.

**Missing Links in Devon’s Rural Cycle and Trail Network:**

**NCN 2: South Devon Way and Links** incorporating:

- Exe Estuary Trail – Dawlish town centre extension
- Teign Estuary Trail – Dawlish to Newton Abbot
- Wray Valley – Bovey Tracey to Moretonhampstead and on road to Okehampton
- Stop Line Way – Seaton to Colyton

**NCN 3: West Country Way** incorporating:

- Ruby Way – Hatherleigh to Bude

**NCN 27: Devon Coast to Coast** Ilfracombe to Plymouth incorporating:

- Tarka Trail – Hatherleigh to Meeth and Knowle to Willingcott
- Granite Way – Okehampton to Lydford

The Cycle Exeter project, part of the Department for Transport's (DfT) Cycle Demonstration Towns initiative, demonstrated the potential for a comprehensive approach to cycle provision; a strong, well signed network of infrastructure linking to schools and employment, complemented by measures to influence behaviour and promote cycling in schools and businesses has helped raise the overall profile of cycling in the city. This resulted in a 40% increase in daily cycling rates. Recognising the transport sector's impact on health, investing in cycling and trails makes sense on many levels. It is nevertheless a challenge to balance aspirations to get more people walking and cycling whilst reducing risks to their safety. We will endeavour to address this through continued evidence gathering, adherence to design standards, investigating campaigns on tolerance and awareness raising as well as cycle training. The emerging Road Safety Strategy will provide more detail on this.

In the next twenty years Devon will increase its housing supply substantially, which will include the completion of two new towns, Cranbrook and Sherford. Cranbrook is part of the East Devon and Exeter growth point and, along with SkyPark and Science Park will contribute to the overall 20,000 new homes and 25,000 new jobs being created in the area. Sherford, North of Plymouth will help to deliver up to 7,500 new homes in the long term and 5,000 new jobs. In addition, there will be significant expansion of Barnstaple, Newton Abbot, Tiverton and other market towns to provide new homes and jobs.

## Financial Constraints and Opportunities

This strategy is being developed at a time of significantly reduced budgets. The level of flexible funding paid direct to local authorities through the Local Transport Plan Integrated Block has been cut by almost half, effective from 2015/16 to help fund the Growth Deals. The DfT has indicated that all other non-maintenance transport capital funding

from Government will be delivered through the Growth Deal process. It is very unlikely that there will be more 'one-off' Government funded bid led competitions for the foreseeable future like the ones funding current schemes (LSTF, Granite and Gears etc).

Setting out our direction for cycling investment enables us to respond efficiently to changing circumstances in funding. We recognise that there are local aspirations to improve the walking, cycling and horse-riding connections in and between towns and villages which may not fall under the priorities highlighted. We will develop a process for communities to enable them to bring forward schemes and improvements using alternative models for delivery.

The approach outlined above requires maximising any opportunities presented in new developments and funding opportunities. Where we can be innovative in our design process for a highway scheme we will seek to achieve improvements for cycling. Devon will continue to be proactive and this strategy enables us to continue targeting funding in order to have 'shovel ready' schemes. Devon's future transport budget will comprise of successful bids to the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Local Transport Board, Local Transport Plan capital, other DfT Bids as they are announced and through Developer section 106 monies and Community Infrastructure Levy.



# The Exeter Cycle Network

## Aim 1: Showcase Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple as premier cycling towns

to provide a healthy, more efficient alternative to travelling by car for a proportion of journeys – cyclists will be able to avoid congestion and benefit from a number of traffic-free cycle routes in the urban areas.

Exeter is the economic hub of Devon and is where the payback in investing in cycling, walking and leisure routes is multiple. There are clear opportunities for switching car trips to foot and bicycle with limited opportunities to build vehicular capacity into the highway network, which experiences congestion not only during peak periods but throughout the day particularly on key arterial routes. A comprehensive network of walking and cycling routes is developing in Exeter which has benefited from the Council’s ability to win significant amounts of external funding, i.e. through the Cycle Demonstration Town (CDT) bid; DfT bids and successfully negotiated developer contributions.

In 2005, Exeter was named as one of the DfT’s six Cycling Demonstration Towns and saw some significant achievements. This success story in Exeter has demonstrated over a very short timescale the potential for cycling to help encourage a healthier, more active lifestyle and minimise car use, particularly for short distance trips.

In the 2011 Census the modal share for travel to work by bicycle in Exeter was 6% and by foot 22%, placing Exeter in the top quartile nationally for cycling cities. Recent survey data relating to two of

Exeter’s busy corridors show around 40% of trips

### Cycle Exeter CDT achievements:

- 44km of cycle routes constructed
- 40% increase in average daily cycle trips
- Cycle training rolled out to 1000s of children and adults
- 22% of secondary school children regularly cycling (national average is 3%)
- 15% of primary school children regularly walking, scooting or cycling (1% nationally)
- 6% of employees cycling to work
- Decrease in rate and actual number of overall cycle casualties in the city
- National Transport Award for Cycling Improvements (2010)

are less than 5 kilometres. This shows significant potential to increase walking and cycling levels in Exeter. Cambridge, traditionally a cycle-friendly place, tops the league for bike commuting, with almost 30% of workers choosing two wheels, followed by Oxford (17%) and it is the economic and cultural attributes of these cities that we aspire to be like. However, in the medium term, our aim is to be within the top 10 cities with the highest percentage of people cycling to work by increasing the percentage of journeys to work by bike to 12% by the next census in 2021.

We aim to build on our success through the Cycle Demonstration Town project to create a culture change in cycling so that Exeter is recognised as a leading cycling city. We need to expand the existing high quality network and provide segregated routes to the major development areas. We are conscious that other cities (outlined in the table below) have significant government

### Cycle City Ambition Projects:

Birmingham	Bristol	Cambridge
Leeds	Manchester	Newcastle
Norwich	Oxford	

funding for cycle city ambition projects and we can learn from their experiences in order to ensure our economy does not suffer and slip behind others.

The planning process will be integral to this and the County Council will continue to work with the Local Planning Authority linking to their Parks and Open Spaces Plan as well as ensure that cycle routes and infrastructure are included in future Infrastructure Delivery Plans, linked to the Local Plan process. This will enable developer contributions to be secured but also strengthen the highway authority's influence over the design of new developments to be more walking and cycle-friendly.

Collaborative working to date between Sustrans, Devon County Council and Exeter City Council officers has helped develop a hierarchy of cycle routes across the city. Figure 2 identifies the main

primary routes into the city, which will provide fast efficient connections by foot and bicycle linking the major new growth areas with key employment, retail, education and leisure destinations.

Primary segregated routes will:

- Link between employment and main residential areas and the city centre
- Be fast and direct
- Be high quality and separated from cars – either off road or on quiet roads
- Offer uninterrupted paths, or minimal stops where possible
- Use clear, high quality signs

Secondary Routes will:

- Use key corridors to connect into the primary routes and link major destinations including major employment sites and schools, colleges and the university
- Use clear, high quality signage

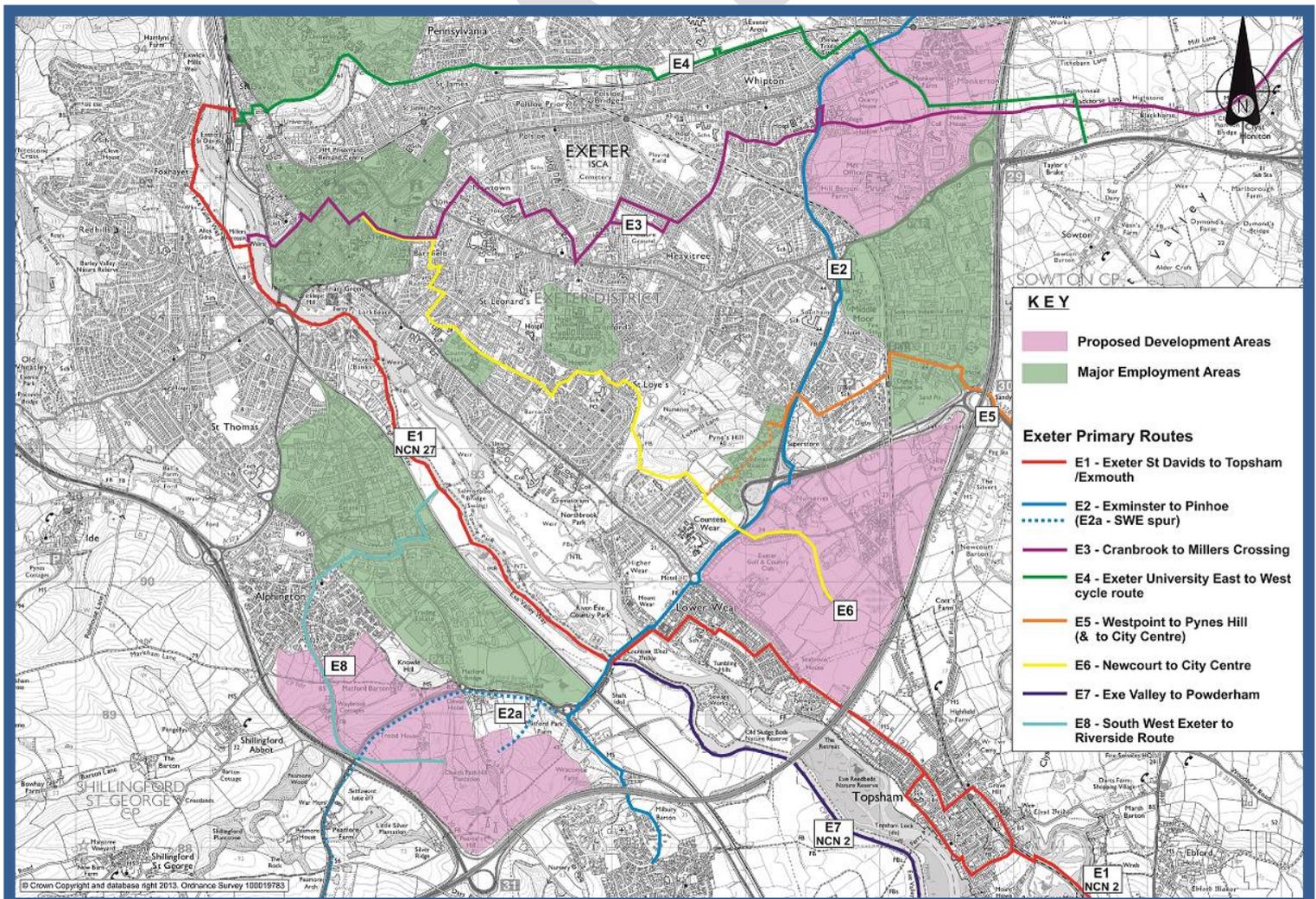


Figure 2: Exeter Cycle Map

These routes will contribute to delivering continued growth in the city and help maintain Exeter’s reputation as a vibrant and prosperous place to live and work. It will achieve mode shift by offering people safe, convenient and, in some cases, quicker journey times compared to travel by car. Implementing these schemes using high quality engineering design solutions will help strengthen Exeter as one of the UK’s premier cycling cities.

A summary of the Exeter cycle schemes is provided in the table below, which relates to the schemes in Figure 2.

Exeter Cycle Schemes	
E1	Exeter St David’s to City Centre and on to Topsham/Exmouth
E2	Exminster to Pinhoe (E2a – SWE spur)
E3	Cranbrook to City Centre & Millers Crossing
E4	Cranbrook to Exeter University (East to West Cycle Route)
E5	Westpoint to Pynes Hill (and to City Centre)
E6	Newcourt to City Centre
E7	Exe Valley to Powderham
E8	South West Exeter to Riverside Routes

## Newton Abbot and Barnstaple Networks

Significant growth is also planned in some of our larger Market Towns such as Barnstaple and Newton Abbot. This section of the strategy focuses on plans to invest further in cycling in Barnstaple and Newton Abbot. Outside of Exeter, these are our largest towns with the most significant levels of growth planned over the next 20 years.

Barnstaple (population 31,000) is planned to have around 3400 new homes and over 50 hectares employment land over the next twenty years. It is the sub regional centre of North Devon, home to North Devon College, North Devon Hospital, North Devon Council, business and industrial parks. We will focus on providing connections from

Barnstaple Town Centre to urban developments west of the River and Railway at Anchorwood, Roundswell and Larkbear. These will link to and enhance the Tarka Trail.

Newton Abbot (population 22, 581) is planned to have 4230 new homes and new jobs in urban extensions to the west and south of the town. It has a vibrant economy with a mix of industries based on minerals, manufacturing and service. We will focus on the development of an East to West Cycle route connecting the large new development to the west to the schools, employment sites and the retail core of the town, as well as links to the rail station and leisure routes.

Our aim for Barnstaple and Newton Abbot would be to develop proportionate cycle and trail networks. Like Exeter, this would draw upon some of the lessons learnt through the Cycle Demonstration Towns project in terms of design standards and focusing on linking the major residential development sites to the retail, employment and education destinations. Cycle routes would be planned to:

- Link directly to the new development locations
- Meet the need to develop the transport options and active travel for a greater population
- Make the most of the opportunity to encourage sustainable transport behaviour

Funding to develop the network in these towns will be secured through the planning process (i.e. developer contributions) and taking advantage of opportunities through Local Transport Board Growth Deal bids. Our ability to be successful in levering in funding for future schemes is more likely where we can deliver sustainable, walking and cycling transport links that could potentially reduce trips made by car from major growth areas to schools and job destinations.

A summary of the Newton Abbot and Barnstaple cycle schemes is provided in the table below.

<b>Barnstaple / Newton Abbot Schemes</b>	
<b>NAB1</b>	East-West cycle route: Houghton Barton to Train Station (via town centre)
<b>NAB2</b>	ASDA to Train Station (via town centre)
<b>NAB3</b>	Wolborough to Town Centre
<b>BAR1</b>	Roundswell A39 Ped / Cycle Bridge
<b>BAR2</b>	Anchorwood to the Strand Bridge
<b>BAR3</b>	Larkbear to town centre

## The Rural and Leisure Cycle Trail Network

### **Aim 2: Invest in Devon’s leisure routes and trails**

to secure transitional economic and health benefits in rural Devon by increasing peoples’ access to Devon’s impressive countryside and heritage, and providing linkages with rural towns and villages.

Tourism is an important part of the Devon economy and the rural cycle and trail network is a dynamic asset, fulfilling a number of roles. The network provides connections between villages and towns and helps to provide access to the county’s stunning natural environment. In some cases, it functions as scenic and enjoyable commuter routes and also attracts people to spend their free time exploring the coast and countryside. They can also be capable of transforming local economies, bringing people into towns and villages to boost the local economy.

Furthermore, they can be used by a variety of users, which demonstrates the wider benefits of the multi-use trail in terms of health and economy to all people living and working in Devon. For example, in addition to cyclists the Exe Estuary Trail is well used by walkers, people with prams and wheelchair users.

There has been significant investment in the rural network by Devon County Council, aided by our ability to win competitive funding bids and deliver schemes on the ground over the past three years. This has helped to fund schemes on our branded strategic routes including: Tarka Trail, Exe Estuary Trail & Teign Estuary Trail, Devon Coast to Coast, Ruby Way, Granite Way, Drakes Trail and Wray Valley Trail. This has included landmark bridges: Gem Bridge near Tavistock, Redhayes Bridge over the M5, the Town Quay bridge in Newton Abbot and several bridges in Dartmoor, delivered through the Granite and Gears programme.

Many of these trails have outstanding public realm attributes and provide access to Devon’s rich countryside and heritage. The recently completed Gem Bridge on the Drake’s Trail just south of Tavistock is a spectacular scheme, replacing an old viaduct.

To date, our approach has been to develop and deliver strategic branded cycle routes; this has delivered economic benefits which are tangible by observing the activity along the routes with cafes (e.g. Fremington), cycle facilities (Torrington), accommodation and public houses (Lymptone) all thriving. This has raised expectations and there are other communities keen to see development of new links, some in areas of Devon where the rural economy is struggling.

We will continue our proactive approach by developing a prospectus for the completion of the existing routes which are indicated on the schematic map (See table below and Figure 3). This will objectively establish the deliverability in terms of design and land ownership, the benefits for links to schools, employment, economic benefits and forecasts about usage levels to establish value for money.

The timing of the delivery will rely on the availability of funding opportunities set by the Government. As section 3 illustrates, there will be significant pressure on Local Transport Plan funding and it is likely to be challenging to secure

**Proposed Schemes – Strategic Cycle Network**

Route	Section
Devon Coast to Coast (NCN27) and links to it	Tarka Trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowle to Willingcott</li> <li>Meeth to Hatherleigh</li> </ul> Tavistock to Tamar Trails Centre
South Devon Way (NCN2) and links to it	Teign Estuary Trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dawlish to Kingsteignton</li> </ul> Stop Line Way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seaton to Colyton</li> </ul> Wray Valley Trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steward Wood to Lustleigh</li> </ul> Feniton to Sidmouth
West County Way (NCN3) and links to it	Ruby Way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hatherleigh to Bude</li> </ul> Pegasus Way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartmoor to Cookworthy Forest (connects Granite Way and Ruby Way)</li> </ul>

funding through the LEP process, hence the need to demonstrate value for money. Nevertheless, the County Council will work to secure funding via a range of sources including the Growth Deal and developer contributions (S106 / CIL). This could be supplemented with possible bids direct to the Department for Transport (DfT) should separate grant funding opportunities arise. To achieve this, we will continue to work with stakeholders including landowners to remove barriers and enable us to be ready to deliver the remaining sections of routes.

As our work to complete the existing network progresses, we will consult on future potential extensions of the network. This will initially be undertaken in conjunction with the roll forward of the Local Plan process, working closely with the Local Planning Authorities.

Complementary to the delivery of infrastructure is the continued promotion of the network. There

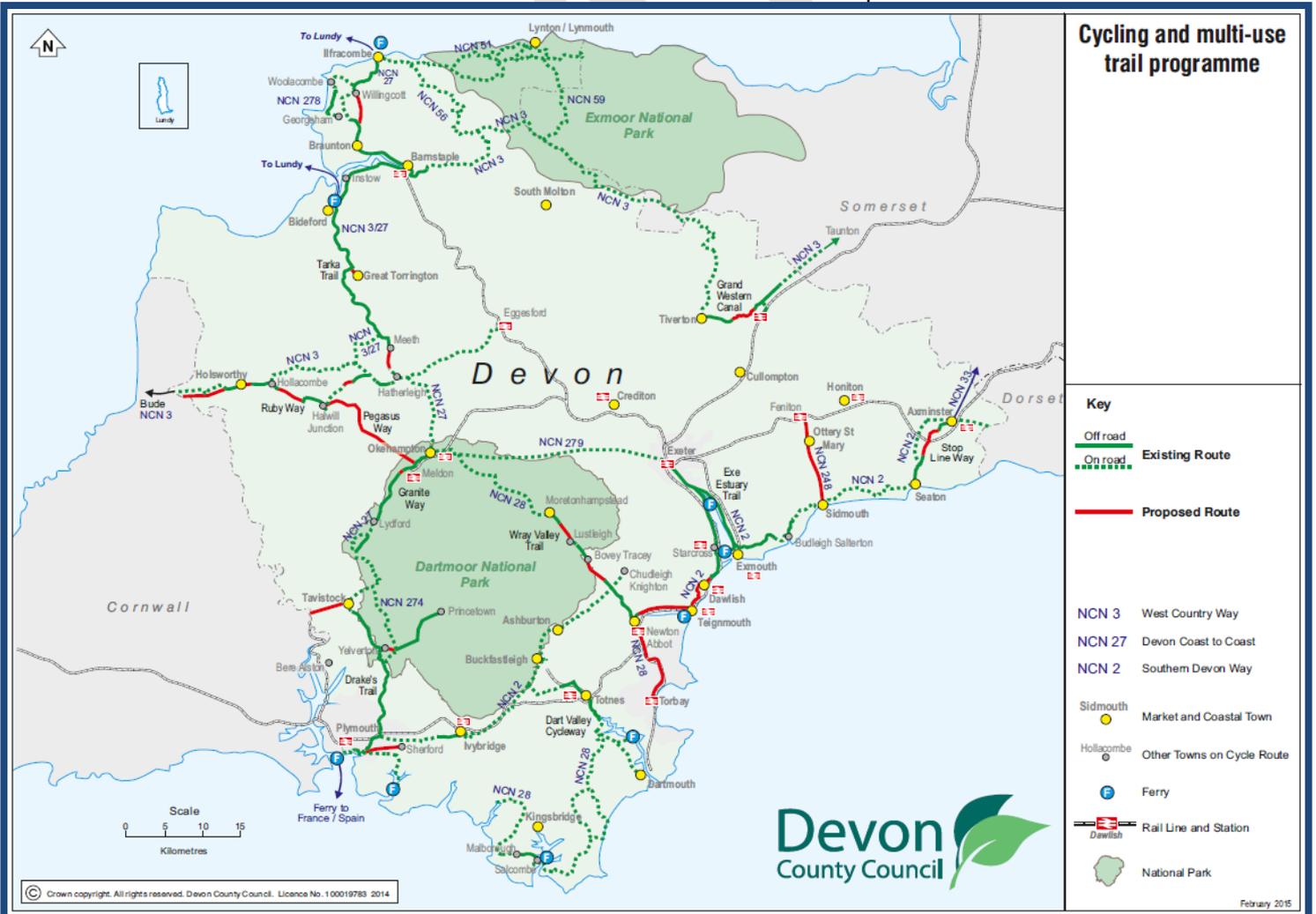


Figure 3: Rural and Leisure Cycle Trails

will be reduced revenue funding to deliver this in the future and we will be reliant on support from local communities and volunteers to promote these assets through the internet, developing town guides and through publicity at local events. It is also key that the networks are accessible to all people, are well signed and well maintained, subject to funding in times of severe budget constraints.

## Market and Coastal Town Networks

### **Aim 3: Influencing the planning process to enable delivery of cycle aspirations in market and coastal towns**

to ensure that cycle schemes are included in Local Plan infrastructure delivery plans so that developer contributions can be secured and new developments designed to create attractive walking and cycling environments.

A number of our Market and Coastal towns will also experience housing and employment growth over the next twenty years. The level of competition for funding both across authorities and across modes means that there is little scope for local cycle schemes to secure funding through the Growth Deal process. Schemes may however be packaged up with other Growth Deal schemes where it can be demonstrated that it unlocks significant levels of growth.

In general, cycle routes will be included in Infrastructure Delivery Plans linked to the Local Plan process and will be developed in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority. The County Council, in its highway authority role, will need to influence planning decisions and secure on-site delivery of quality walking and cycling routes to ensure that sustainable alternatives to the private

car are attractive to new residents. Off-site cycle network improvements are likely to require developer funding (S106 / CIL) to contribute towards design and delivery of the schemes.

Where local planning authorities have adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule, there are likely to be significant demands on this funding from other district, borough, city and county council infrastructure priorities - it may therefore be difficult for local planning authorities to agree to release funds for cycle schemes, which may be considered less critical infrastructure in the context of the Local Plan aspirations.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) enables local people and their accountable councils to produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities. From our day to day contact with communities it is clear that schemes will continue to be identified locally by the community and it is important that these are considered, recorded and encouraged. With pressures on funding, local communities should identify their walking and cycling needs through inputting to the Local Plan processes but also including proposals in their neighbourhood plans. This could ultimately secure funding (for instance through their share of the CIL allocation).

Cycle schemes should achieve an aspiration to improve walking and cycling opportunities by meeting some or all of the following objectives:

- support housing and employment growth
- completing links or provide a valuable connection to a route
- addressing safety concerns
- increasing opportunities for leisure and providing access for all

Schemes that can also provide match funding and have a good prospect of being delivered (e.g. have land ownership agreements in place) will also increase the likelihood of delivery. We will put in place guidance to help communities to develop their own 'local aspirational maps' to help define priorities in their local areas. This is currently a

practice adopted within DCC for delivery of Public Rights Of Way improvements. Communities may need to find funding (e.g. through Neighbourhood Plans) or deliver these initiatives themselves.

## Delivering the Strategy

The planning process will be integral to the delivery of the strategy and the County Council will continue to work with local planning authorities to ensure that routes and infrastructure are included in future Infrastructure Delivery Plans, linked to the Local Plan process. During the planning process for new developments, DCC will need to negotiate with developers and local planning authorities to secure contributions towards cycle schemes. We will also need to influence the detailed design and layout of new developments to ensure that more walking and cycle-friendly developments are developed, which encourage more sustainable travel.

DCC will continue to be proactive and innovative in its design, learning from best practice and sharing experiences with planners, engineers, safety auditors and using its expertise to influence decision-makers at the DfT and LEP. We recognise the safety concerns around cycling and will strive to overcome these barriers through positive road safety campaigns and education programmes aimed at encouraging greater respect and tolerance of all road users.

There will need to be a prioritisation of schemes, with a focus on schemes which are likely to gain support from the LEP. The prioritisation will need to consider how projects will help deliver economic growth and represent good value for money. DCC is also producing an overarching Transport Infrastructure Plan, which will set out all major transportation infrastructure schemes up to 2030. This will enable local planning authorities to understand when and where local contributions (e.g. CIL) may be required to support LEP grant funding and also enable designers to get schemes

to a 'shovel-ready' state. The ability to deliver a scheme, with design complete and planning and land secured will ensure that DCC can be opportunistic when funding becomes available.

Whether funding is secured through the Growth Deal or through other contributions, the County Council is likely to have a key role in delivering the strategic cycle schemes.

## Conclusion

This "Cycling and Multi-use Trail Network" strategy builds upon our existing strong ethos in developing a high quality network of urban and rural routes. Funding sources are reducing and becoming more challenging so we need to be clear on our objectives and outcomes. This strategy explains that these are focused on economic growth, health, leisure, access for all and providing sustainable options for travel.

The County Council will need to be targeted and selective about which projects it invests its design resources in. The lack of funding directly available to the County Council means that it will need to identify a range of funding sources that will help deliver the county's strategic priorities. This will include preparing bids through the LEP Growth Deal and ensuring that cycle schemes are included in Local Plan infrastructure delivery plans so that developer contributions (£106 / CIL) can be secured.

There is still considerable work to do to complete our existing rural network so we need to focus on this. Our experience has demonstrated the benefits of a high quality walking and cycling network, providing access to an outstanding natural environment. Our strategy is aimed at completing this network to deliver economic benefits for rural communities. We will also consult on future expansion opportunities.

The network will continue to be developed in key urban growth areas of Exeter, Barnstaple and Newton Abbot. This will focus on delivering high quality segregated routes, linking the main growth

areas to key employment, retail, education and leisure destinations and building on alternative routes to the main trafficked corridors.

In other Market and Coastal Towns, the network will be developed in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority. This will be linked to Local Plans, neighbourhood plans and funded by new development. We recognise communities will have aspirations to develop their own local routes. We will provide guidance to enable communities to achieve this.

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