

Who is funding the North Widnes active travel cycle route enhancement?

Design work has been funded by the UK Government/Active Travel England Capability Fund. Funding for the implementation phase has not yet been secured but Halton Borough Council (HBC) is seeking funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements Fund which is intended to improve active travel. The enhancements form part of the Liverpool City Region Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and align with strategic priorities to deliver significant benefits for the region. The improvements are being delivered and promoted by Halton Borough Council.

Who is designing the cycle route enhancements?

Flinders Chase have been appointed by Halton Borough Council to provide technical consultancy design services for the scheme. The appointment of further designers, contractors and their scope will be determined based on the individual schemes and required expertise.

Where will the cycle route enhancement be located?

The route runs north-south from the borough boundary with St Helens along Wilmere Lane, along a short section of Lunts Heath Road between its junction with Wilmere Lane and Birchfield Road and along Birchfield Road to Widnes Station. It provides continuity with a proposed scheme within St Helens to link the two towns.

The plans refer to a Cronton Lane scheme and potential for continuation along Lunts Heath Road, what is the status of these schemes?

These schemes are still under development and will be subject to a separate consultation exercise as funding becomes available (which has been secured through planning agreements as part of local developments). In the case of Cronton Lane this may consist of a shared cycleway/footway to the college and changes to crossing facilities and junction form and crossing points at Norlands Lane. Lunts Heath Road may feature new cycleways and pedestrian crossing points.

Why are the cycle route enhancements being proposed?

The cycle route enhancement proposals support the strategic needs of Halton Borough Council and will connect Halton residents and businesses with existing and future learning, employment, and leisure opportunities.

Improved connectivity will create the right environment for investment, resulting in more job opportunities for people in Halton and across the Liverpool City Region. Improved connectivity will also improve road capacity and make areas that are currently poorly connected more accessible, creating opportunities to improve the urban environment for local people, businesses, and visitors.

New and improved cycle routes will encourage residents and visitors to make more sustainable travel choices and help to improve the health and wellbeing of those who live, work and learn in Halton. Cyclists and pedestrians would benefit from safer, better-connected routes within Halton and to the town centre. The cycle routes will encourage and enable more people to get out of their cars, reducing the number of short car journeys made, which would, in turn, improve air quality and the health and wellbeing of the local community. Increased provision of safer cycle routes will provide opportunity for individuals who may find themselves in transport poverty, because of lower incomes and rising living costs.

Active Travel Enhancements: Design

What do the cycle route enhancements consist of?

Improvements to these routes will include the construction of new segregated and shared cycle tracks and improvement of existing footways. To improve safety and accessibility, upgrades may also include improved lighting, new traffic signals (Upton Bridle Path and Derby Road junctions with Birchfield Road), junction alterations including raised table crossings (raised sections of the road that are uncomfortable to drive over at speed) and new zebra and segregated signal-controlled crossings.

How will the cycle route enhancements benefit those walking?

The cycle routes all include areas which will include segregated and shared-use paths as part of the proposals. Physically separated infrastructure from motorised traffic and primarily segregated cycle tracks and pedestrian footways. This makes walking and cycling safer, especially in areas with high levels of traffic.

How will the cycle route enhancements benefit those wheeling?

The active travel enhancements have been designed to make active travel more accessible for every type of footpath user, including those wheeling. 'Wheeling' generally refers to those who use mobility scooters, wheelchairs, or other forms of wheeled aids, but can also include people walking with pushchairs. As such, proposals include segregated infrastructure, additional road crossings and speed reduction measures that should give people with reduced mobility, young children or those travelling with heavy shopping greater confidence to travel safely without the use of a car.

How will the cycle route enhancements benefit those cycling?

The cycle routes included in the enhancements have been developed to make cycling a more appealing travel option by improving connectivity to places of learning, employment, green space, retail and leisure destinations and existing transport infrastructure such as Widnes station. All cycle routes will be designed in accordance with LTN 1/20 "Cycle Infrastructure Design" and will also incorporate improvements to safety for vulnerable users. A large proportion of these routes are off the road and segregated from both pedestrians and motorists (these are considered the most useful interventions for motivating people to move from driving to cycling, according to cycling charity and custodian of the National Cycle Network, Sustrans).

Will these improvements cause increased congestion to the road network?

Any future development work on the enhancements will involve traffic modelling to assess the impact on the existing road network.

Economic Growth and Prosperity

What economic benefits will the improvements bring to the local area?

The enhancements have the potential to improve business efficiency, reduce people's travel costs and stimulate the local economy. The development of cycle routes will provide travel options that, for many, are safer, more convenient, and cheaper.

By decreasing the number of car journeys, participation in active travel can help to reduce the cost of congestion to the UK economy, which is estimated to rise to £25 billion per year by 2025. There is also considerable evidence that suggests active travel schemes represent good financial investments, making returns which range from £4-£19 for every £1 spent on them. Local businesses particularly benefit from improved walking, wheeling, and cycling infrastructure; previous examples have shown an increased customer footfall by as much as 20-40%. This is because people are much more likely to enter local shops as they walk, wheel or cycle by, unlike drivers.

The rising cost of living means that people have less money to spend on transport. In comparison, the costs of walking, wheeling, and cycling are relatively low or free. Increased provision of safer active travel routes would provide greater opportunities for the community, encouraging more people to work and spend their time and money, on the local economy rather than working or spending time and money in other larger cities/towns.

In the long term, the proposed active travel cycle route enhancements would facilitate future economic development by connecting people to projected housing development and employment areas. This would ensure that both current and future residents have meaningful access to sustainable travel and make Halton a more desirable place to live, work and invest.

Health

What health benefits will the cycle route enhancements bring?

Aside from the improvements in road safety and the reduction in road traffic accidents, increases in physical activity associated with the active travel elements of the programme have the potential to reduce people's risk of a range of diseases and health concerns, including heart disease, asthma, diabetes, and cancer. It is estimated that physical inactivity has direct costs of £1 billion and indirect costs of £8.2 billion to the NHS every year. The Local Government Association (LGA) reports that, if cycling rates were elevated to London levels across other UK cities, this would avoid at least 34,000 incidences of eight life-threatening conditions between 2017 and 2040. By reducing vehicle emissions, greater active travel can help to reduce the 28,000 to 36,000 early deaths each year caused by heart disease and cancer, which have been linked to air pollution and poor air quality.

Physical activity can benefit people's mental health too. Research suggests that just 30 minutes of daily exercise can almost halve incidences of depression and reduce stress. Exercise can even boost work productivity and has been linked to improved cognitive performance.

Environment

How will the cycle route enhancements affect the environment?

When compared to travel by car, active and public transport significantly or completely reduces travel emissions. The new travel improvements will help to contribute to the government's transport decarbonisation plan and [Halton Climate Change Strategy](#). The plan estimates that active travel can reduce between 1 million tonnes and 6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide across the country.

While the enhancements will contribute to an improvement in local air quality and help meet climate goals, we recognise that parts of the improvements may have a significant impact on the local environment. Any impact to the environment will be subject to detailed surveys and designs. We are working closely with environmental groups to ensure we avoid or mitigate any detrimental effects on the surrounding natural environment and where possible, we would try to find opportunities to enhance the local natural environment through the development of the scheme. We will share details of any proposed environmental mitigation measures with stakeholders and the local community as a part of the consultation.

Construction

When will the cycle route enhancement works begin?

This is yet to be confirmed but if implemented in the current funding period could be between 2025 and 2027.

Will roads be closed or disrupted during the delivery of the cycle route enhancements?

At this stage, we can't confirm if roads would be disrupted or closed during the construction of the cycle route enhancements.

Information on the works and any upcoming impact on the road network will be available on the Halton Borough Council webpage at the earliest opportunity.

Will the proposed new cycle route enhancements remove on-street parking?

The cycle routes are still in the development stage and are subject to change. The active travel public consultation seeks to understand local views on the proposed routes and their level of impact. The proposed routes have been assessed to minimise impacts but, where restrictions are necessary, where possible, we will limit the impact for on-street parking and seek alternatives. We will aim to engage any users of any facilities that may be affected.

Public Consultation Events

How can I give feedback on the cycle route enhancements?

We would like your thoughts on these cycle routes to understand your support for them, how much they would benefit you and how the current designs and routes can be improved to work for you.

There will also be two public information events in Halton where you can view the route proposals, give feedback, and ask our team any questions.

The public consultation events will be held on:

- Monday 3 June 15.30-18.00 Widnes Cricket Club, Beaconsfield Road WA8 9LA
- Wednesday 12 June 17:30-20:00 Cronton 6th Form College, Cronton Lane WA8 5WA