

Review of Cycling Infrastructure for Bath & North East Somerset Council

November 2014



**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**


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Introduction

This document is currently a DRAFT.

This document presents the findings of Sustrans' cycle network review of Bath and North East Somerset.

The information contained within presents:

- Key findings of the study
- Key recommendations of the study
- Results of consultation
- Recommendations for priority routes
- Maps of the complete proposed routes

This report has been compiled using information gathered from various processes. These are:

- Sustrans desktop study
- Direct engagement with informed local groups
- Online consultation via a mapping website
- Public consultation sessions
- Sustrans site inspections

Note:

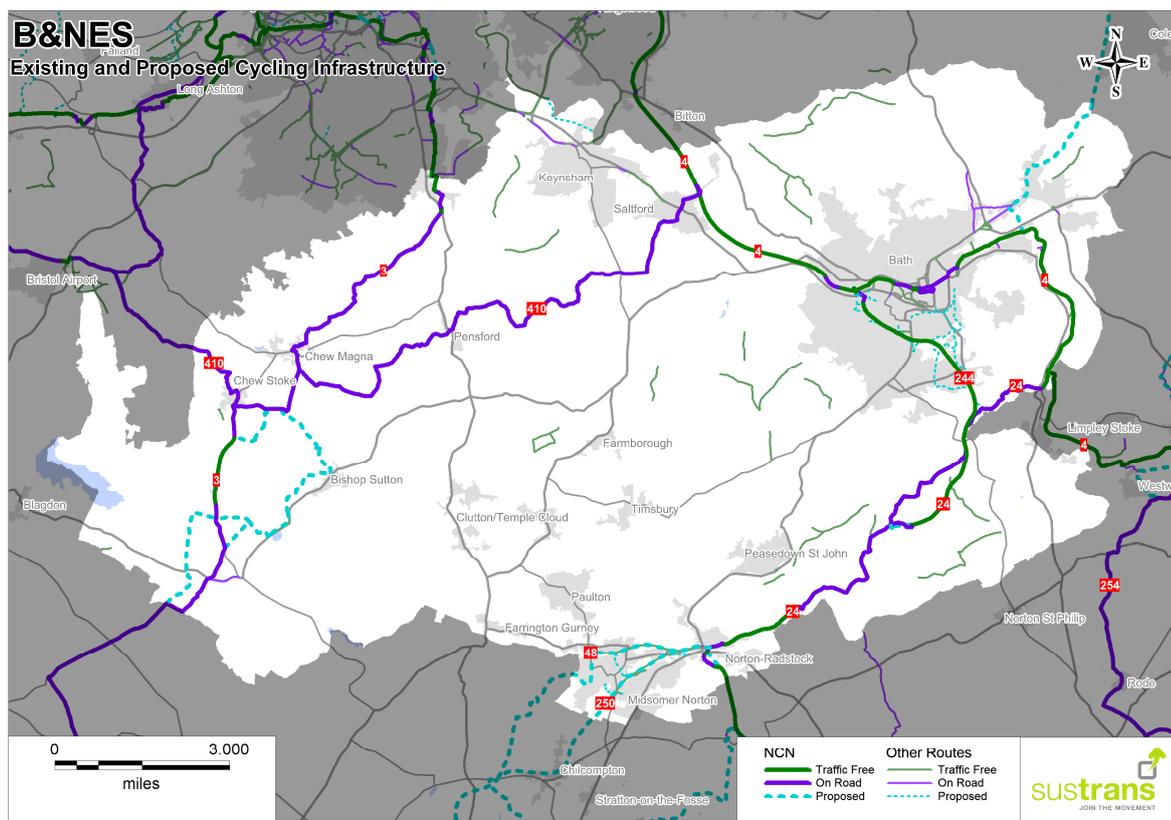
Quality

All of the schemes proposed in this plan are done so on the assumption that they will be delivered using existing best practice guidance such as LTN 1/12, LTN 2/08 and Manual for Streets 2. Wherever possible we have factored in sealed surfaced routes with a minimum width of 3metres with safe crossing of roads and junctions. Given the quality of infrastructure that BANES has delivered in recent years this should be easily achievable.

Land ownership

This report suggests potential opportunities for new or improved cycle routes. Suggestions have been gathered using Sustrans' own experience and from consultation. Many routes will require land negotiation and acquisition if they are to proceed. Inclusion of a route in this report makes no guarantee that a land acquisition process is underway or is intended to be started, simply that a potential route has been identified. In compiling this report Sustrans has made no contact with potential land owners.

Cycling in Bath and North East Somerset



The experience of cycling in BANES is not consistent. The quality of individual routes throughout the District varies significantly and can change dramatically within a short distance. There are a number of excellent routes that provide a very safe, enjoyable experience for cyclists of all abilities – these include the Bath Two Tunnels Route, Radstock’s Five Arches Greenway and the Colliers Way. The council has established a precedent for delivering high quality cycle facilities in the last ten years and should continue this, whilst striving to produce even higher quality, more ambitious projects.

There is significant scope to invest in improving existing cycle routes and conditions for cycling in BANES, particularly in the urban areas such as Bath, Keynsham and Radstock/Midsomer Norton and the communities around the Chew Valley. By creating a high quality strategic cycle network the council would continue to make conditions for cycling in the district safer, more convenient and more enjoyable.

Reported levels of cycling in BANES are already very encouraging. Over 6,000 people used the Odd Down Cycle Circuit within its first year of opening and the council’s Go by Bike programme has enjoyed great success with year on year increases in children cycling at participating schools from 7% to 30% (the national average for regularly cycling to school is said to be between 2% and 5%).

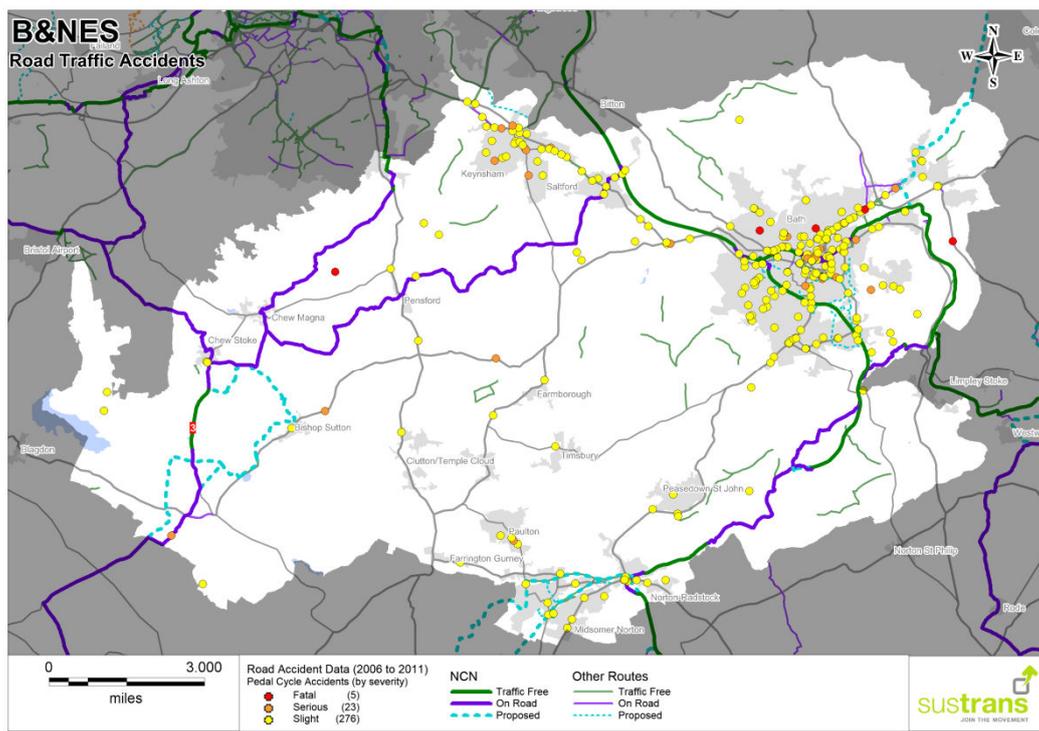
Continued investment in high quality cycle infrastructure would encourage more people to cycle more often. It would encourage more people to cycle to school, to work, to the shops and for their everyday journeys. This would be of particular benefit to people that are not already confident, capable cyclists. Research shows that only 4% of women cycle more than once a week.

Generally it is the existing long-distance routes that are found outside of the most urban areas (Colliers Way, Bath Two Tunnels or similar) within the District that are of the highest quality and offer the most consistency within a single journey.

It is the links within urban areas such as Bath or Keynsham that provide the least consistency and would benefit most from improvement.

Cycle collisions 2006 to 2011

2006 to 2011 Road Traffic Collisions data for BANES shows the majority of cycle collisions to be focussed on Bath, followed by Keynsham and Salford and then Midsomer Norton and Radstock. In this period there were in fact more reported cycle collisions in Keynsham and Salford (40 reported collisions) than there were in the whole of the District's rural areas (35 reported). During this period there were approximately 147 reported collisions in Bath, of which 4 were fatal. There was only one reported fatal collision outside of Bath during this period. This reinforces the need to improve cycle provision within the District's most densely populated areas.



Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

Consultation sessions identified a strong demand for new or improved routes from the communities within BANES.

- The highest demand was for a complete, circular route of Chew Valley Lake.
- A link to the Bristol to Bath Railway Path from Keynsham also scored highly.
- Upgrades to the Avon River towpath (linking Bristol to Keynsham) also scored highly.

These routes present both leisure and amenity value to their local communities.

The key recommendations of this review are as follows:

Investment should ...

- ... Focus on routes for daily, local, short distance trips. Investment should focus on improving opportunities for the short, useful, day to day trips that people within BANES need to make most regularly. Trips to school, to work or to the shops are typically less than two miles and are considered to be possible to be undertaken by bicycle or on foot rather than by car. Focusing on improving these trips within the most populated areas of the district will present the greatest potential to improve opportunities for existing cyclists and inspire those that do not currently cycle.

Sustrans' published research states that 11% of short car journeys are less than one mile and 29% are between one and two miles. Over a third of commuting journeys by car in the UK are defined as "short journeys", reportedly costing society £3.5bn a year.

- ... Focus on communities. Investment should be focussed on areas that have the highest potential for improvement. These are Bath, Keynsham, Radstock and Midsomer Norton and the Chew Valley Lake communities.
- ... Be allowed to be carried across subsequent financial years. Whilst infrastructure schemes can be delivered with a one year funding window, it takes a significant period of time to gain land and access permissions in order to deliver very ambitious routes. By allowing funding to be available for at least 3 years (and ideally more) the council will significantly improve the quality and scale of schemes that can be considered for delivery. This will also offer potential match funding partners significantly increased confidence and improve their likelihood to commit funds.
- ... Be complimented by measures to encourage and promote cycling. Whilst this report focusses on the delivery of infrastructure, the council should ensure that continued investment is made to promote the opportunities and benefits of cycling. This is something that BANES do well already through projects such as Go by Bike – this should continue and ideally compliment infrastructure projects.

This report should ...

- ... Be ratified by the Council. Formal approval and adoption by BANES is essential for the recommendations of this document to be achieved. This recommendation was supported by the Cycle Forum at its May 2014 meeting.
- ... Be integrated into policy. This will ensure that cycling is not considered in isolation but as a part of all future developments in the district. Cycling should not only be considered alongside transport infrastructure projects but alongside all developments, public realm improvement projects etc. For example, this report should be considered as the 'detail' behind the cycling element of the 2014 Bath Transport Strategy.

- ... Be reviewed on a regular basis. This report was compiled using evidence gathered in 2013/14. The District will see substantial growth in the immediate future with several large development projects planned. As BANES changes so too will the opportunities and priorities for improving cycling. This report should be updated annually to ensure that suggested schemes and their priority for investment reflect the current transport needs of the District. The report should then be rewritten in full in 5 years. Doing so will ensure that the council's strategy for cycling stays current and is able to react to the rapidly changing environment within BANES.

BANES council should ...

- ... Continue to deliver high quality infrastructure. BANES council already deliver high quality cycle infrastructure. This should continue, with best-practice standards used for all schemes.

Our experience in delivering routes throughout the UK shows that the quality of a route has an impact on the usage that it generates. Where we have upgraded existing routes to make them very high quality we have seen huge increases in the number of trips that they host. One particular scheme in the North West of England in Sale saw the upgrade of a towpath to a high standard, resulting in a 428% increase in cycle usage on the route.

Schemes should be delivered using existing best practice guidance such as LTN 1/12, LTN 2/08 and Manual for Streets 2. Wherever possible they should be sealed surfaced routes with a minimum width of 3 metres with safe crossing of roads and junctions.

- ... Ensure that communities are included in planning, delivering and celebrating new routes. The community can be a valuable asset to scheme delivery. Working with the community will ensure that routes are both well used and meet the needs of local people. It can also in some instances help to overcome challenges to delivery and even actually gain match funding. The Bath Two Tunnels route is an excellent example within BANES and one where the community raised significant funding for route maintenance and now regularly work on the route to keep it in good condition.

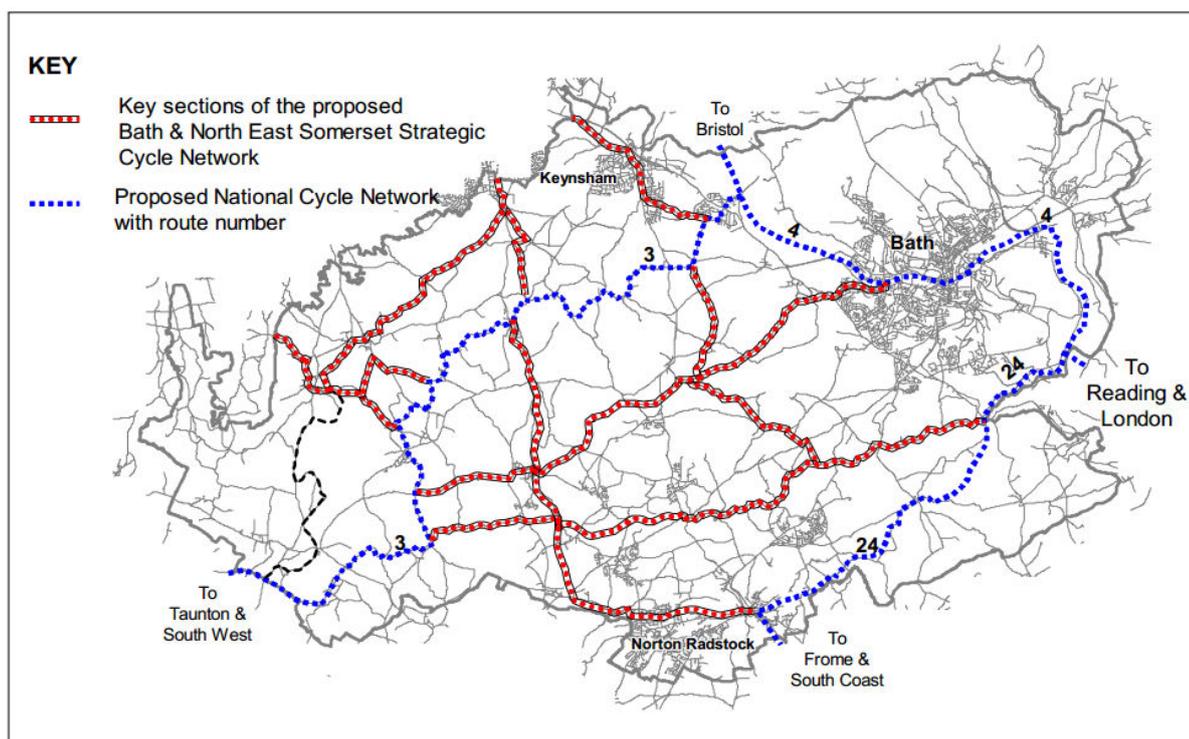


Background to cycling in Bath and North East Somerset

The council adopted a Cycling Strategy in 1998.

“The Council will whenever possible provide, or seek the provision of facilities which will encourage cycling as a means of travel in association with transport and development proposals ...Development will only be permitted if provision is made for secure cycle parking in accordance with the standards set out in the schedule attached to this policy.”

Development of the Council’s Cycling Strategy was continued with the publication of a draft Strategic Cycling Network in August 2000.



The 2002 Banes Local Plan reported that in 2001 22% of resident employees in Bath walked to work and that the council “wishes to encourage cycle use” reporting that “the proportion of work journeys by this mode increased in most of the urban parts of the District between 1991 and 2001 and in 10 wards this proportion is above the national average” and that “despite the hilly topographer there is considerable scope to increase the choice for this mode”.

Largely the ambitions of the proposed network have been achieved as of 2014. There is currently a comprehensive network of signed routes throughout BANES and each of the major settlements contain cycle provision.

The proposed network also sought to address long distance cross-district links which appeal to confident cyclists and primarily provide leisure value. This has been achieved through routes such as the Colliers Way, Bristol to Bath Railway Path, Kennet and Avon canal towpath and Two Tunnels greenway.

The most impressive and significant investments in cycling in BANES has occurred in the last 10 years with the delivery of a select number of high value, high profile routes. These routes provide value for both daily trips and leisure journeys and include:

- The Bath Two Tunnels Linear greenway
- The 5 Arches Midsomer Norton to Radstock greenway
- Various sections of the Chew Valley Route
- £910,000 spent on a new bridge at Batheaston
- £475,000 on a new shared use facility linking NCN4 to Bath Spa University
- £220,000 of investment on other cycle schemes throughout the district.
- Recent work to implement cycle improvements to Bath City Centre, including several contraflows

The Council's successes are not limited to infrastructure. A particular success is the 'Go by Bike' programme – a scheme to encourage cycling participation that has affected a 20% increase in cycling levels in participating schools.



Proposed schemes for investment and their prioritisation

This report recommends that investment in cycling improvements is prioritised on the following communities:

- Bath
- Keynsham
- Radstock and Midsomer Norton
- Communities around the Chew Valley.

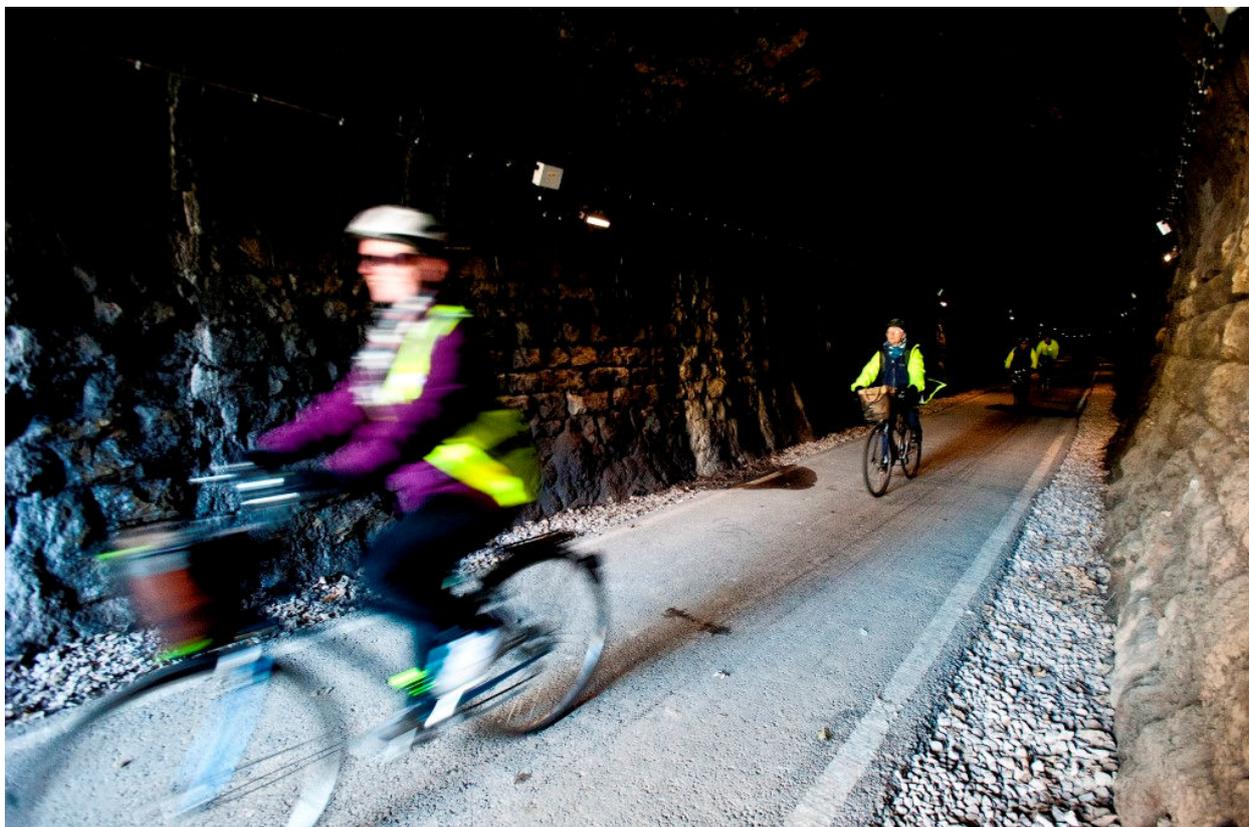
These communities have been chosen as they present the highest potential for improvement to daily journeys. Within the context of the district Bath, Keynsham and Radstock/Midsomer Norton are all densely populated, urban areas.

The Chew Valley communities are significantly less urban but present a concentration of communities, separated by short stretches of busy roads. There is a significant demand in the area to access Chew Valley School (1200 pupils) and Chew Valley Lake, which already has the basis of a circular route in place.

Recommendations include both brand new cycling routes and improvements to existing ones. Some schemes require the delivery of major infrastructure and significant investment whilst others are more modest and could be implemented more quickly with less investment required.

Each is intended to provide value in isolation but wherever possible to also tie in with other existing facilities or proposed routes to ultimately create a large network across the district.

Both the individual routes and wider network have been designed with people in mind. They are intended to make cycling safer and more convenient and to provide high quality routes that take people where they want to go for every day trips.



Method for selecting routes

Routes that have been proposed in this reported were selected on the basis of work that took place during November 2013 to May 2014. This process involved:

- A desktop study of conceptual desire lines
- A desktop appraisal of existing cycle infrastructure highlighting known opportunities for improvement
- Public consultation to assess existing provision and seek out new ideas. This occurred via an online mapping website and public consultation sessions
- Direct consultation with the local authority and informed local groups
- Sustrans site visits to assess the viability of schemes on the ground

Routes have been chosen for inclusion in this report and prioritised on the basis of the following criteria:

- The likelihood of them being delivered within a reasonable timescale and reasonable budget
- Their potential to encourage or improve daily journeys for cycling, particularly journeys under 5 miles
- Their potential to contribute to increasing the numbers of cyclists in BANES
- Their popularity amongst the community, measured through public consultation

Schemes have also been allocated approximate costs, based on the experience of Sustrans' Managers.

These costs are broad estimates only and are inclusive of design, land acquisition, construction and supervision. It is acknowledged that a more detailed costing process would need to be undertaken by BANES council as schemes are considered for funding.

Prioritisation of schemes for funding

Schemes were then assessed against our criteria for prioritisation. Those that were ranked highest are those that we feel should be prioritised for funding over all others. Whilst all of the schemes included are valuable it is the 'top priority' schemes that we feel really would stand the best chance of being delivered and make the most impact if funding was made available.

The full list of schemes that were investigated can be found within appendix A.

‘Priority’ schemes

A number of schemes have been highlighted as of the highest priority.

These are the schemes that we recommend should be delivered first and receive funding as soon as it becomes available. We have chosen these on the basis that they appear to best fit our criteria for selecting schemes (listed above).

These routes have been assessed in the greatest detail and an outline feasibility study included as an appendix for each.

<p>Bath (Appendix C)</p> <p>Kennet & Avon Canal widening and resurfacing (£200K+)</p> <p>London Road to Grosvenor Bridge Link (£200K+)</p> <p>Sion Hill link to Lansdown (£100-£200K)</p> <p>Weston Road Link (£100-£200k)</p> <p>Newbridge Hill link to Riverside Path (£200k+)</p>	<p>Chew Valley Lake and surrounding communities (Appendix D)</p> <p>Chew Stoke – Chew Magna (£200K+)</p> <p>Chew Stoke to Bishop Sutton (£100-200k)</p> <p>Chew Lake Circuit (£200k+)</p>
<p>Midsomer Norton and Radstock (Appendix E)</p> <p>Midsomer Norton Cross town link (£200k+)</p> <p>Waterside Westfield Link (Up to £100k or £200k+ depending on design)</p> <p>Radstock to Thicket Mead (re-surfacing, possibly lighting)* (£100-£200k with lighting, up to £100k without)</p> <p>Midsomer Enterprise park link (Up to £100k)</p> <p>Underhill Link (£200k+)</p>	<p>Keynsham ((Appendix F)</p> <p>Broadlands school western link (up to £100k)</p> <p>Coronation Avenue quiet way (up to £100k)</p> <p>Broadlands school eastern link (£100-£200k)</p> <p>Chandag Rd quiet way (£100-£200k)</p> <p>Bath Rd shared-use path (£200k +)</p>

‘Other’ schemes

Including Priority schemes, 62 schemes are recommended for funding.

These schemes were identified through consultation and assessment of existing conditions for cycling in the district. They cover a broad range of interventions and are all within or around the 4 communities identified as being the highest priority for investment, with the exception of one long distance inter-urban route (Bishop Sutton to Midford).

These schemes are listed in full in Appendix A.

These schemes have been allocated an approximate ‘score’ by our area managers based on the criteria listed above. This score provide each scheme with a prioritisation for funding and delivery.

It is recognised however that opportunities to deliver schemes may not arise in the order that schemes are prioritised and recommended that opportunities to deliver an of the schemes listed should be taken as they arise.

‘Quick Wins’

A small handful of ‘quick win’ schemes have been identified.

These represent schemes that are estimated to be deliverable for less than £100,000, do not require significant construction works and will not require significant permissions. They may not necessarily affect the highest impact on cycling of all our suggested schemes – they are intended to be deliverable quickly and with minimum difficulty.

It is recommended that these schemes are either delivered immediately or given priority when funding becomes available that must be spent quickly and with low risk.

These schemes are:

- Five Arches Greenway to College (Midsomer Norton and Radstock)
- Five Arches Link (Midsomer Norton and Radstock)
- Weston Road (Bath) ★
- Cam Valley Link (Peasedown St John)
- Sion Hill (Bath) ★
- Bath Road Shared use Path (Keynsham) ★
- Broadlands School link West (Keynsham) ★
- Bathwick Hill (Bath)
- Bloomfield Link (Bath)

Schemes marked ★ are also ‘Priority Schemes’. These are considered to be the best schemes in the study area that would have the highest impact on cycling. A scheme that is a ‘priority’ and can also be delivered as a quick win presents a very good opportunity for investment.

District wide recommendations

In addition to identifying specific cycle infrastructure schemes, this report recommends a number of 'district-wide' approaches are undertaken.

These measures will maximise the benefits of investment and greatly improve conditions for cycling. They will contribute towards creating a safe, enjoyable environment that encourages existing and new cyclists.

- **20mph limits** should continue to be introduced throughout BANES, as they have already done in Twerton, Peasdown St John, Newbridge, Weston, Landsdown, Kingsmead and Keynsham.

Limits should be created and enforced on all urban roads in the district. During consultation we were told that people felt comfortable cycling on quiet or rural roads, significantly more so than on 'normal' urban roads or on-road cycle lanes. Targeted traffic calming should also be considered on roads where the built environment doesn't support self-enforcing 20mph limits.

- **Cycle parking** should continue to be installed throughout the district, particularly in the communities highlighted in this study and around major trip-generators such as train stations, libraries or high-streets. It should be high quality, secure and located in well-lit and high trafficked areas. Major developments should ensure that cycle parking is delivered to a degree that will meet the potential demand for cycling and support future growth.
- **Mapping and signage** should be revisited for the whole of the existing network and planned in to all new cycle routes. Clear, high quality signage should be installed throughout the district and be complimented with interpretation boards at key locations and online mapping to help route planning. This will make the network easier to navigate, particularly for those who are less experienced or are visiting the district. Mapping and signage is currently delivered on a project basis, leaving a number of historic routes with the potential to be signed.
- **Reduction of speeds** on urban roads should continue to be considered alongside the proposed 20mph zones. Roads that carry potential cycle traffic should be considered for reductions to make for safer and more comfortable trips.
- **Chicane style barriers** should be removed from all routes and not considered for new routes. This will ensure that all users (particularly those using wheel chairs, push chairs, mobility scooters or non-standard bikes) are able to access and use routes.
- **Potholes** should be prioritised for repair on cycle routes. This will reduce the significant hazard that they present and greatly increase the perception of safety on routes. BANES council has reportedly repaired over 14,000 potholes since 2010 at a cost of over £10.5M, this should continue and focus on well-cycled routes.
- The authority should **continue to maintain all routes** to a high standard, ensuring that any areas that are in poor repair and can be addressed through maintenance alone are highlighted for improvement.

Consultation

Public consultation was a key process in assessing the existing provision and the prioritisation of links.

The purpose of this public consultation was to:

- Promote a sense of ownership of the proposed network amongst the communities within BANES
- Ensure that the proposed links are valuable for daily journeys and serve genuinely useful destinations via locally preferred routes
- Promote an awareness of the process and potential benefits of the proposed network
- Inform the process of prioritising links by asking communities which are the most important to them
- Build a picture of how the communities within BANES cycling in their area and what they need to help them to cycle more

Consultation was undertaken via the following methods:

- Discussions with local users groups
- An online mapping website
- 4 public drop-in sessions held in Chew Magna, Keynsham, Radstock and Bath
- Direct consultation with the Local Authority and informed local user groups

Some observations from consultation:

Almost half of all consultees expressed concerns over safety when cycling on the road, answering that they felt either "not at all safe" or "somewhat unsafe" when doing so.

Only 2 people of the total consultees said that they felt "very safe" cycling on the road.

65% of people consulted said that they felt "very safe" when cycling on traffic free routes, with no one saying that they felt "not at all safe".

Over 65% of people surveyed said that they prefer to use traffic free routes

Interestingly, people were much happier to cycle on quiet or country roads than they were to use on-road cycle facilities. 18% said they would be happy to use quiet roads, whereas only 8% said they would use cycle lanes on roads.

Approximately a 3rd of consultees were female, of those that responded over 60% said that they had concerns over safety which discouraged them from cycling.