

Corporate information: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs – Statistics at Defra

We publish national and official statistics relating to the environment, rural communities, food, farming and biosecurity.

End of the line for construction as A66 Keswick to Threlkeld trail is reopened

Its re-opening and improvement, which will benefit cyclists and pedestrians in particular, was made possible by Highways England's designated funds programme which covered almost half the £7.9 million project costs.

Bruce Parker, Highways England's head of planning and development for the North West, said:

As part of our ongoing commitment to giving cyclists and pedestrians a better deal along our major A roads network, including the A66, we were delighted to be able to provide almost half the money needed to restore and enhance the link between Keswick and Threlkeld. It is fitting that the route has re-opened today exactly five years after it was so badly damaged by Storm Desmond.

The route provides a much safer and far more pleasant alternative to cyclists and pedestrians using the busy A66 and we hope it is used and enjoyed for many years to come.

To mark the re-opening on Friday two local school children from Threlkeld and St Herbert's Primary Schools were the first through the Bobbin Mill tunnel which has been re-opened for the first time in nearly 50 years as part of the project to fully reconnect the route.

Monty and Holly both aged 10, were joined by the Mayor of Keswick, Paul Titley, Chief Executive of the Lake District National Park Authority, Richard Leafe, along with various other community and partner representatives for a socially distanced celebration.

The Keswick to Threlkeld Railway trail has been fully reconnected and enhanced, new picnic benches, seats and perches at viewpoints have been installed as well as new comprehensive on-site interpretation to fully tell the national park local history and heritage story of the trail and give information on local wildlife and flora and fauna. In 2015 Storm Desmond brought the worst floods the county has seen, with around 178.4 mm of rain falling in Keswick. As a result two of the original Victorian railway bridges that cross the River Greta and around 200 metres of path were completely washed away, Rawsomes Bridge was deemed unsafe and the well-used route between Keswick and Threlkeld was completely cut off.

As much as possible the Lake District National Park found some alternative routes but through feedback it was clear how important the route was to the communities of Keswick and Threlkeld, visitors to the area and to local businesses. As part of the design stage, a survey showed that the reconnection of the trail could be worth around £2 million to the local economy.

The extensive reconnection project has included:

- rebuilding and repairing 5 kilometres of the trail
- re-opening and extending of the Bobbin Mill railway tunnel
- construction of two new bridges
- extensive repair of a third bridge
- creation of 200 metres of brand new path
- work completed to stabilise the river bank along the way
- entire route being made more resilient to future flooding
- new on site interpretation project completed

Richard Leafe, Chief Executive of the Lake District National Park Authority said:

This has been the most ambitious construction project we've undertaken as a National Park Authority. It's taken five years to complete due to the scale, but we're thrilled to be able to reopen the trail on the anniversary of Storm Desmond. I'd like to thank all of our funders and project partners for their input and the local community for their initial fundraising and for their patience whilst the work was ongoing. I very much look forward to using the trail and seeing others make use of this fantastic safe, local route which provides a sustainable transport link between Keswick and Threlkeld.

A £7.9 million package was agreed to enable the project to go ahead and consisted of funding from the European Structural Investment Funds which supports innovation, businesses, low carbon activity to improve local growth and create jobs. Funding was also received from Highways England, Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership and the Lake District Foundation.

Jim Jackson, Chair of Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership's Investment

Panel, said:

We are delighted that with the assistance of a £300,000 contribution from the Local Growth Fund, the Keswick to Threlkeld Railway Path is set to reopen to the public. This much-loved route will strengthen the visitor experience and economic performance of the Lake District National Park. We're looking forward to seeing both Keswick and Threlkeld communities benefit as visitors enjoy the route once again.

Additionally the Lake District foundation led a fundraising campaign which was supported by the local community, with businesses, residents, visitors and organisations all playing their part in raising money through everything from duck races to online auctions.

Sarah Swindley, the Lake District Foundation's CEO, commented:

The community fundraising campaign raised an incredible £130,000. We were thrilled to have had so much support from the local community, businesses, residents, visitors and organisations; everyone played their part to make it happen. We would like to say a huge thank-you to everyone who donated during the campaign. We are looking forward to the opening this Saturday and for everyone to enjoy the new path for years to come.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Liverpool City Council: letter seeking written assurance](#)

A copy of the letter sent to Liverpool City Council on 8 December seeking written assurances, including on the steps the council has taken to improve governance and to ensure that the council is operating properly and in line with its Best Value Duty.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people to get extra education support

- Education and training programmes to help Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children catch up on lost learning
- Programmes backed by £400,000 investment to help over 100 children
- Tutoring, one-to-one support and expert guidance to help young people progress in education or find employment

Children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities will receive extra educational support under proposals outlined today (8 December 2020) by Communities Minister Lord Greenhalgh.

Evidence shows that children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds are among the lowest achieving groups at every key stage of education and are likely to have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, due to lack of access to public services and digital exclusion, which impairs access to online learning.

Backed by £400,000 government investment, over 100 children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities will receive extra tutoring, one-to-one support and expert guidance to help them progress in education or find employment.

The first of the projects will provide online 'catch-up' tutoring for a group of up to 80 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children to support their learning and tackle the attainment gap between these children and their peers.

The second will provide up to 30 young people who are not in education, employment and training in Derbyshire, London, Essex and Kent with access to targeted support and educational resources to help move them into further education or employment.

Communities Minister Lord Greenhalgh said:

All of the evidence shows us that members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities continue to face some of the steepest challenges in society, and the pandemic is likely to have increased these yet further, especially in education.

Children from these communities have been disproportionately affected by being out of school, which is why I am so determined to help them bridge the gap to their peers.

These important projects will ensure that vulnerable children have a fair chance in life and are given the opportunity to gain further skills and experiences to help them in education or in the workplace.

Pauline Anderson, Chair, and Yvonne MacNamara, CEO of The Traveller Movement said:

We are delighted to be able to support the development of this new programme, which will afford these young people opportunities that have not previously been available to them.

We will provide one-to-one tutoring catch-up to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children that have fallen behind on schoolwork due to the pandemic, alongside support for up to 30 young people not in education, employment or training to gain level two functional skills in Maths and English.

Michael Farrell, Interim Programme Manager of Open Doors Education and Training said:

We are really excited about this venture as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people have traditionally fared poorly in education league tables.

Programmes such as these are vital for ensuring young people are valued, supported and given opportunities to develop career prospects and access to further education and training pathways.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is leading the development of a cross-government strategy to tackle the inequalities and improve outcomes faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities across the country.

The Department for Education is also running a National Tutoring Programme, worth £350 million, which will increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people over the 2020-21 academic year.

This will help accelerate their academic progress and prevent the gap between them and their more affluent peers widening.

Lord Stewart of Dirleton QC sworn in as Advocate General for Scotland

News story

Lord Stewart of Dirleton QC was sworn in as Advocate General for Scotland at ceremonies in Parliament House, Edinburgh on Friday 4 December 2020.



Swearing-in ceremony at Parliament House. Credit: STV

Lord Stewart presented his Royal Warrant of Appointment, first to a bench of three Court of Session judges led by Lord Carloway, the Lord President, in the First Division courtroom and then to three High Court judges, again chaired by Lord Carloway, in Court Three.

Lord Carloway administered the Oath of Allegiance and the Official Oath and, after Lord Stewart had signed the official parchment, invited the Advocate General to take his seat at the table within the Bar of the Court, joining the Solicitor General for Scotland, Alison Di Rollo.

Lord Carloway, the Lord President, pointed out that while several new Senators of the College of Justice had been welcomed to the Bench under Covid conditions, Lord Stewart was the first Law Officer to “take the oath in this strange, but as now appears finite, era of physical distancing.”

Lord Carloway also said: “Lord Stewart’s transition from law to government reminds us that these two spheres of public life are not mutually exclusive. As the UK Government continues with the complex process of leaving the European Union and, in conjunction with Scottish Ministers, guides the recovery from the worst public health crisis in living memory, it is vital that it has access to authoritative legal advice on Scots law.

“That is something, with the benefit of a long career as a member of the Faculty of Advocates, that Lord Stewart is well equipped to provide.”

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