

# Clocking up cycle miles by pumping funding into coastal scheme

Since 2015, the Government company has invested more than £85 million towards the creation of 160 new and upgraded cycle ways across England, providing safe, attractive and accessible facilities for people to cycle for work, shopping and leisure.

Cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders will see more benefits over the next five years, with £169 million set aside in Highways England's new Users and Communities fund. The company is using the fund to improve services for users and neighbours of England's motorways and major A-roads, including increasing the options people have for sustainable travel.

In the latest initiative announced today, £1.3 million of funding will help create a path between Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon and complete the final part of the cycle route between Brean and Portishead in the South West.

Anyone currently wishing to cycle between the two towns has to negotiate a motorway junction and a busy A road. But the new section will remove those challenges and add to the mix of quiet lanes, dedicated cycle facilities and a crossing of the River Yeo on the route. It will also reduce the distance to travel between the towns by about four miles for people not in vehicles, and provide a vital link between existing routes.

Funding from Highways England has also realised safer journeys for cyclists around the A540 near Ellesmere Port in Cheshire, the A64 near Musley Bank and Tadcaster Bar and the M11 near London Stansted Airport, where cyclists commuting to the airport previously faced navigating the hazardous junction 8.

Up to 55,000 trips per year are forecast on the new coastal route and a significant number of those will be commuters who can leave their cars at home.

Chris Heaton-Harris, Cycling and Walking Minister, said:

Across the country there has been a surge in the numbers of people getting on their bikes or walking as part of their daily exercise, and I want to build on this with our recently announced £2 billion investment to create a green legacy.

This 24-mile coastal cycleway will provide a great space for cyclists, walkers and horse riders and help them boost their physical and mental health. Cutting the journey between Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon by four miles will also make this journey more accessible and help cut road traffic.

Steven Wright, Highways England's Users and Communities Fund lead, said:

We're committed to significantly improving safety across our road network, and the new and improved cycle and footpaths will make it much easier and safer for cyclists and pedestrians.

At Highways England, our work goes beyond operating, maintaining and improving roads. We're investing in the environment and communities surrounding our network, as well as the people travelling and working on it. We aim to address social and environmental issues and add real value to society.

We're delighted to be partnering with North Somerset Council to realise this project – a glowing example of how this funding can make life better for communities living and working near our roads.

Highways England manages four designated funds, allocated by the Government, to deliver benefits above and beyond building, maintaining and operating England's strategic roads.

From protecting the environment and enhancing the landscape around roads, to improving safety, reducing congestion, and supporting communities, the aim is to make a positive difference to people's lives.

Highways England has invested £1.3 million into North Somerset Council's £2.09 million project to create a new mile-long walking and cycling path between Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon, to the west of the M5.

The benefits will not only reduce traffic around M5 junction 21 and on the motorway, but also bring about a growth in the use of sustainable transport, improved air quality and a healthier society in general.

North Somerset Council executive member for transport Cllr James Tonkin said:

This funding from Highways England is fantastic news. Building a Weston to Clevedon cycleway is a long-held aspiration for the council, first proposed back in 1979.

It will give a quiet, safer route for cyclists, avoiding the busy A370 and M5 junction 21. It will be designed to accommodate disabled people and will have health and environmental benefits by encouraging an active lifestyle and reducing travel by car.

## **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.