

The Hub

Your supporter and volunteer magazine

Winter 2025 - Issue **47**

30 years of connection

Celebrating three decades
of the National Cycle Network



John Grimshaw on founding the Network - Page 5
Meet a winner of the British Empire Medal - Page 14
Pull-out day ride guide to the Network - Page 32





John Grimshaw

These routes speak to the history and culture of the people using them. The Network is a part of the ever-evolving history of our places, from the disused railways to the canal towpaths, it is a part of our heritage and our lives.

John Grimshaw, founder of Sustrans.

Welcome

A very warm welcome to the first edition of our newly branded Hub magazine. This refreshed format lets us share even more stories of how your support is transforming lives across the UK.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the National Cycle Network, so we are celebrating the individuals that rolled their sleeves up and built something truly incredible.

Like Sustrans founder, John Grimshaw, the visionary behind the Network, and those who continue to build, support and use this national resource.

Whether you walk, wheel, cycle, or champion the cause in other ways, thank you. With 2,000 volunteers, 25,000 donors, and 140,000 supporters, you're part of a powerful movement driving change from the ground up.

We hope every page reminds you of the difference you're making to our health, our wellbeing and our world.



© Jon Bewley

Cover image © Brian Sweeney

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30 years of a people powered movement

This year, we celebrate 30 years of the National Cycle Network. Three decades of connection, collaboration and community action.

From just 318 miles in 1995, the Network now spans more than 12,500 miles across the UK, carrying over 500 million walking, wheeling and cycling journeys every year.





The journey

The Network's roots go back to 1979, when a group of friends and volunteers transformed a disused railway line to create the Bristol and Bath Railway Path. It inspired a vision for a UK-wide network.

In 1995, John Grimshaw and the team secured one of the National Lottery's first major grants - £42.5 million to build 2,500 miles of routes.

When Meat Loaf handed over the cheque live on television, it marked the beginning of something extraordinary. That investment united councils, partners, donors and volunteers behind a shared vision. Transforming a grassroots idea into a national movement.

We will always be grateful to the National Lottery for believing in this vision and helping bring the National Cycle Network to life.

To mark this milestone, we sat down with John Grimshaw, Sustrans' founder and engineer at Greenways Cycleroutes, to reflect on the. and explore his hopes for the future.

"We started as Cyclebag, campaigning for sustainable transport, paths for everyday journeys on foot or by bike. Our ambition was for every town to have a traffic-free route embedded in its community. We've come far, but there's still more to do.

"One early memory that makes me smile was of some locals who complained about being woken at 3am by singing. I tracked down the culprit, a railway guard walking to work who claimed to be the tallest in Britain. He stopped singing before the dawn chorus, but it showed the path was part of people's lives, which is exactly what we wanted. Community involvement has been vital. When people feel ownership of something, they care for it. The Network is a patchwork of local pride and effort.

"The Network still gives people safe, attractive routes to walk, wheel, or cycle. But we're not finished. We need it to be as recognised as the National Highway Network is, walkers and cyclists need to be recognised as a key part of the transport package.

"I've loved this work. It's been a privilege. I cycle these paths and worry about every mile of them, but to know they're used by thousands of people, that's what they are there to do and that feels wonderful.

"The job now is to get that message across to the government, so that they can see that these routes are a vital part of our future. Ultimately, I want to pick up a newspaper and read about hundreds of local groups taking action, trying to achieve the routes they want, with Walk Wheel Cycle Trust supporting them."

The success of the National Cycle Network is the story of countless people whose passion and collaboration made lasting change. It stands as a testament to the power of community and the belief that ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things.





© Michael Kelly

30 Years of support: Charles' story

As the National Cycle Network turns 30, we meet Charles, one of our longest-standing supporters.

? When did you first hear about Sustrans?

"It was 1982, from a colleague who said he'd just heard of this great new charity. He explained what you did, and I joined. I've been a member ever since. It seemed like such a brilliant idea to develop this cycle network. To connect up cities across Britain by cycle routes. What's not to like, really?"

? Why do you continue to support?

"I still think it's a really good idea, but maybe for different reasons. Back then, we weren't thinking about climate change or our health, but now we are.

"I've never been interested in sport, but I am interested in keeping fit by ordinary, everyday activities. I have an electric bike now. They're so wonderful. You see a lot of older people on electric bikes. They allow more people to be able to move.

"Cycling should be incorporated into your everyday life. It's just part of getting around. If the distances are right, it can be a habit, instead of the bus or car. But there has to be the right infrastructure to support that."

? Can you tell us more about your incredible journey post-retirement?

"When I retired, my wife asked me, 'what's the next project then?' I thought, well, I'll cycle on an electric bike. And it just struck me that I could visit all the places I've lived and worked around the UK, of which there are a lot. So, over the past two years, I've been doing this very long intermittent cycle in one or two-week legs.

"If you're by yourself, you tend to meet more people, but my family were of the very strong opinion that there was no way I was going by myself. It was very nice to have one of the children, my wife, or a friend with me for the journey.

"I've finished that now. I started in Norwich and went down through Essex, London, then to Southampton, Winchester, up to Oxford, Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield, the Lake District, Edinburgh and Orkney. About 1,600 miles. It was by far the most ambitious cycle ride I've done."

Thanks to continuous support from all our regular givers, like Charles,, we can plan for long-term projects with the knowledge that we have supporters like him behind us. If you would like to set up a regular gift, please contact our Supporter Care Team, or sign up now on our website. www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/outsidere

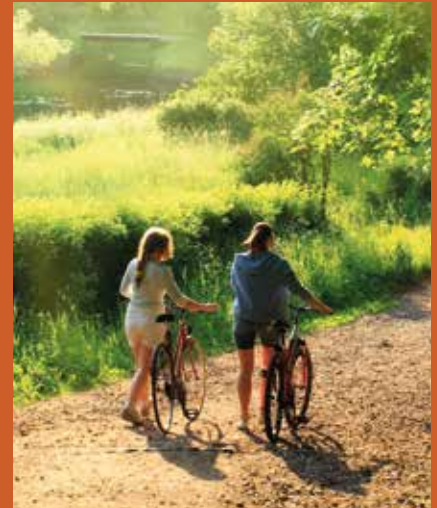


Let's get outside!



Regular donations, like Charles', mean we can plan ahead and deliver longer-term projects. This is vital for the kind of work Walk Wheel Cycle Trust does, developing large-scale infrastructure changes and evidencing the impact of walking, wheeling and cycling to influence policies to push those changes further.

Join us and become a Walk Wheel Cycle Trust Outsider today. By signing up with a £5 monthly donation you'll be helping to preserve the treasured resource that is the National Cycle Network.



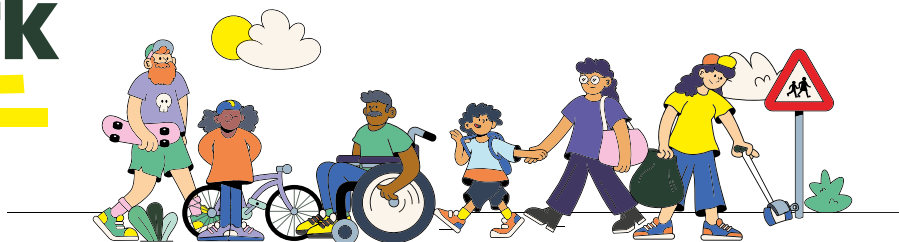
Whether you're out for an adventure, a fitness challenge, or want to spend time surrounded by nature, here's what you can expect for **£5 a month:**

- ✓ a special welcome pack to help get you outside
- ✓ regular emails packed full of information, tips and advice
- ✓ cost saving tips for enjoying the outdoors
- ✓ a few surprises along the way.

Sign up at www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/outside



News from the Network



Northern Ireland

Inspiring teacher wins award

An inspiring primary school teacher in Co Down has been named Active School Travel Champion of the Year.

Jonny Hall from Kilcooley Primary School in Bangor won the award for inspiring positive change. He organises bike buses, walk-to-school days and leads charity cycles. His energy and commitment are contagious to the students and parents around him.

A standout moment for him was leading a group of P7 pupils 15 miles from Bangor to Belfast to deliver food items to a homeless charity, combining community care with the joy of movement.

Jonny said, "The real reward is seeing our students grow healthier, happier, and more connected. **Encouraging physical activity in school is about more than fitness - it's about building strong relationships and fostering a sense of belonging.**"

Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins said, "I am delighted that my department has been able to support the Active School Travel Programme."

Jonny's story is a reminder of our personal power to inspire others, when given the support.



Cymru

The importance of resurfacing

Over 429,000 walking and cycling trips are made each year along a popular stretch of Route 5 in North Wales, part of the Wales Coastal Path.

But the uneven surface was proving challenging for wheelchair users, families with prams, and people with limited mobility.

So, this well-loved section of the Network will undergo vital resurfacing and improvements this year.

Anthony Jones, Network Development Manager, said, "This is a very popular route by an important ecological site here in North Wales, so we need to ensure we're doing everything we can to ensure the route's quality and accessibility for everyone."

There will be a celebration of the completion of the project including led walks and rides.

Mae eich hwb nawr ar gael yn Gymraeg.
Darganfyddwch fwy...



Your Hub is now available in Welsh. Discover more...

www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/welsh-hub

Will you help maintain and improve the National Cycle Network today?

A donation of just £5 could help create more stories like these. Donate today at www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk//DonateHub and you could help create spaces which empower people to choose active travel for their everyday journeys.



England

Making heritage accessible

A cobbled area outside the historic 16th-century Temple Newsam House had long posed a challenge for visitors, especially those using wheelchairs, prams, or bicycles. As part of a new route, we were commissioned to find a solution.

Working closely with heritage experts and landscape architects, our teams designed a 400-metre path that honours the estate's rich history while ensuring it is open to all. The solution was to carefully grind down and re-lay the cobbles to create a smooth, accessible surface that preserved the heritage of the site even as a new path was created.

"It was the first time we'd attempted to make an accessible surface over cobblestones," said Jim Yeoman, Network Development Manager.

Visitor Cath Kendall, whose husband Dave is a wheelchair user, said: "It's fantastic, it's so much easier to use".

The project, in Leeds, also saw the installation of a new signalised crossing and clear signage, connecting the estate to National Route 66 and making active travel safer and easier for all.



Scotland

Reclaiming the coast

A new traffic-free path in Ardrossan, North Ayrshire, has replaced what was previously a very poor on-road section of the Route 753.

"Ardrossan used to be a thriving wee town. It's lost that. And it needs something to bring some energy back into the place." Chris, Ardrossan local resident. This new route is the first step in the regeneration of the Ardrossan Coastal Quarter, a major development that will include homes, businesses, and a new education campus.

"I find it quite peaceful and calming," said Harry, a pupil at Ardrossan Academy. **"I like cycling along the beach and this path helps with that. I'll use this path quite a lot, more so when I'm at my gran's because it's just over the street."**

The route also links directly to Ardrossan Harbour train station and ferry terminal, meaning these improvements will help local people access sustainable transport options for longer journeys, without needing to drive.

With your support, we're helping communities like Ardrossan rediscover their spaces one step, pedal, and push at a time. Developed in partnership with North Ayrshire Council and funded by the Scottish Government.



© Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Designing spaces for people and nature

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust landscape architects are helping to reimagine how we move through our towns and cities.

We asked Jon Rowe, Head of Landscape Architecture, to tell us why he and his team are designing climate-resilient spaces for people and nature.



Jon Rowe,
Head of Landscape Architecture,
Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

As a landscape architect, I see my role as bringing the needs of people, places, and nature together. It's about more than the quickest way to get somewhere, it's about designing spaces that solve a problem, and creating spaces that people enjoy.

The joy for me is when we can find a way for multiple solutions to work together - when a street becomes greener, safer, and more connected, all at the same time. In practice, this means working with engineers, ecologists, and communities to design places that are not just functional, but vibrant, resilient, and alive.

? How do we achieve that?

One of the most powerful tools we have is Green and Blue Infrastructure, using planting (green) to manage water (blue), while also creating beauty, shade, and habitats for wildlife.

Examples of this are rain gardens, trees, and permeable paving, which might sound small, but they have a big impact, such as reducing flooding. Thousands of litres of rainwater can be captured in these systems and used for growing, instead of going into our overstretched sewers. And it is about offering people a chance to connect to nature on their journey, especially at a time when our streets and public spaces often feel

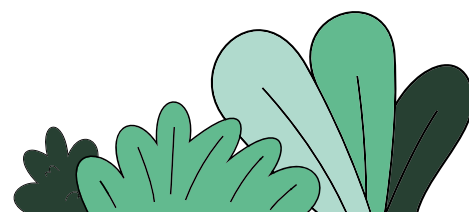
dominated by traffic.

Creating climate-resilient, people-focused spaces is not the work of one profession alone though. Landscape architects, engineers, ecologists, planners and urban designers all bring different skills, but the real impact comes when those skills are combined.

? Why choose to work this way?

We are living in the middle of a climate and biodiversity emergency. That can feel overwhelming, but I believe change is possible. Every street, every park, every active travel route is an opportunity to do more: to store rainwater, to plant more trees, to give people healthier, greener spaces. As designers, we have a responsibility to look beyond the short term and create places that thrive over time.

When people, nature, and communities are considered together, the result is always stronger. It's about longevity and joy. And that's what keeps me passionate about this work, the knowledge that thoughtful design can make life better for both people and the planet.



Photography
competition winner, Ian

Taking it slow



Winning photo



You might be looking at the sunrise, but the light could be changing what's behind you. Take in the moment. Look around. Sit down for a couple of minutes.



Ian



Many people have special moments out on the National Cycle Network.

For Ian, it was the perfect lighting in autumn, when he revisited a section on National Route 7 to get the shot that won him the National Cycle Network photography competition. He described it as "serendipitous".

Ian had first cycled the Hownsgill viaduct, where the shot was taken, 15 years prior as part of a charity Coast-to-Coast ride going from west to east. He recalls that, during the final stretch, his wheel became dislodged.

Some of the other cyclists helped Ian find the right tool and they all waited to complete the challenge together, finishing with a triumphant dip in the sea.

For Ian, this photo is more than a beautiful scene, it is a reminder of an incredible achievement and the camaraderie he experienced along the way.

For anyone thinking of exploring with their camera, his advice is simple: don't wait. "Take whatever camera you've got, on your bike or on foot. And remember to look behind you as well as ahead – sometimes the best view is the one you almost missed. Sit for a moment, breathe it in. These are the memories that brighten your day when you're working, or unable to be outdoors."



The Network isn't just a series of routes – it's a living gallery, a place to learn more about nature, and to share those memories.



Ian



Volunteering highlights

Find out what our inspiring volunteers have been up to this year.

Mark



Volunteering for Walk Wheel Cycle Trust is vital for my wellbeing.

Mark

Mark's exploration of the Network and wildlife in Scotland

Mark in Glasgow travels round Scotland by bus to litter pick on the Network, reaching as far as the Cairngorms and Aberdeen.

Along the way, he also removes graffiti from signs and records wildlife sightings.

Earlier this year, Mark spotted his first red squirrel along National Route 7 between Boat of Garten and Aviemore.

He has been involved in Action Team volunteering for over a year and noticed a real boost to both his physical and mental health. "Volunteering for Walk Wheel Cycle Trust is vital for my wellbeing.

"It is such a pleasure to walk and litter pick on the National Cycle Network, being surrounded by a diversity of landscapes, flora and fauna."

You can find out more about Action Team volunteering on page 15.





Ruth

Supporting more school children to cycle

In North West Wales, Ruth has been supporting children in schools to learn to ride and to care for their bikes.

Leading puncture repair sessions, one-to-one learn-to-ride sessions, and organised bike rides, she loves seeing their faces and watching their confidence blossom.

"It's been amazing to watch our Year 2 and 3 children learn to ride bikes - many for the very first time. This wouldn't have been possible without Ruth." Teacher, Mrs Williams, said.

Her patience, encouragement, and passion have made a real difference to our pupils, and we're so grateful for her time and dedication.

Mrs Williams, Teacher



Adam and James

Young people take action

Brothers Adam and James have been volunteering since October last year as part of their Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Each week they've been out maintaining their local path, the Phoenix Trail near Oxford. They clean graffiti on signs, pick litter and clear vegetation.

For the two brothers, it's all about helping others enjoy their local Network, and they can really see the difference it makes. James says:

"It's nice knowing that a bit of selflessness and time has helped people. Animals enjoying the habitat that you helped preserve, people having fun on the trail you helped to maintain, it makes you appreciate the work you do and feel proud of your accomplishments."



Philip and Gary

Reclassifying and re-signing the Network

Philip and Gary have been key to the reclassification of almost 1,000 miles of Network in Northern Ireland.

As part of our work to make the Network safer and more accessible, sections needed to be removed or reclassified. So, to support this work, volunteers Philip and Gary collaborated with local teams reviewing maps, identifying remaining routes and heading out to re-sign them. During these trips, they encountered unusual or outdated signage and updated these too.

Caring for the Network and inspiring others to get active, takes a national effort and we couldn't do it without the dedication of volunteers like Philip, Gary, Ruth, Adam, James and Mark. Thank you.

Interested in volunteering?

Head to our website to find out ways that you can support more people to walk, wheel and cycle.
www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/volunteer





British Empire Medal winner

Twenty-six years of volunteering

Chris has been awarded a British Empire Medal for his outstanding dedication to the local community through volunteering.

Since 1999, he's been a passionate Walk Wheel Cycle Trust volunteer, first leading a group on National Route 2 in Chichester for 11 years, and continuing as a committed member for the past 15.

Chris also campaigns for safer routes, working with his council to make them happen. Thanks to his efforts, National Route 2 along Littlehampton and Bognor Regis promenade was recently extended.

"Chris is a brilliant example of how volunteers often wear many hats and use their skills, passion, and persistence to drive real change in their communities" said Katie Aartse-Tuyn, Volunteering Director.



What's Chris's next goal?

Transforming a 9.5 mile stretch of disused canal near Chichester into a greenway. "It would join massive sections of housing together to stations and to schools. I'd love to see that," he said.

Chris is working to see an even more connected network of routes. And with more connection in miles, comes more connection to our health, our wellbeing, our world.



©Rafael Bastos



A quiet observer of a gentle world

Maxine's decade of exploring wildlife on the Network



For the past ten years, Maxine has championed wildlife along National Route 76 in East Lothian through a journey of discovery and learning.

Armed with field guides and a keen eye, Maxine has recorded over 4,000 sightings of birds, plants, insects, amphibians and mammals. She walks through all seasons helping build a vital record for conservation research and route development.

For Maxine, the path always has something to offer, "In spring, violets and primroses are along the tiny streams. In summer, the liquorice smell of sweet cicely and the sound of bees on the willowherb.

"In autumn the 'hips and haws' of dog-rose and hawthorn shine among the brambles and the winter trees give a clear view to fields where roe deer often feed."

Maxine's dedication hasn't just enriched her own life, her records, verified by experts and shared with conservationists, help ensure our green corridors support both people and wildlife.

Often stopped by curious passersby, Maxine loves to share the importance of nature on the Network. "I feel part of this scene - a quiet observer of a gentle world," she reflects.



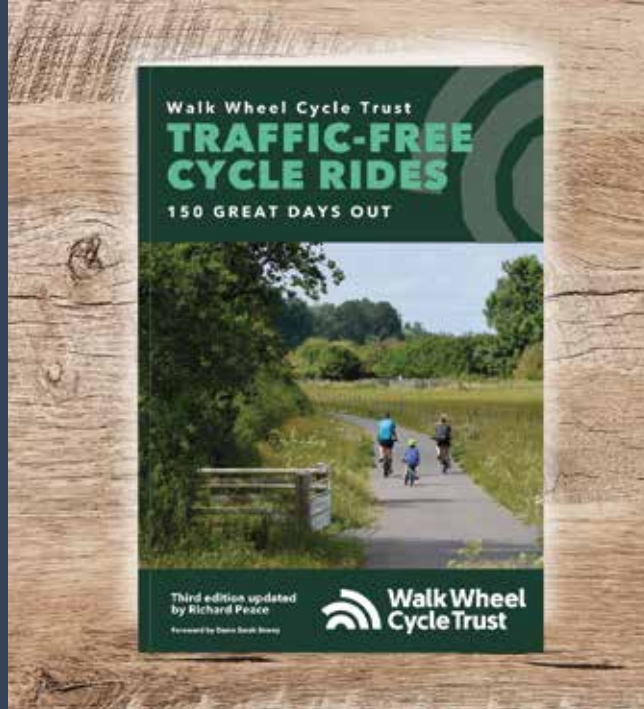
Inspired by Maxine's story?

You can take action too. Action Team offer a variety of one-off tasks, events, and opportunities that fit your interests and schedule. Go to www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/volunteer to find out more.

All images ©Michael Kelly

Shop

Prepare for your winter adventures with our Traffic-Free Cycle Rides Guidebook or find the perfect cycling gift.



Get 20% off our shop*

T&Cs apply

Shop now at
shop.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk

*Discount code is one-use only. Exclusions include Traffic-Free Cycle Rides Guidebook, Ortlieb products, Beeline products, Sponsor A Mile, Donations. Cannot be combined with any other offer.



Crossword answers:
(Across) 1. Howmsgill 5. Phoenix 8. Green 9. Canal (Down) 2. Kilcoolley 3. Shamrock 4. Singing 6. Cicely 7. Grind 10. Three 11. Fell

Explore the National Cycle Network with a Saddle Skedaddle holiday.

Ready to book your next holiday? Here are Saddle Skedaddle's top picks from the 12,000+ miles of the National Cycle Network. Each promises an unforgettable cycling adventure, curated by experts:

- **Way of the Roses** - a beautiful coast to coast route through Lancashire and Yorkshire
- **Coast to Coast** - a fun challenge ride from Whitehaven to Tynemouth
- **Caledonia Way** - an epic west to east ride through the dramatic Scottish Highlands.
- **Hadrian's Cycleway** - a gentler 'coast to coast' route through Cumbria and Northumberland

Saddle Skedaddle has been running cycling holidays for 30 years, offering guided or self-guided tours with all logistics like accommodation, luggage transfers, and bike hire taken care of.

Book your National Cycle Network holiday with Saddle Skedaddle and support the Network.

Saddle Skedaddle donate 5p to Walk Wheel Cycle Trust for every mile ridden on one of their tours on the Network. This has added up to more than £62,000 for Walk Wheel Cycle Trust.



**Scan the QR code or visit.
www.skedaddle.com/uk
to find out more.**



Peter won the Saddle Skedaddle Giveaway in our last edition of the Hub and is looking forward to a holiday on Hadrian's Cycleway next year. He said:

"This route has been on my radar for a while. It is just going to be so much easier with the directions from Saddle Skedaddle and the transport out to the west coast."





© Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Why working with young people matters

Children and young people want to play a bigger part in our communities. Speaking to them today has been so valuable.

Adult participant, Children's Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Summit

We are on a mission to make it possible for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle. To help achieve this, we held our first Children's Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Summit.

Walk, Wheel Cycle Trust invited 40 children, aged between nine and thirteen into discussions with decision-makers, policy experts, and industry leaders about the barriers that children face when travelling and how we can address them together.

An adult participant told us, "Children and young people want to play a bigger part in our communities. Speaking to them today has been so valuable. It's really made me think and I travel home inspired and energised!"

What was discussed at the summit will contribute to the Children's Walking and Cycling Index and be presented to the government.

A decline of walking, wheeling, and cycling journeys to school since 2022 has sparked the need for a change in how we, as a sector, work.

So, sponsored by Halfords, the index report turns the spotlight onto the next generation of active travel champions.

One part of a larger puzzle

Other Walk Wheel Cycle Trust projects like FRideDays, Big Walk and Wheel, and School Streets are also a part of this movement.

School Streets

School Streets are creating safer school streets on main roads. An example of this is timed closures outside schools, which create safe spaces to gather, and encourage travel by foot, scooter, or cycle.

halfords

SCHWALBE



All images © Sustrans

The Big Walk and Wheel

This is the UK's largest inter-school walking, wheeling, scooting and cycling challenge. It inspires pupils to make active, sustainable journeys to school, arriving ready to learn, while creating a safer environment around school. Almost 3 million journeys were counted, 2,759 schools registered, with 873,460 pupils taking part this year.

FRideDays Bike Bus

This year we saw the largest ever FRideDays Bike Bus take place in Cardiff. FRideDays Bike Buses support children to cycle to school in groups enabling many more children to travel actively. They help children establish sustainable travel habits and enjoy all the mental and physical health benefits of travelling actively. Sponsored by Schwalbe Tyres UK

Together, we're building a people-powered movement for a future that puts people before cars. To make that future truly inclusive, we need both adults and young people to see themselves in it, and feel empowered to be part of the change.

Scan the QR code to download your free Bike Bus toolkit, or visit www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/bikebus





©Alan McAteer

Transforming Mobility

Putting the voices of disabled people at the heart of transport planning

This year, Walk Wheel Cycle Trust launched the Transforming Mobility report in parliament.

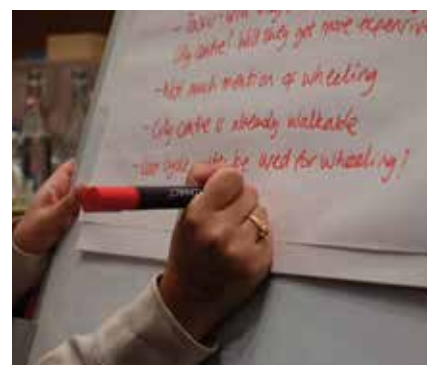
The report highlights the need for disabled people's voices to be part of shaping transport systems, especially as cities undergo huge transformative changes.

The parliamentary launch was opened by Laurence Turner MP and the personal stories in the report helped demonstrate the need for change and brought insight, urgency, and humanity to the recommendations made. It's incredibly rare for MPs to remain engaged for a full hour, so to have them stay for the whole event shows just how powerful the session was.

This work builds on the work done by Disabled Citizens' Inquiry, and is part of our wider commitment to make active travel for everyone, by enabling disabled people to help design and review transport projects from the start.

This launch was a true cross-team effort, and a moment of real influence. We're now working to share the report with local authorities to help turn these ideas into action.

This report was launched in partnership with Transport for All and funded by the Motability Foundation.





Ben's story of independence

For Ben, cycling isn't just a way to travel, it's an expression of his independence

On his bike he is confident, comfortable and happy. Ben has Aspergers and uses the Network's traffic-free paths to cycle around 22 miles a day to and from his job.

"He leaves at the same time the bus would, but gets there under his own steam, sometimes even beating the bus," Ben's mum, Heather, told us.

When Ben started cycling to work, there was no bike parking. With support from his workplace, he lobbied the council and got free bike stands installed.

This has given other people the opportunity to cycle into work too. Unlike Ben, they had the option to drive, but now the bike parking is there, a couple have chosen to start cycling in.

Cycling has transformed Ben's life. It builds his self-esteem, helps him manage his mental health, and gives him a sense of belonging.

"When he's on his bike, he fits in." says his dad, Rowan.



Ben

"It's something he can do that not everyone can, and that gives him a real boost."

But his journey has also had a profound impact on his family. "As carers, seeing Ben happy, fit and independent makes our job easier," says Heather. "It's good for him, and it's good for us."

Ben's parents campaign locally for better infrastructure and are working to extend their local traffic-free path so more people, like Ben, can experience the benefits of active travel.

His story reminds us that building infrastructure that is truly for everyone, benefits everyone.



Since cycling to work, he is less likely to get depressed. He feels a lot calmer, like he can take more things in his stride. Cycling is his main route of independence and he loves his independence. He can ride his bike to ours, to the shops, to work. For him, his bike is as valuable as any car.



Rowan, Ben's Dad





©Chandra Prassad, Sustrans

Got your own winter tips?

Share them with fellow supporters on the National Cycle Network Facebook group and use #HubWinterTip



©Chandra Prassad, Sustrans

Winter cycling tips

Some of you reading this might be seasoned all-weather walkers, wheelers and cyclists, but for those of us a bit more skeptical about the outdoors in the chilly months, here are some tips for making the most of winter.

Be prepared

Lights, waterproofs, good shoes - the list of gear for winter exploring can feel like a barrier to getting outside, so we will focus on just one, tyres. Wider or knobbly tyres help with grip and if it's icy, try studded ones. If you don't have other tyres, consider lowering your tyre pressure for better traction. Mountain or cyclocross bikes handle winter best, but whatever you ride, take extra care and don't put yourself at risk.

Make it exciting

Plan your next adventure with nature in mind. Before you set out, find out what wildlife you could spot along your local route or keep your eyes and ears out for chance encounters. You could spot bats at dusk, kingfishers by rivers, or rare red squirrels.

Call a friend

Cycling with a friend makes journeys fly by. You could even set a regular time to meet each week. Don't miss out on this opportunity to connect, check in and share a laugh.

Treat yourself

Warm up with cake, chips, or a cosy meal, you've earned it.

What is inspiring us?

Podcasts to connect you with the outdoors this winter.

We are all for unplugging completely when out in nature and immersing ourselves in the birdsong, people chatter, or just the wind in the leaves. But, for those times when we can't get outdoors easily, podcasts offer a portal to new places and can inspire us to get our boots or helmets on and get out into it. We asked teams across the charity what they are listening to that is keeping them inspired.

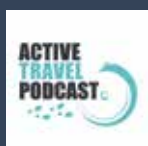
Make sure you are using all of your senses to keep yourself safe when cycling.



Wild about Wellbeing, Wildlife Trust Podcast

Join Rob Gordon and Dom Higgins as they talk about all things to do with nature and health.

They discuss eco-anxiety, the fear of the impact of climate change and explore the topic, looking at strategies for cultivating positive mental health habits, and in particular looking at what you can do to tackle it and keep hope in your heart for a brighter future.



Active Travel Podcast

Brought to you by the Active Travel Academy at the University of Westminster, this podcast brings together expertise in transport and urban studies, architecture, sociology and politics, media studies, business studies, and health and wellbeing. Some of the leading voices in the field discuss knotty issues around air pollution, climate breakdown, inactivity, road injuries and deaths, access to transport and independent mobility in childhood and at older ages.



Streets Ahead

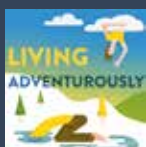
A podcast dedicated to all things cycling, walking and wheeling, in the UK and beyond. Each episode, Laura Laker, Ned Boulting and Adam Tranter discuss the news and views in the fast-paced world of active travel and urban planning in a jargon-free safe space. mobility in childhood and at older ages.



Folk on Foot

Join Matthew Bannister on his travels across the UK and Ireland in this multi-award-winning podcast.

Listen to top folk musicians perform in the landscapes that have inspired them with this unique blend of live music, storytelling, and beautiful natural soundscapes.



Living Adventurously

Living Adventurously, with Alastair Humphreys, is the story of ordinary people choosing to live extraordinary lives. Alastair interviews artists and chefs, students and pensioners, athletes and travellers. He wants to discover what living adventurously means to different people, what universal obstacles stand in the way, and how each of these people took the first step to overcome them and begin their own fascinating journeys.



I have always found cycling to be an adventure and love having my friends and family accompany me en route.



Graham



©Rafael Bastos

More than miles

A story of friendship on the Network

A long-time volunteer, Graham got in touch to tell us about his journey to the Network, which started 4,000 miles away, on a charity ride in Cuba.

"It was back in 2002, just a chance conversation on a charity bike ride. That's where I met Alice, a Sustrans volunteer from Totnes, as well as Bill from Reading and Jaana from Finland. We just struck up a rapport and it was the starting point for my life with the Network and three very good friends.

"After that first trip, Alice organised a reunion ride along the Camel Trail (National Route 32), and soon we were meeting up every year to tackle more of the Network. From the Devon Coast to Coast (National Route 27) to Lon Las Cymru (National Route 8), we cycled through some of the most stunning parts of the UK.

"I also cycled from Lands End to John O' Groats via Ireland which my wife nicknamed the "Shamrock Route".

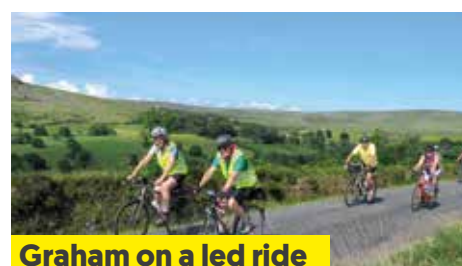
"I joined Sustrans as a volunteer ranger in 2009 and started leading rides around in my local area, introducing new riders to the joy of cycling. Whether it was a two-mile family pootle or a 50-mile challenge, these rides were about more than distance, they were about building confidence and having fun.

"Even now, with a leg injury slowing me down, the Network is part of my life. My trusty touring bike might be resting in the garage, but the memories of crossing the River Erme at low tide, of children riding behind the Tour of Britain, of the cuckoos in the Hebrides are still there."

The National Cycle Network is more than a series of paths - it connects us to each other and the world around us.



Crossing the River Erme

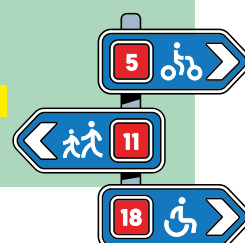


Graham on a led ride

The Network took me to exciting places away from busy roads, and no matter where I went, it was the same beautiful, well-chosen routes that I could trust.



Graham





David on the hills above Keswick



Climbing towards Helvellyn



©Rafael Bastos



I have been supporting Sustrans for over twenty years now. This is my first time raising money for them in this way though and it felt more important than ever...



David

Challenge event fundraising

Raising money for Walk Wheel Cycle Trust was about more than pounds for David

David shares his story of fundraising for Walk Wheel Cycle Trust by completing the Great Lakeland challenge.

The challenge

David ran 78km over three days in the Lake District, as part of the challenge. Accompanied by five friends, all encouraging one another. Strapped with equipment for the day, they camped each night and then they would pack up camp and hit the hills again. It was a real test of endurance, but he was proud that he did not give up.

The support

David was overwhelmed by the incredible support for his fundraising efforts, nearly doubling his goal of £1,000, raising £1,800 as we go to print.

After 22 years of supporting Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, this was David's first time fundraising, and people's generosity reminded him that this was also a chance to spread the word about Walk Wheel Cycle Trust.

David supports Walk Wheel Cycle Trust because it reflects his passion for staying fit and finding ways to address climate change. He regularly runs and cycles on National Route 221 bordering the Basingstoke Canal, and feels lucky to have a peaceful place that connects him to nature and fresh air.

David hopes his efforts will inspire others to fundraise for Walk Wheel Cycle Trust. Every pound raised and every person who learns about our work helps us grow and protect the over 12,500 miles of Network for future generations.



If you've got a challenge event planned for next year, why not turn it into something even bigger with our 30 for 30 fundraising challenge celebrating the National Cycle Network?

Fundraise for Walk Wheel Cycle Trust and let your journey make more journeys possible. Get in touch with our Supporter Care team for any advice and support on how to start your journey today or head to our Just Giving page to find out more.



supporters@walkwheelcyclustrust.org.uk

Cycling LEJOG in memory of a beloved friend

Friends came together to embark on a cycle trip stretching the length of the nation in memory of their friend, Tim McKenna, who lost his battle with mental health.



Anna with Lorenzo and Mark

All images ©Anna Hughes



Tim and Anna



Tim

It felt like an escape from my problems and my mind. When I was out on the bike I didn't dwell on the past or worry about the future – everything was in the now.

Tim Mckenna

The 1,000 mile ride from Land's End to John o'Groats was set up by Tim's friend, Anna Hughes, to pay tribute to the life of her dear friend, who adored cycling.

The group covered around 50 miles a day over 20 days of pedalling along sections of the National Cycle Network.

For Anna, the adventure brought her even closer to her memories of cycling with Tim. She said:

"The ride was an emotional as well as a physical challenge, with certain stretches bringing very vivid memories of our friend Tim. He loved touring in the UK, and especially loved Scotland, so it was very poignant to ride there in his memory.

"The National Cycle Network was a brilliant guide for almost our entire journey, starting with National Route 3 which miraculously found the flatter routes through Cornwall."

Anna wanted to stay true to the essence of Tim's relaxed approach to cycling.

She explained: "Tim was very much 'take all your kit with you, it doesn't matter where you stop, see how you feel' – and I wanted to keep to the spirit of that."

Tim inspired people the length and breadth of the UK with his cycling journeys.

Anna Hughes

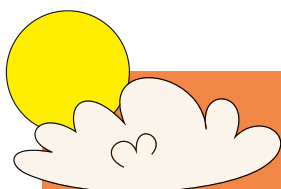
The group has raised over £8,000 to be split between Walk Wheel Cycle Trust and two other charities, including a mental health charity.

Tim, who Anna described as a wonderful man, had bipolar disorder and would regularly go out on his bike to help manage his mental health.

Tim was open about his mental health struggles. As part of an online blog about his mental health and cycling, he wrote: "I bought myself a cheap road bike and started to cover longer distances. Before long, cycling became something I really looked forward to.

"It felt like an escape from my problems and my mind. When I was out on the bike I didn't dwell on the past or worry about the future – everything was in the now."

If you would like to donate, please go to Anna's fundraising page at: www.givewheel.com/fundraising/6774/ride-for-tim



If you've been affected by any of the themes in this story, you can reach out to Samaritans' 24/7 helpline on 116 123.

Powered by People: 30 Years of the National Cycle Network





Past



Present



Future

For 30 years, the National Cycle Network has transformed how people move, explore and connect across the UK. It is all thanks to the unwavering support of you, our donors, volunteers and partners.

What's next?

With your help, we're building a future where walking, wheeling and cycling are safe, joyful and accessible for everyone.

Over the next five years, we have four priorities for improving the Network:

- Making routes safer and more accessible for everyone.
- Greening the Network to boost biodiversity and climate resilience.
- Empowering communities to shape and care for their local spaces.
- Connecting people and places by linking paths to homes, schools and public transport.

But the Network is just one part of our wider mission.

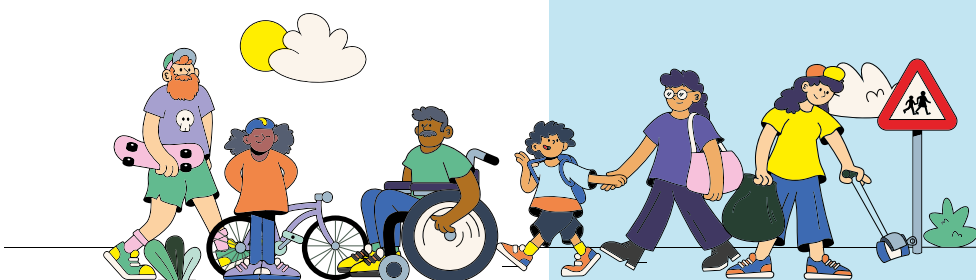
Across the UK, we're working with communities to create local change and using that momentum to influence national policy.

We're helping families walk, wheel or cycle to school, and ensuring new housing developments are designed with active travel at their heart.

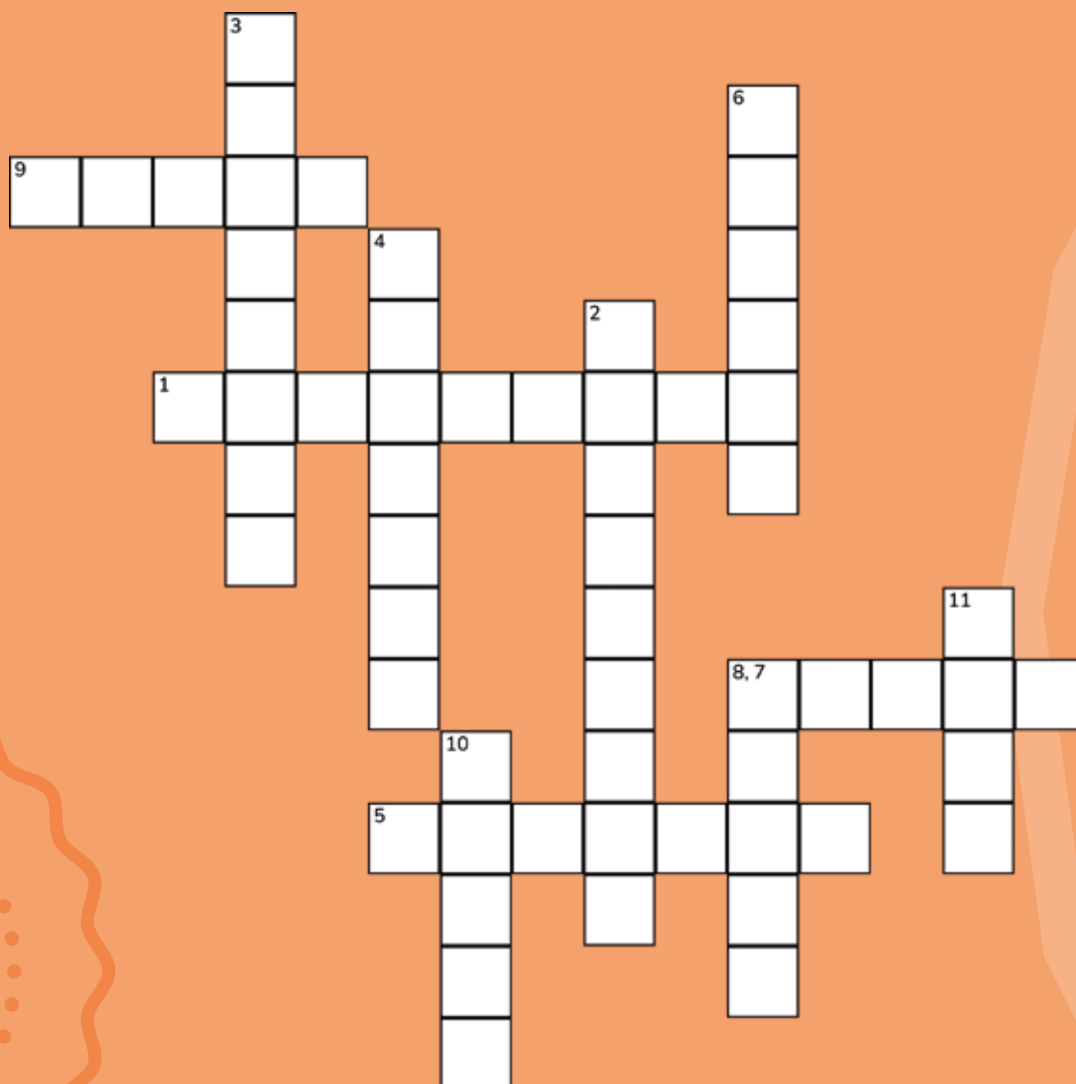
This is a people-powered movement.

And it's powered by you.

Thank you for helping shape a healthier, fairer, more connected future.



Crossword



Across

1. What was the name of the viaduct pictured in the winner of the National Cycle Network photography competition? (9)

5. What trail do Adam and James volunteer on as part of their Duke of Edinburgh awards? (8)

8. Name one of the types of infrastructure that landscape architects can use to create climate-resilient spaces? (4)

9. British Empire Medal winner, Chris is looking to transform what kind of path into a greenway? (5)

Down

2. What school does the teacher who won the Active School Travel Champion of the Year award work at? (9)

3. What was the nickname given to the Lands End to John o'Groats via Ireland route in Graham's story? (8)

4. What was waking people up at 3am on the Bristol to Bath path when it opened? (7)

6. What does Maxine love the smell of in summer? (6)

7. What did we do to the cobblestones at Temple Newsam to create an accessible surface? (5)

10. _____ million journeys were counted in this year's Big Walk and Wheel. (5)

11. What type of race did David partake in to raise nearly £2,000 for Walk Wheel Cycle Trust? (4)

(Answers can be found on Page 16)



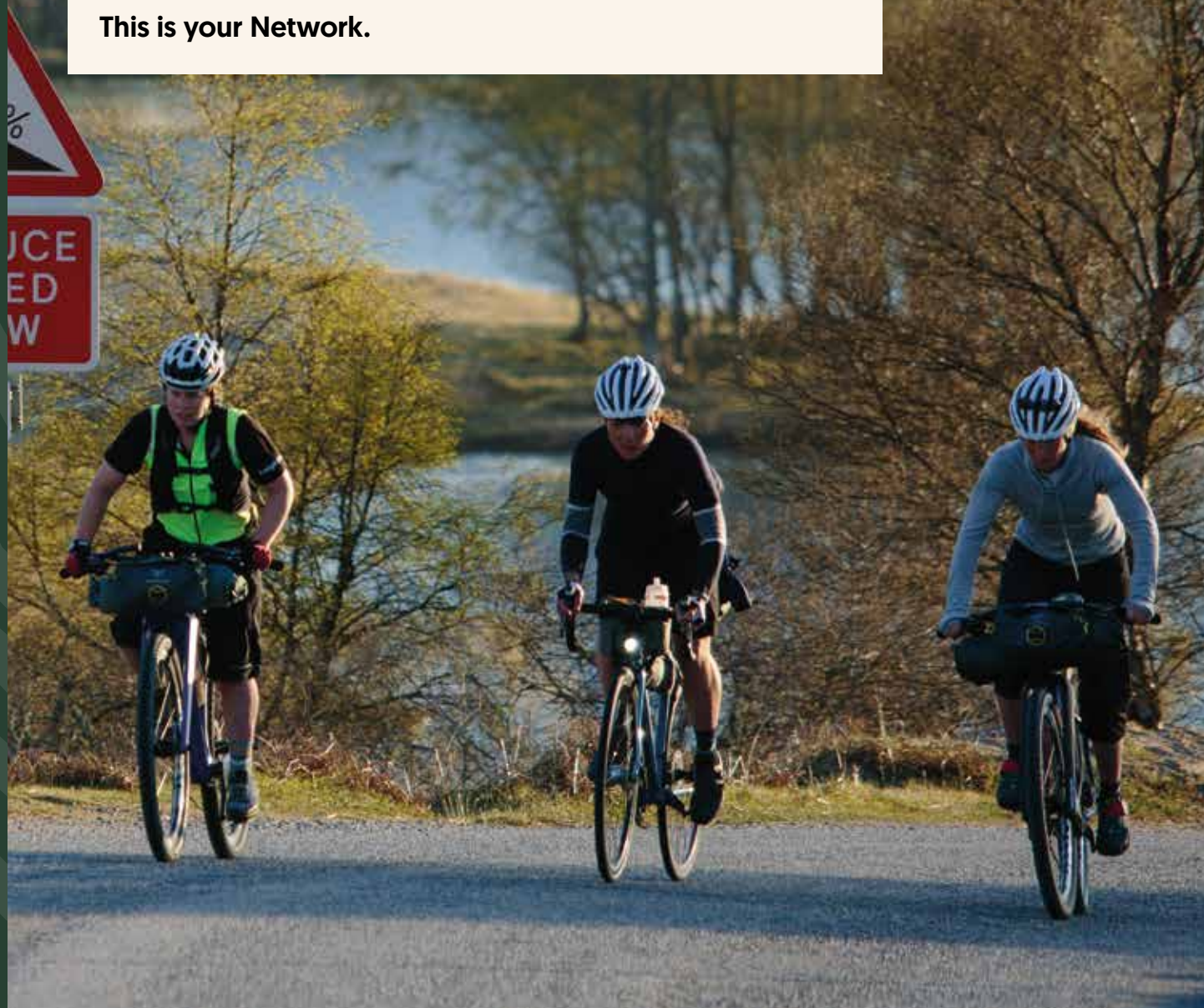
Your next day out on the Network

You've just read about the incredible people and stories that make up the National Cycle Network. You are a part of it too. Your stories, your journeys, your favourite spots are what make it special.

This map is here to help you discover a new corner of it. A fresh path, a different view, a day out to create more memories. Whether you walk, wheel, or cycle, there's always more to see. Hidden corners, new gems and unexpected moments, what will you discover? Take the map, plan your day, and get out there.

And when you do, we'd love to see it. Share your photos and moments from your day out using #NetworkDayOut and tag @WalkWheelCycleTrust.

This is your Network.



Start / Finish: Crowborough train station, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 2JR

Description: From Crowborough to Heathfield, this scenic loop takes in the best of the East Sussex Weald, combining rolling countryside, leafy lanes, and a stretch of the traffic-free Cuckoo Trail. With some hills and road sections, it's best suited to confident leisure cyclists. This is a varied and rewarding ride, with plenty of chances to stop and soak up the scenery.

Directions

Turn **right** out of Crowborough Station and then **right** on Western Rd. Turn **left** on Hadlow Down Rd and then **left** on Steep Rd. Follow the road until it ends, turn **right** on Castle Hill. When this road ends, turn **right** on Dewlands Hill. Turn **left** on Stonehurst Ln towards Mayfield. When you reach a crossroads with a school road sign, turn **left** away from the sign. When you reach the A267 turn **left** and then immediately **left** again onto Horleigh Green Rd. Keep **right** - the road becomes Fir Toll Rd / Route 21. Cross the A267 onto the signed shared-use path, then turn **right** onto Station Rd following the sign for the Cuckoo Trail. Continue following the signs for Route 21 until you reach a **right** turn onto an off-road path signed Heathfield. This becomes Marklye Ln. Cross the A265 onto Tower St and then turn **right** onto Downsview. At the end of the road **zig zag left right left** onto Highcroft Cres, then turn **left** on Gibraltar Rise and **left** onto Station Rd. On your right you will see a car park with a Cuckoo Trail sign, please enter the trail here. Continue on the trail until near Maynard's Green - you will come to a small green bridge with a path to your **left** going down to the road under the bridge. Take this and turn

right onto the road passing under the bridge. When you reach West Street Ln turn **left**. Continue straight and cross the A267, then turn **right** when the road ends at a T-junction (no sign). Stay **left** at the road triangle, then turn **right** following Hanging Birch Ln towards Cross in Hand and Heathfield. Take the next **left** towards Cross in Hand, then turn **right** on Back Ln. Turn **left** in front of the gated property, then turn **left** on Whitehouse Ln. Follow the road until you reach the memorial cross and turn **right**. Continue **straight** on crossing the B2102, then when the road ends turn **right** following the sign for Hadlow Down. Bear **left** towards Hadlow Down. At the fork stay **left**, then continue straight on. Turn **left** onto Fordbrook Hill, then **right** onto Burnt Oak Rd. When this road reaches a five-way junction, turn **right** towards Crowborough. Turn **right** on Walshes Rd, cross over the tracks and turn **left** on the B2100 / Crowborough Hill. The train station entrance is on your left.

© Ian Chamberlain



Call of the Cuckoo

A short stretch of this circular ride joins the **Cuckoo Trail**. A traffic-free path rich in heritage, wildlife, and springtime folklore.

The trail follows the old **Cuckoo Line** railway between Polegate and Heathfield and forms part of **National Route 21**. It's named after the tradition of releasing the first cuckoo of spring at Heathfield Fair. A signal that winter was over.

Today, the trail is loved by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Look out for quirky sculptures, old mile markers, and railway heritage along the way. In spring, you might even hear a real cuckoo calling through the trees or see a carpet of bluebells blooming in the shaded woodlands.

Along the way

- Stop for coffee and cake in **Mayfield**, a picturesque village with historic charm.
- Glide through nature on the **Cuckoo Trail**, a peaceful, tree-lined path along a former railway.
- Climb through the **Wealden Hills** for views across the countryside.

Get 20% off maps and guides

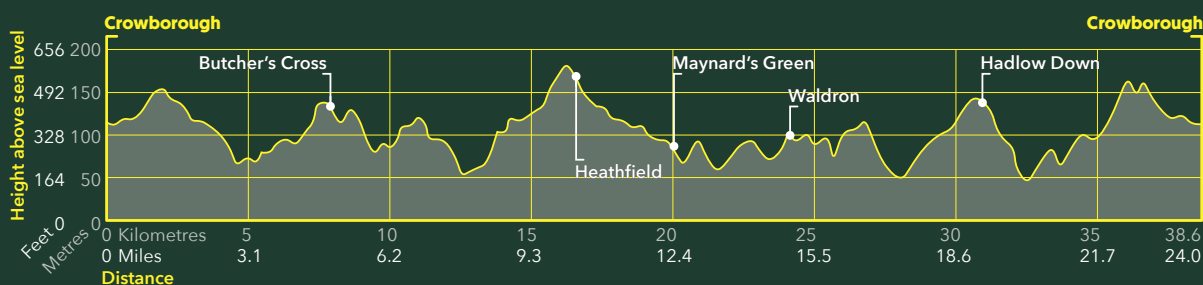
As a **Walk Wheel Cycle Trust** supporter or volunteer, enjoy 20% off maps and guidebooks in our shop.

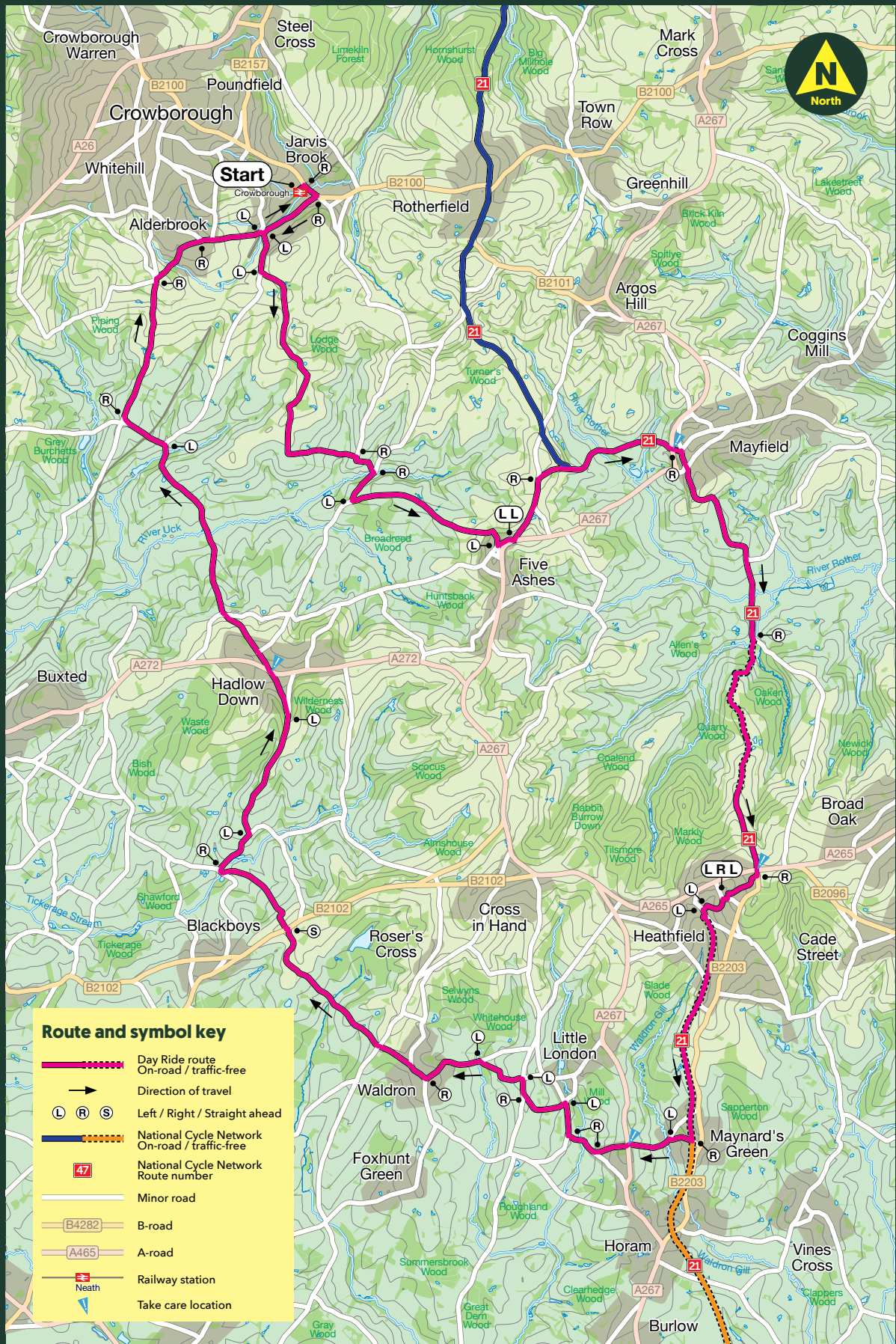


Use code **HUB20** at checkout.

(Code not valid with other offers).

Discover more at shop.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk





Before you set off: We've made every effort to ensure these routes are safe for people with a reasonable level of fitness. But outdoor activities carry some risk. Paths and surfaces can change over time and may be affected by weather. Please use your judgement based on conditions on the day, and the ability and confidence of everyone in your group. Some rides go beyond the National Cycle Network. These are marked on the map and may include busier roads, so they're best suited to more experienced cyclists. Walk Wheel Cycle Trust can't accept responsibility for any accidents or injuries resulting from using these routes.



Get in touch

Your Supporter Care and Volunteering teams are here to ensure you always have someone to speak to.

You can contact us at supporters@walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk or by phone on **0300 303 2604** (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm).

Volunteers can contact volunteers-uk@walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk

Thank you

Learn more at

www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk



Walk Wheel Cycle Trust is a registered Charity in England and Wales (326550), Scotland (SC039263) and Republic of Ireland (20206824), and a company limited by guarantee registered in England (1797726) at 2 Cathedral Square, Bristol, BS1 5DD.