

National Cycle Network Scotland

Impact report 2024-2025

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Image: People using the newly resurfaced National Cycle Network Route 7 at Clydebank.
Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

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About this report

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust is the charity making it possible for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle.

We work directly with communities to make change happen. Then we evidence the impact to influence policies to push those changes further.

Because people-powered movement changes everything. Our health. Our wellbeing. Our world. www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk

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Report partner

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Contents

National Cycle Network Scotland	1
Document control	2
About this report	3
Walk Wheel Cycle Trust	3
Report partner	3

Contents	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	9
How we work to improve and build the NCN	13
Delivery and Impact	16
Delivery	16
Planning	18
Accessibility	20
Volunteers	24
Engagement	25
Greenways	28
Infrastructure Impact	29

Appendix	34
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Executive Summary

In 2024/25 the National Cycle Network (NCN) programme in Scotland continued to Grow, Fix, Love and Connect the network for the communities it serves and the destinations they need.

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust achieved this by working more effectively with our partners than ever before through a new planning tool, improving and building new infrastructure, engaging community groups and young people in hard-to-reach areas, upgrading signage and removing a record number of barriers to improve access to the network for everyone. We also sought to understand better how people use the NCN to connect with nature and greenspace, resulting in improved health and wellbeing.

This report focuses on the delivery and impact of the NCN programme in the financial year 2024/25 including projects delivered in year, follow-up monitoring on projects completed in previous years¹, and research results into wellbeing and nature connectivity.

Our research conducted on the NCN shows that the public consider it an important piece of national infrastructure, which provides an alternative to car travel for everyday trips, and provides the opportunity for people to experience the benefits of walking, wheeling and cycling to their health and wellbeing.

The NCN programme focuses on including everyone, consistent with the Active Travel Framework and wider government policies. Our findings provide learning to help progress towards the goal of ensuring the benefits of active travel are shared equitably.

Increase the number of people choosing walking, wheeling and cycling and in Scotland

The NCN continues to be used extensively for walking, wheeling and cycling, enabling leisure trips, running everyday errands and commuting journeys.

¹ Monitoring of projects, particularly infrastructure projects, generally extends beyond the delivery completion date. Monitoring completed in 2024/25 which is included in this report is for example often in reference to projects completed in 2023/24. Follow-up monitoring reports of the projects delivered in 2024/25 will likely be presented in future impacts reports from 2025/26 onwards. Further explanation of NCN monitoring methodology can be found in the appendix.

Many trips made on the NCN replace car trips thereby reducing carbon emissions.



An estimated **43 million** trips were taken on the NCN in Scotland in 2024. This saved **2050 tonnes** of CO2 emissions from replaced car journeys.

In 2024/25 the programme completed **34** infrastructure projects, progressing **91** projects overall to grow and upgrade the NCN to increase the accessibility, quality and reach of this valuable active travel network. In total construction of **27.2 km** of new or improved NCN was completed

46%² of Scottish people are aware of the NCN and **30%**³ of people know where the nearest section of the NCN is relative to where they live

High quality walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure is available to everyone

The NCN programme is dedicated to making the NCN accessible to everyone and an extensive audit of barriers on the NCN in 2022/23 resulted in successful barrier removal in 2023/24 and 2024/2025 with both years exceeding set targets.



507 barriers were removed on the NCN in 2024/25, significantly exceeding the set target of 200, allowing for greater accessibility to the network for all

153 km of route had a signage upgrade including the entire 86km of the Forth & Clyde Union Canals.

3,320 link paths and access points in need of improvement were identified by an audit completed by volunteers using ArcGIS in 2024. This audit will now be used to collaborate with partners to improve access to the NCN.

² Scotland People and Nature survey 2024 – see appendix for more

³ YouGov survey 2024 – see appendix for more details

Walking, wheeling and cycling is safer for all

Work continues on the NCN to improve safety for people walking, wheeling and cycling.

Our Targeted Arts project engages with specific underrepresented groups. In 2024/25 the project worked with young artists from Irvine and Niddrie/Bingham in areas with the most deprivation. The artworks had a positive impact on the local area and community. Survey respondents said the artwork made them feel more welcome on the NCN, **80%** at Niddrie and **88%** at Irvine.

Infrastructure interventions on NCN75 between Greenock and Port Glasgow to improve path surfaces, lighting, and maintenance resulted in an increase in survey respondents agreeing that it was safe to cross roads in two locations.



The sense of crossing safety at Gareloch Road increased from 58% before to **78%** after, and Moray Road increased from 70% before to **90%** after.

High quality walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure is available to everyone

The NCN programme is committed to ensuring that walking, wheeling and cycling is available to all through our work on the network.

The Jenny's Well Greenways project in Paisley created a high-quality active travel route connecting communities on either side of the White Cart Water river by opening a bridge, completing sections of path and resurfacing paths.

96% of survey respondents agree the path now has a high-quality surface, compared with just 26% agreeing this was the case before the works.



97% agree the path can now be accessed by people of all abilities, compared with only 49% agreeing this was the case before the works.

Delivery of walking, wheeling and cycling is promoted and supported by a range of partners

In 2024/25 we launched the Scotland Network Development Plan Partner Collaboration tool on ArcGIS. The tool was received positively, with **24** partner organisations signing up in the first week alone.

34 construction projects were completed in 2024/25 and a further **62** projects were in various stages of design and construction by the end of 2024/25.



23 different partners were involved in the delivery of projects as well as our in-house design and engineering team.

The programme also works closely with the communities that live around the NCN through community and volunteer engagement.

40 community groups were engaged in 2024/25 through arts and conservation projects. Volunteers supported our delivery teams on **11** projects.



Image: Love Your Network litterpick on Telford link path - with Drylaw Neighbourhood centre, 2025.

Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Introduction

The National Cycle Network is the backbone of Scotland's network of walking, cycling and wheeling routes.

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust's vision is for the NCN to be a network of traffic-free paths for everyone; connecting cities, towns and countryside, loved by the communities it serves. It is a strategically important asset in reducing transport inequalities, taking climate action, improving the health and wellbeing of the Scottish people and boosting the economy.

44% of Scotland's population live within 1km of the NCN, making it an important part of the nation's transport infrastructure. It supports everyday active travel trips as an alternative to car travel, helping tackle the climate crisis and meeting Scotland's target to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030.

Scotland's Walking and Cycling Index 2023⁴ shows that people in Scotland walk, wheel or cycle for short everyday journeys more often than using the car in the index cities (74% of the time compared to 34% for car travel). Moreover, 48% would like to walk, or wheel more often, 46% cycle more often, and 22% would like to be able to drive less in the future.

The Hands Up Scotland Survey 2024⁵ showed 46.6% of school pupils travelled actively to school in 2024, either by walking, cycling, scootering or skating.

The Scotland Children's Walking and Cycling Index 2024⁶ showed us that children value active travel and would like to have more say in neighbourhood development:

- **84%** want more traffic-free paths and quiet routes for walking and cycling
- **77%** want more cycle paths along roads physically separated from cars
- **48%** want to cycle more often
- **53%** don't think the government is doing enough to give children a say in improving their neighbourhood and country.

⁴ [Walking and Cycling Index 2023: Scotland](#)

⁵ [Hands Up Scotland Survey - Walk Wheel Cycle Trust.org.uk](#)

⁶ [Children's Walking and Cycling Index Scotland 2024](#)

The proximity of the NCN to so many of the Scottish population's home and the desire to do more journeys by walking, wheeling and cycling, highlights the importance of the Network in reducing emissions and improving health.

With a view to improving the connections from homes to the NCN and everyday destinations, Walk Wheel Cycle Trust conducted an extensive audit in 2024/25 identifying areas where link paths to the NCN could be improved. This information will now be used to inform the NCN planning process through the shared Partner Planner Tool.

The NCN also enables people to experience the joys and benefits of walking, wheeling and cycling, promoting physical and mental health, and connecting people to nature. In many places the NCN protects and preserves greenspace and biodiversity.

Responses to questions submitted by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust in the Scottish People and Nature Survey (SPANS) showed **25%** of people who used a path on their last visit to the outdoors said it was part of the National Cycle Network. Amongst people in the most deprived areas, this rises to **32%**.

Top reasons given for using the NCN in the SPANS report were:

- **31%** for health and exercise
- **27%** as a greenspace itself
- **26%** to access other greenspaces locally
-



In Scotland the National Cycle Network covers around **2552 km** across urban, inter-urban, and rural areas.

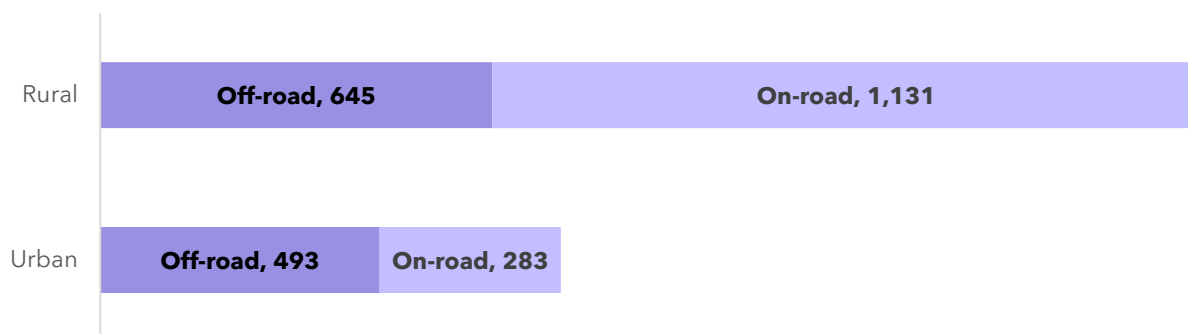
Approximately 30% of Scotland's NCN runs through urban areas with around 70% connecting rural areas.⁷ Of its 2,552 km, 1,138 km are 'traffic-free'⁸ and 1,414 km are 'on-road'.⁹

⁷ For information on Urban/Rural classification see [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2020](#) (2022). The classification is based on (i) population as defined by National Records of Scotland (NRS), and (ii) accessibility based on drive time analysis to differentiate between accessible and remote areas in Scotland.

⁸ Traffic-free describes any situation where active travel users are separate from motor vehicles

⁹ This describes a mixed traffic environment where active travel and motor vehicles share the same space.

Figure 1: Breakdown of route length (km) in rural and urban areas of the NCN in 2024



An estimated **43 million trips** were taken on the NCN in Scotland in 2024, comprising of 14 million cycle trips and 29 million walking and wheeling trips¹⁰ which boost health and wellbeing as well as reducing car trips and supporting the economy.

Cycle trips are estimated to have replaced 2.5 million car trips, saving over 1,000 tonnes of CO₂e. Walking and wheeling is estimated to have replaced 5 million car trips, saving over 1,000 tonnes of CO₂e in 2024.



A combined saving of **2,050 tonnes of CO₂e** in was saved by replacing car trips with active travel journeys on the NCN in 2024¹¹.

The total estimated economic benefit from usage on the NCN was **£61 million** in 2024, including health, emissions and reduction in road collisions.

16.7 thousand trips per km of the NCN were made in 2024. Urban traffic free routes were the most used areas of the NCN with 13.6 thousand cycle trips and 41.7 thousand walking and wheeling trips made per km in 2024.

¹⁰ The Whole Network User Estimate methodology can be found in the appendix.

¹¹ CO₂e savings and economic benefits are calculated using the whole network user estimate figures from 2023 and AMAT (Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit).

Table 1: Trips in thousands/km on the NCN 2024 by mode and route type

	Urban traffic free	Urban on-road	Rural traffic free	Rural on-road
Cycling	14	6	4	3
Walking and Wheeling	42		13	

There is an increasing number of non-NCN active travel routes in Scotland providing a growing active travel network, particularly in highly populated areas. The NCN provides the foundation on which these developing active travel networks are built, strategically linking them to form a national network for walking, wheeling and cycling (similar to the way the trunk road network links local road networks).

The NCN is widely recognised and celebrated and helps support and promote active travel across Scotland. **61%** of the Scottish public surveyed in our 2024 YouGov survey agreed the NCN is a valuable national asset.



Walk Wheel Cycle Trust employs Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to plan and monitor our work on the NCN. The newly developed [Scotland NDP Partner Collaboration Tool](#) details the Network and plans to improve it.

Right: Map of the current NCN in Scotland showing on-road and traffic-free sections.
Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

How we work to improve and build the NCN

In 2023 Walk Wheel Cycle Trust undertook a strategy refresh for the NCN in Scotland which considered key Scottish policy areas including: tackling climate change, the nature crisis, health inequalities, transport poverty, and supporting low carbon economic resilience. The new strategy focuses on working in an agile way with partners to deliver a NCN for everyone.

Strategic priorities identified in the refreshed NCN Scotland strategy 2023-2026 were:

1. Deliver Walk Wheel Cycle Trust' Paths for Everyone strategy to improve the safety and accessibility of the NCN in Scotland.
2. Scale up and speed up the delivery of high-quality, direct, walking, wheeling, and cycling NCN routes that offer value for money.
3. Ensure all our projects and programmes on the NCN are strategically planned to tackle climate change, transport poverty, health inequalities and the nature crisis, and support low-carbon economic resilience.
4. Increase the number and diversity of NCN users and groups engaging with it.

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust hold the information on the shape and state of the Network and work with partners to identify shared priorities and plan the NCN; we deliver interventions via partners or in house; we engage on the NCN via targeted community art projects, supporting community groups, working with partners and through a strong volunteer network.

In 2024/25, work on the NCN Scotland programme was delivered through three workstreams: Planning, Delivery and Engagement.

Planning

The Planning team coordinate the strategic planning of Scotland's NCN. They hold a three-stage master plan which has information on every current and potential future section of NCN. They work with partners to align NCN plans with regional and local plans for walking, wheeling, and cycling wherever possible, and take a collaborative approach to project selection and shared ownership of the NCN.

Delivery

The Delivery team work to fix and grow the NCN in Scotland through a variety of different programmes including; work on over 60 projects per annum through the Network Development Fund, removal and redesign of barriers through the Accessibility Fund, the Quietways programme which brings on-road sections of the NCN up to standard, and the Greenways programme which works with communities to connect them to their local NCN.

Engagement

The Engagement team supports and empowers individuals, communities and groups to use, be part of, and shape their local NCN. They have a particular focus on making the NCN more accessible to underrepresented groups and for people who are experiencing multiple deprivation. The team also works with delivery partners to raise the NCN's profile and increase its value.



Image: Fairlie Coastal Path project created a new off-road path along the waterfront
Credit: Gary McLaughlin, North Ayrshire Council
For more information on this project enjoy the [YouTube video](#)

Monitoring the NCN

The 2024/25 Walk Wheel Cycle Trust monitored impact on most NCN projects and capture trends across the whole network using a variety of methods which are outlined in more detail in the appendix.

Timelines - Monitoring and evaluation of projects most often happens after the project has been completed and allowed, in the case of infrastructure projects, a period to 'bed in' before post evaluation monitoring and reporting is undertaken. This means that final reporting on these projects can take place 6 months to a year after completion with reports being often being finalised in the financial year after the completion, or beyond.

This is dependent on many factors including: if the project is multi-phase, what time of the year the project finishes and if monitoring is possible, a desire to monitor at the same time of the year as baseline monitoring etc. As a result, project monitoring in 2024/25 included in this report often reflects projects completed in 2023/24 or before. Projects which have been completed in 2024/25 are likely to be presented in the 2025/26 impact report, or beyond, dependent on factors listed above.

Outcomes - A set of key measurable outcomes were developed for the NCN programme to evidence success and inform progress and delivery. These outcomes mirror and support the Transport Scotland Active Travel Framework, Programme for Government priorities and National Transport Strategy 2 priorities. Details of how these outcomes align with key Scottish government strategies, including PfG and NTS2, can be found in the appendix.

The NCN programme outcomes used in 2024/25 to monitor impact were:

- Increase number of users of the NCN
- Improve connectivity to the NCN
- Improve quality of the NCN
- Improve accessibility of the NCN
- Improve safety of the NCN
- Increase diversity of users of the NCN
- Increase awareness of the NCN
- Increase engagement with the NCN
- Reduce car use
- Reduction in health inequalities through use of the NCN
- Improved natural environment along the NCN

Delivery and Impact

The 2024/25 NCN programme continued to amplify its outreach and engagement efforts, strengthening partnerships with all local authorities, and other stakeholders such as Scottish Canals, National Parks, Community Trusts, NTS etc.

Delivery

The programme completed **34** separate infrastructure projects, adding new NCN and upgrading many existing sections, increasing the accessibility, quality and reach of this valuable active travel network.



In total **27.2 km** of new/improved NCN was completed in 2024/25.

There were also **62** projects in the pipeline at various RIBA design stages moving into 2025/26, of which 14 were in tender/construction stages.

Significant construction projects completed in 2024/25 included:

- NCN 753 Ardrossan North Shore (£1.5m)
- NCN 1 Formartine & Buchan Way (phase 3 - Ellon boundary heading south) (£448K)
- NCN 76 East Linton to Dunbar (phase 2 - East Linton) (£403K)
- NCN 753 Fairlie Coastal Path (phase 3 of 4) (£393K)
- NCN 75 Kilmalcolm to Auchenbothie Road (path surfacing) (£336K)
- NCN 753 Lunderston Bay to Inverkip Marina (£330K)
- NCN 1 Tweed Trail: Gytes Leisure Centre - Priorsford Bridge (£255K)
- NCN 75 Greenock Spaces for People upgrade (phase 1a - Brougham Street / Patrick Street Junction) (£247K)
- NCN 1 Monifieth path (Marine Drive) (£189K)
- NCN 193 Glen Coe path (phases 1/2) (£141K)



Above: Before and after Lunderston Bay path improvements in Inverclyde on the NCN 753 coastal route between Gourock and Inverkip

Credit: Left: InverclydeNow.com Right: Inverclyde Council



Above: Working with the National Trust for Scotland we completed a 5.8km sustainable access path into one of Scotland's most iconic and natural places in 2024/25; providing a safe alternative to the A82 trunk road for locals and tourists to access this stunning area.

Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Planning

We launched the Scotland Network Development Plan Partner Collaboration tool launched at the end of 2024/25 on ArcGIS. The tool was received positively with 24 partner organisations signing up in the first week alone.

The tool enables partners to have a live view, prioritised of the Network Development Plan and provide feedback.

The launch of the tool also published the findings of the Investment Plan project by displaying the Planning Horizon for each section of the NCN, focusing discussions and activity as follows:

Planning Horizon	What this means
<2030 (5 years)	Projects are already underway to deliver this segment, or appropriate infrastructure already exists.
<2035 (10 years)	Projects should be initiated now to deliver these segments of the NDP. Walk Wheel Cycle Trust will focus more activity in these areas.
<2045 (20 years)	Walk Wheel Cycle Trust will work with partners to deliver these segments of the NDP by 2045. Some projects will be initiated now, and others planned for later in the pipeline.
>2045 (long term aspiration)	Highly aspirational routes that will take longer to deliver. Individual sections may be worked opportunistically or where there is a strong local business case, but there will not be a pipeline of projects for the whole section. Ideally looking for match funding.

The tool has supported Walk Wheel Cycle Trust to engage with partners with the plan for the NCN rather than the existing Network, and focus discussions on:

- where there is overlap between national and local active travel network priorities
- the role of the NCN as the backbone of the wider active travel network
- a partnership approach to delivery of the plan for the NCN

Planning Tool case study - Edinburgh Council

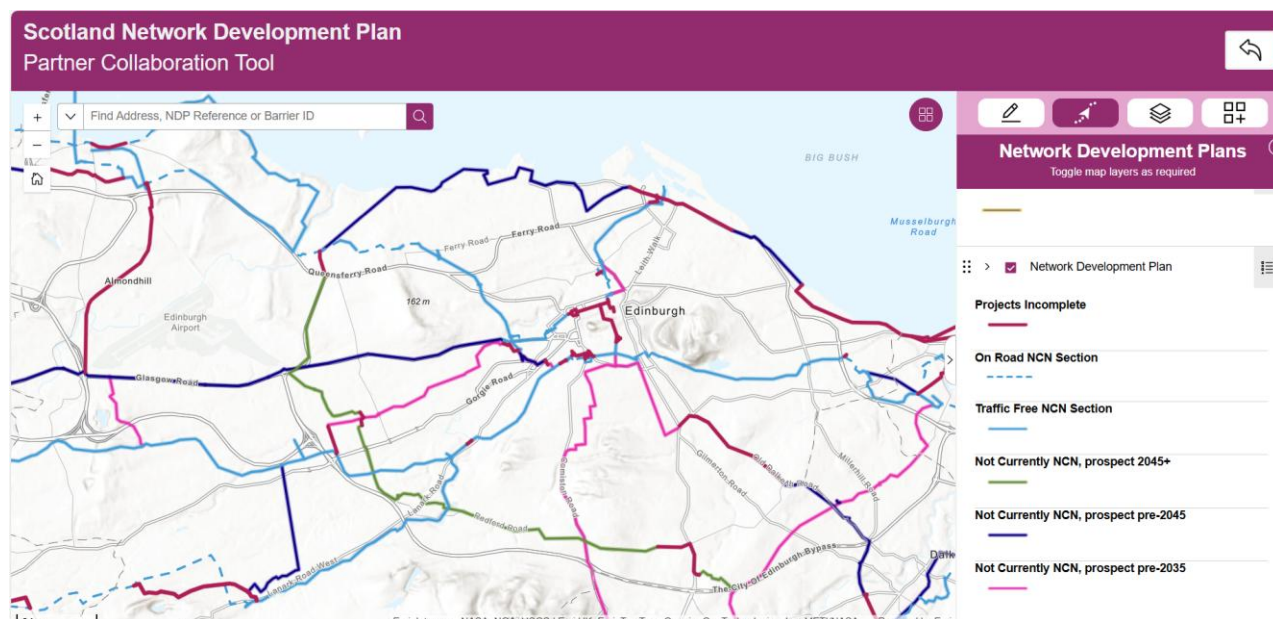


Image: Edinburgh City Council's view of the NCN Development Plan

Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Since publication, Walk Wheel Cycle Trust have engaged with City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) extensively on the overlap between their Our Future Streets and the NCN Development Plan. This has resulted in:

- CEC being able to effectively map out where to approach Walk Wheel Cycle Trust for funding on shared aspirations
- Project development in high priority areas of the NCN Development Plan, e.g. a junction improvement at Balgreen and the Telfer ramp under the Western Approach Road, both of which were new to the council.
- Discussion at an earlier project stage for routes that currently have funding elsewhere, enabling design support, e.g. the South Queensferry to Kirkliston route (currently ATIF Tier 1 funded), in which Walk Wheel Cycle Trust were able to sense check the spend profile based on our Investment Plan cost per KM estimates allowing CEC to better control spending
- Safeguarding active travel provision, e.g. the fact the A8 corridor is identified as a future NCN route enabled CEC officers to make a stronger case for future investment, thereby raising the profile and priority of active travel provision in early project stages currently being delivered by other teams

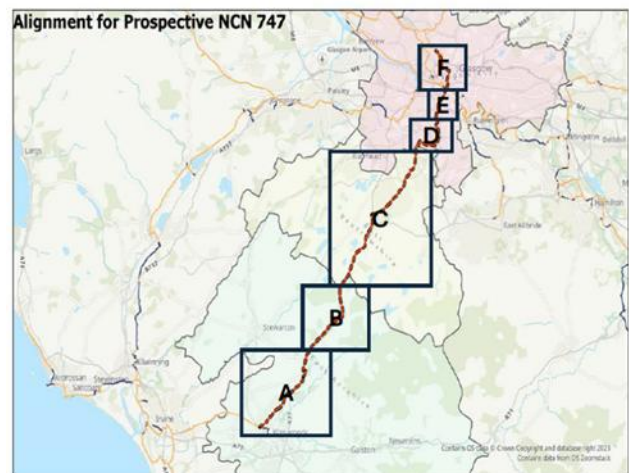
- Suggestions for changes to alignment to better route alignment, e.g. extending aspirations of the Queensferry route and other elements of the NDP to create a western orbital, creating a more cohesive route in that part of the city than Walk Wheel Cycle Trust had previously identified.

Route development work

The NCN Development Plan and Partner Collaboration Tool has supported route development work, identifying projects, infrastructure and gaps along whole routes and bringing partners together to plan the implementation of a whole section of new routes in a coordinated way.

There has long been an aspiration to develop an NCN route between Kilmarnock and Glasgow. Following engagement with our NCN delivery partners in 2024/25 to align local project delivery with local and national network development this now looks possible.

Right: Plans progress for the Kilmarnock to Glasgow route.



We identified several projects and existing infrastructure that could be connected to realise the vision of this route. These projects include Glasgow Avenues, the Glasgow City Network, South City Way, East Renfrewshire's strategic active travel routes and the Kilmarnock Infinity Loop.

Accessibility

Efforts to remove physical barriers at pace and scale along the NCN have been a resounding success, significantly improving accessibility for all users.



507 barriers were removed, far exceeding the target of removing 200 barriers for 2024/25

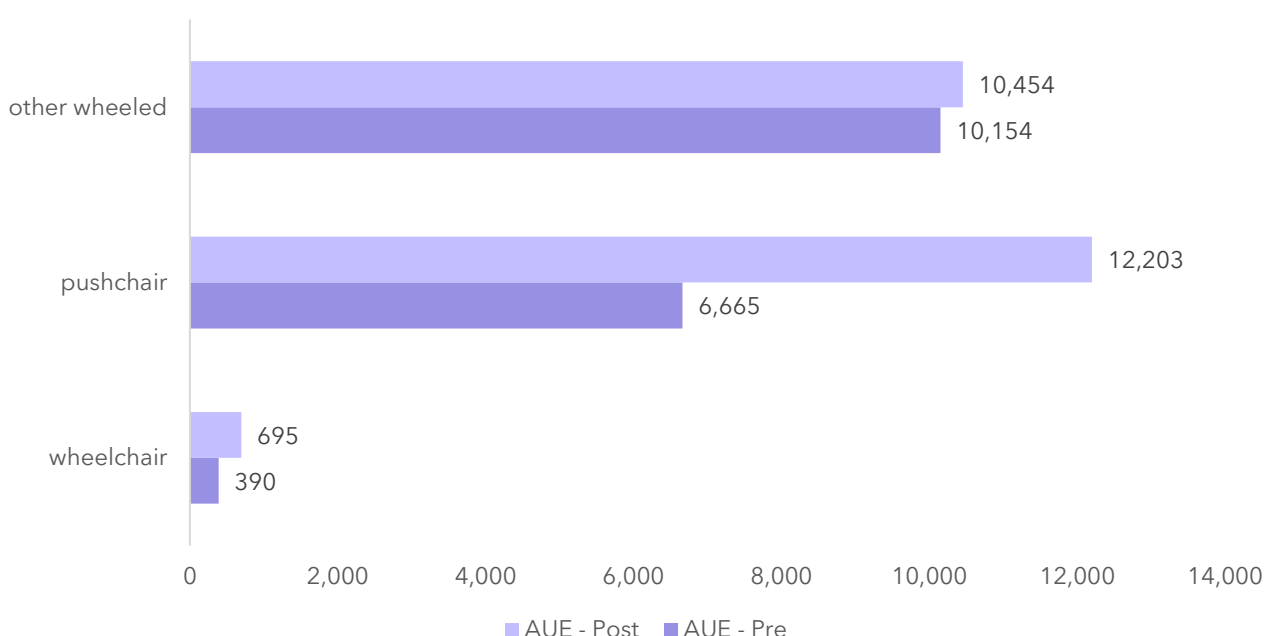
Bonnyrigg

In 2024 barriers along and on key entrances to NCN 196 in Bonnyrigg, Scotland were identified for removal. A section of the route was identified for monitoring based on the large number of barriers on the route that are relatively close together with the aim of diversifying usage on the route. There were concerns that the removal of the barriers may lead to users traveling with more speed, increasing user conflict and an additional concern that illegitimate users (e.g. quad bikes etc.) would increase. The follow up monitoring showed increased usage by some users and no speed or conflict disbenefits.

Annual User Estimate analysis

Follow-up monitoring gathered after the barrier removal was completed suggests the Annual Usage Estimate (AUE) of the path following barrier removal was 550,000 representing an increase of 130,000 users compared to the AUE estimate in 2023 (420,000). A rise in the AUE of people using wheelchairs, pushchairs and other wheeled aids was also seen.

Figure 2: Estimated annual usage of wheelchair, pushchair and other wheeled users pre and post barrier removal



Annual user estimates also indicated that more children were using the route after the barriers were removed (36% before and 39% after) and that they represented a higher proportion of users than the proportion represented in the census for the area (22% in census).

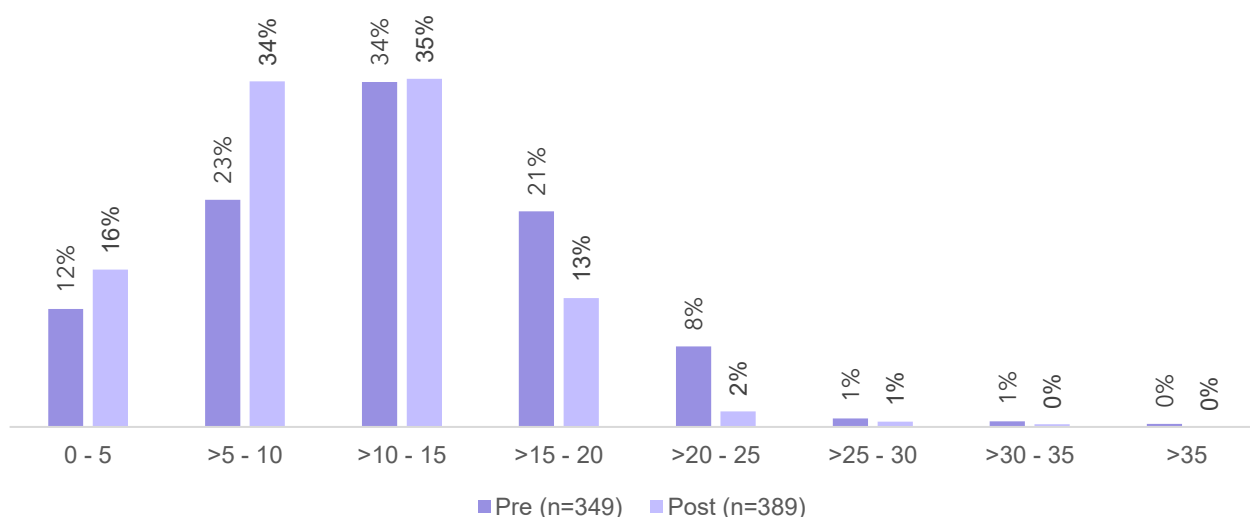
User conflict analysis

Particular attention was paid to conflict between path users for this project as there were concerns that removing the barriers would increase speeds of travel by some users and potentially increase conflict. Video footage was taken close to two barriers on the route. Both before and after the removal of the barriers, around one-half of interactions recorded required no response from either party, and one-half involved at least one of the users manoeuvring, stopping, or slowing down to avoid another user (with ample time to do so). There was no evidence to indicate that increased speeds or conflicts occurred as a result of the barrier removal and in fact the speed of users decreased with an increase in number of those travelling at between 5-10 mph.



At baseline, 34% of wheeled users were travelling at 10mph or under, and at follow-up this was **50%** of users. The proportion of wheeled users travelling over 15mph also reduced by around one-half (31% at baseline, 15% at follow-up).

Figure 3: Wheeled user speed bin categories pre and post barrier removal



The removal of the barriers did not appear to have a significant impact on the presence of illegitimate users on the path. At both baseline and follow-up, 2 instances of quad bike/motorcycle users were recorded. At follow-up, 4 instances of horse riders were also noted.

After follow-up monitoring was completed, some barrier locations were reinstated (with 1.5m gaps to pass through but not meeting the minimum spacing between chicane panels). Only the Bonnyrigg East sections were affected by reinstatements at chicane points (bollard locations were upgraded to compliant standards) with West of Bonnyrigg remaining as agreed. It could be worth further monitoring to assess what impact the reinstated barriers have had on usage.

Sam's story



Image: Sam enjoys the accessibility improvements on NCN75
Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Sam, a recumbent cycle user, explained to us in May, how the Accessibility Fund for partners made their local section of NCN75 more accessible by funding Inverclyde Council to remove a barrier between Kilmacolm and Port Glasgow. This now allows Sam and other users to fully enjoy the benefits of the route. You can hear more of Sam's story on [YouTube](#).



In 2024/25 the Accessibility Fund was able to fund **16** partners to remove/reconfigure over **350** barriers. A further **157** barriers were removed through other NCN projects.

Volunteers

Volunteers remain an important resource for the work we do on the NCN. In 2024/25 volunteers completed an audit of formal and informal link paths to the NCN using the ArcGIS 123.

Initial findings provide a snapshot of how people get on and off the NCN identifying **3,225** paths and access points. Information captured on surface quality show 47% have been rated as good, 26% adequate and 24% poor quality.

Much like previous volunteer audits on barriers and art works on the NCN, this information will be used to improve the quality and accessibility of paths connecting the NCN to important community services and destinations. The Audit information will now be validated and added to the NCN planning tool for visibility and planning with local authorities across Scotland.



Image: Volunteers litterpicking along the Union Canal from boats.

Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust



Hear how Love Your Network grants have helped West Lothian Scouts to litterpick in their area along the NCN and help reconnect young people to nature [YouTube](#).

Engagement

The target for community group involvement was also surpassed following engagement with **40** community and voluntary groups along the NCN – including 11 ArtsRoots projects, and 2 Targeted Arts projects engaging young people in socially deprived areas.

Targeted Arts

In 2024 the Targeted Arts project worked with two local partners to engage with the local community with a focus on young people. Six young people benefitted from an intern programme during the project. Paid at the real living wage they worked, with artists supporting them, to create two murals reflecting the local history and community. The permanent artworks were created at two traffic-free sections of the NCN in communities experiencing high levels of multiple deprivation. The sites selected were a tunnel and an underpass that were experienced as unsafe and neglected spaces which would benefit from a mural installation. Artworks were installed on NCN routes in early October 2024.

The Connect Mural projects in Niddrie and Irvine aimed to:

- support communities to transform neglected traffic free NCN locations into more welcoming, enjoyable and meaningful places
- engage with young people to learn about the process of producing public art
- promote the National Cycle Network as a resource for everyone

A sample of route users were surveyed at each site to understand their experiences of the routes and artworks:

Because of visiting the artwork, at least half of survey respondents said they were somewhat or very likely to recommend the route to a friend **60%** at Niddrie and **79%** at Irvine.

The artworks had a positive impact on the local area and community. The majority of survey respondents said the artwork made them feel more welcome on the NCN, **80%** at Niddrie and **88%** at Irvine.



100% of respondents at Niddrie and **95%** at Irvine said that the artwork makes the route more attractive. There was strong support to see more artworks on the NCN.



Image: A young artist works on the art project in Niddrie-Bingham tunnel
Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Across both partner organisations, eight young artists aged 16-17 were involved in creating the outdoor artworks in consultation with the local community. Young artists were paid the Real Living Wage for their participation. The partner organisation emphasised the importance of compensating artists for their time, especially those from deprived backgrounds. Two of the young artists said they would like to work on other, similar projects in the future, and were now considering a future career in the arts. The partner organisation in Niddrie said they would like to do more work with this age group, who they felt particularly benefit from the opportunity to develop self-confidence and consider '*different possibilities*' for their futures.

"It's a joy to walk through it now and just see your artwork and the hard work you put into it to make that part of the community brighter. I would definitely agree that I'm more comfortable going through." Young artist, Niddrie

Young artists in Niddrie said that the project enabled them to learn how to produce a public artwork. They saw the project as an opportunity to develop their art skills by producing work on a larger scale and using new materials, which they enjoyed. Both focus group participants agreed that they now feel more confident in using their creativity for positive change in their local area and community.

"I feel like everybody wants change when there's a problem in their community, but it's sometimes quite hard to express the change that you want or find a way to let people know. And I feel like the whole art side of it, being on the mural, really helped to get the message across." Young artist, Niddrie



Image: Completed Connect Mural at Irvine
Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

You can learn more about the two projects in [Irvine](#) and [Niddrie-Bingham](#) on YouTube.



"Good for the area"

"More attractive and less threatening"

Survey respondents, Niddrie

Greenways

The Jenny's Well Greenways project in Paisley created a high-quality active travel route connecting communities on either side of the White Cart Water river. The project:

- Opened a bridge over the White Cart Water, which had been built by local housing developers but never opened
- Completed missing sections of path connecting to the bridge
- Resurfaced the link path through the nature reserve, from NCN7 to the bridge, and several access points from nearby housing onto the link path



Image: Before photos of the inaccessible bridge at Jenny's Well

Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust



Image: After photos of the bridge at Jenny's Well

Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

Usage of the link path where it joins NCN7 increased by **51%**, from an estimated 89 trips per day in 2023 to an estimated 134 trips per day in 2024.

Before the bridge opened, the nearest place to cross White Cart Water was the busy Hawkhead Road. Bankhead Bridge now provides a safe off-road alternative.



97% agree the path can now be accessed by people of all abilities, compared with only 49% agreeing this was the case before the works.



96% agree the path now has a high-quality surface, compared with just 26% agreeing this was the case before the works.

64% of survey respondents said that using the route has improved their wellbeing.

93% of survey respondents said the route has helped them to access green or blue space.

93% said the use of the route had improved their overall satisfaction with life.

99% of survey respondents said that they used the route to appreciate nature

71% of survey respondents were from postcodes in the most deprived quintile of SIMD 2020. The improvements will have benefited people in areas of high deprivation, helping to reduce inequalities by connecting the community safely to the NCN.

Infrastructure Impact

NCN75 Dubbs Road to Lady Octavia improvements

This project is part of a series of interventions on NCN75 between Greenock and Port Glasgow to improve path surfaces, lighting, routing and maintenance. Lighting has been installed, and the route has been widened and resurfaced between the Lady Octavia Sports Centre and Devol Glen

Bridge and between Barr's Brae and the junction of the route with Dubbs Road.

Our follow-up user survey indicated that the improvements at Moray Road and Gareloch Road had more impact on user feelings of safety and quality than those at Lady Octavia Sports Centre. This was reflected in the annual user estimates which also increased at the first two sites but not at the Sports Centre.

Figure 4: Comparison of Annual Estimated Usage at the three survey locations before and after work took place



The perception of surface quality at the Sports Centre was high before and after the work at 97% but there were notable increases at the other two sites; at Gareloch Road there was an increase from 67% to 98%, and at Moray Road there was an increase from 73% to 100%.

When asked about the route allowing users to cross busy roads safely there were improvements at Gareloch and Moray Roads but a decrease at the Sports Centre. Almost all the decrease at the Sports Centre is accounted for by an increase in those who were neutral to the statement. This location is at the end of the section that has been improved, and some respondents may have been referring to nearby routes. The crossing will be removed and replaced with a traffic free path, as part of Phase 3.

Figure 5: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement about the route? Allows users to cross safely (agree/strongly)

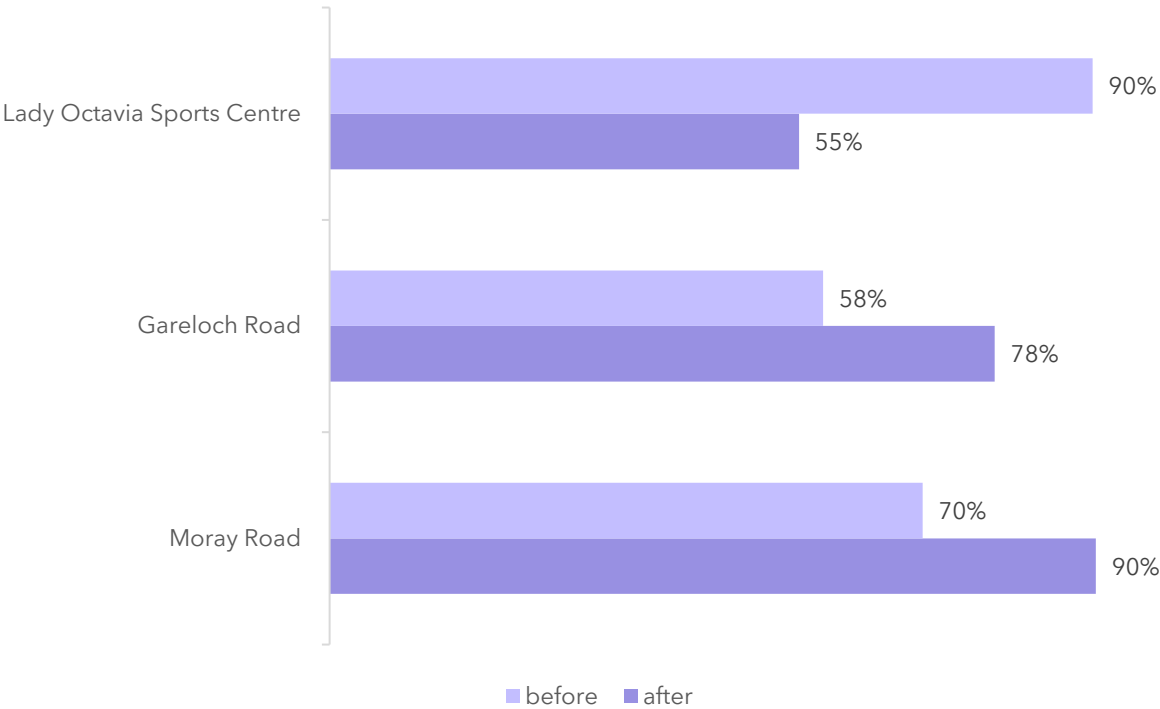


Image: Crossing at Barr's Brae, after improvements were made (October 2024).
Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

The number of users saying they would be likely to recommend the route created a much-improved Net Promoter Score at Gareloch Road (25 before/50 after) but remained largely the same at Moray Road (39 before/35 after) and the Sports Centre (33 before/40 after).

Scottish Canals towpath resurfacing NCN754 Ruchill Bridge to Port Dundas



Image: Resurfaced towpath on NCN754 with a swan nesting by the canal
Credit: Walk Wheel Cycle Trust

An important, 3km, traffic-free link route from NCN 754 on the Forth and Clyde Canal into Port Dundas in Glasgow was resurfaced in 2023, and improvements made to the drainage. This forms a key off-road route from Glasgow city centre to the Stockingfield Bridge junction and is expected to become increasingly popular.

The signage throughout the canal network in central Scotland was also upgraded. After the improvements were completed, a survey was commissioned that collected retrospective data on route usage and perceptions.

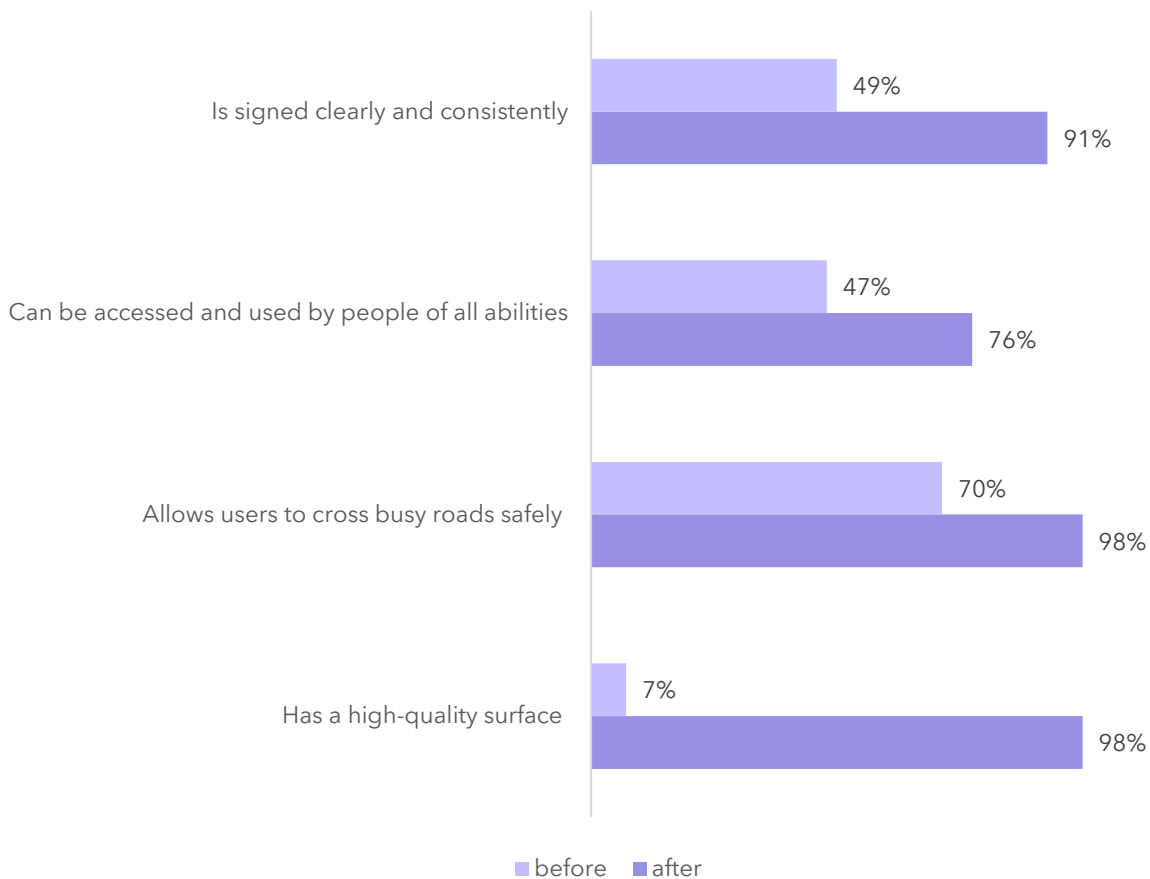
Our annual usage estimate for this site in 2024 was **350,000** trips.



94% of interview respondents said that this route has helped them to increase the amount of physical activity they regularly take

39% of interview respondents were aware of recent changes made to the route, and were also asked about their opinion on the route prior to the changes.

Figure 6: To what extent do respondents agree with the following statements about the route...?



99% of interview respondents use the route to access green space.

Appendix

Outcomes and indicators

To monitor and evaluate the Scotland NCN programme, a set of key outcomes has been identified which align with the strategic objectives of the National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2) priorities, and Transport Scotland's Active Travel Framework (ATF) outcomes.

The outcomes are relevant across the programme in the short, medium and long term, will be reviewed annually and refreshed as needed to serve emerging areas of strategic focus.

NCN Scotland outcomes:

- Increase number of users of the NCN
- Improve connectivity to the NCN
- Improve quality of the NCN
- Improve accessibility of the NCN
- Improve safety of the NCN
- Increase diversity of users of the NCN
- Increase awareness of the NCN
- Increase engagement with the NCN
- Reduce car use
- Reduction in health inequalities through use of the NCN
- Improved natural environment along the NCN

The table below illustrates how these outcomes align with key Scottish Transport strategies. In reality, the programme outcomes cut across these key strategic outcomes and priorities in a much more intrinsic way than this table can fully illustrate.

Table 2: NCN Outcomes Strategic Alignment

Outcomes for NCN Scotland	National Transport Strategy 2 priorities	Active Travel Framework outcomes
Increase number of users of the NCN	Improves our health and wellbeing	1. Increase the number of people choosing walking, cycling and wheeling in Scotland
Reduction in health inequalities through use of the NCN	Improves our health and well being	Objective: Better health and safer travel for all
Improve safety of the NCN	Improves our health and wellbeing	3. Walking, cycling and wheeling is safer for everyone
Improve connectivity to the NCN	Reduces inequalities	2. High quality walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure is available to everyone
Improve quality of the NCN	Reduces inequalities	
Improve accessibility of the NCN	Reduces inequalities	
Increase diversity of users of the NCN	Reduces inequalities	4. Walking, cycling and wheeling is available to all
Increase awareness of the NCN	Helps deliver inclusive economic growth	5. Delivery of walking, cycling and wheeling is supported by a range of partners
Increase engagement with the NCN	Helps deliver inclusive economic growth	
Reduction in car use	Takes climate action	Objective: Cut carbon emissions and other pollution
Improved natural environment along the NCN	Takes climate action	

Specific indicators are applied to each NCN outcome and appropriate monitoring tools used to gauge the impact of each project.

Table 3: NCN Outcomes and corresponding Indicators

NCN Outcomes	Outcome indicators
Increase number of users of the NCN	Number of trips on the NCN
Improve quality of the NCN	User perceptions of quality
Improve safety of the NCN	User perceptions of safety
	Speed of motorised traffic (if on road)
	Volume of motorised traffic (if on road)
Improve connectivity to the NCN	Use of the NCN to access key destinations and services
	Number of people using their local NCN
Improve accessibility of the NCN	User perceptions of access barriers
Increase diversity of users of the NCN	Demographic
	diversity of NCN users
	Community perceptions of design consultation outcomes
Increase engagement with the NCN	Community perceptions of involvement/volunteering on NCN projects
	Users indicating they would recommend the route
Increase awareness of the NCN	Proportion of public aware of NCN routes
	Proportion of users aware of NCN routes
Reduction in health inequalities through use of the NCN	Physical activity level of NCN users
	Wellbeing of NCN users
Reduction in car use	Estimated level of CO2 and other pollutants (from mode shift)
	Mode shift towards active travel
Improved natural environment along the NCN	User perceptions of greenspace on the NCN
	Community group perceptions of environmental projects on the NCN
	Increase in biodiversity along the NCN

Monitoring summary

The Strategy, Impact and Evidence (SIE) team monitor the Scotland NCN programme in two distinct ways – project monitoring and network monitoring. Elements of these two monitoring methods have been included in this report. To illustrate project impact, this report draws on monitoring and reporting compiled after project completion, to create short case study summaries. The full project reports are available on request. Elements of our whole network monitoring have also been included in this report in the form of the Whole Network User Estimate, and key results from public surveys (i.e. SPANs and YouGov) which gauge a broader view of the public’s awareness and use of the

network. The approaches to project monitoring and network monitoring are explained more below.

Project monitoring

We select a sample of NCN projects for in-depth monitoring. The decision on whether a project is monitored is taken on a case-by-case basis, guided by the scale, cost and expected impact of the intervention in question. Large scale infrastructure or accessibility projects are likely to be monitored, while smaller scale resurfacing or isolated barrier removals are less likely to be monitored. We also monitor the impact of large-scale engagement projects such as the Targeted Arts project which this year focused on young people in areas of high deprivation.

Project evaluations methodologies typically take a 'baseline' and 'follow' up methodology, in which monitoring data collected before project construction is compared to data collected in a similar manner after construction has completed and there has been a 'bedding in' period (typically six months minimum). Project monitoring methods are various, tailored for each project and may include tools such as Route User Intercept Surveys (RUIS), counters, interviews, focus groups, postal surveys, etc.

Examples of tools used to monitor projects showcased in this report are:

Route User Intercept Survey

Route User Intercept Surveys (RUIS) are conducted over four days, covering a weekday and a weekend day. The survey comprises a manual count or video manual count of all route users alongside interviews of a convenience sample of the users over a 12-hour period, from 07:00 to 19:00. The manual count identifies mode of users as well as age and gender of route users. The directions of travel are also counted.

Manual Count

Manual Counts (MC) are conducted alongside a RUIS over four days, covering a weekday and a weekend day. A manual count allows us to count cyclists, pedestrians, wheelers and joggers. Unlike a video manual count, it allows us to identify age group and gender, as well as types of cycle (electric, non-electric or other (e.g. cargo, adapted)), people using walking aids, and other legitimate users (e.g. horse riders). A MC also identifies directions of travel. Like the RUIS the MC takes place over a 12-hour period, from 07:00 to 19:00.

In 2024/25, a total of **45 RUIS with Manual Counts** were conducted. 13 of these were conducted for project monitoring, and 32 for network monitoring.

Video Manual Count

Video Manual Counts (VMC) are conducted by installing a video camera at the site and recording the usage from the footage. As much footage as required can be collected, usually between four to seven days. The count can take place over a period of up to 24 hours. Similarly to a MC, a VMC counts mode of users, covering different types of cycle (electric, non-electric or other, e.g. cargo, adapted), walking, walking with aid, jogging, wheelchair, other wheeled and other legitimate users (e.g. horse riders). A VMC also identifies age and gender of route users, and directions of travel.

23 VMCs were conducted in 2024/25.

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews

Qualitative, semi structured interviews are based on a topic guide of open questions. The guide provides consistency between interviews and ensures all topics needed for the project are covered. When facilitating a semi-structured interview, the interviewer can tailor the question wording to suit the language used by the interviewee and contribute extra questions to probe further into the interviewee's responses.

Evaluation Sessions

An evaluation session consists of a group of individuals coming together to complete a survey capturing their experiences and views of a project. An evaluation session may be an appropriate method to use for a group of project participants who are meeting regularly or if there is an organised end of project event. Using an evaluation session may also increase response rate to the survey as participants are given a dedicated time to complete the survey.

Permanent automatic counters

Automatic counters continuously record cycle (and/or pedestrian) user numbers on an hourly basis. They are installed on routes that are used by active travel users.

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust owns **92 permanent automatic counters** across the NCN in Scotland, and collaborates with local authorities, Cycling Scotland and

others to share data for a further **78 permanent automatic counters** on the NCN.

Temporary automatic counters

Temporary automatic counters continuously record cycle (and/or pedestrian) user numbers on an hourly basis. In contrast to permanent automatic counters, temporary automatic counters can be installed relatively quickly and for a set period of time at a location. They usually provide user data before or after an intervention but are not used for long-term usage data.

Whole network monitoring

Separate from project-specific monitoring, SIE collect and analyse data to give a picture of the state of the Scotland NCN as a whole. The Whole Network User Estimate utilises counter data from across the UK to generate a user figure. The figure for Scotland is disaggregated from this overall estimate. We also employ two particular public surveys to measure public awareness and opinion of the NCN (YouGov), and how they use the network to access and enjoy nature (SPANS).

Whole Network Usage Estimate

The Whole Network User Estimate (WNUE) methodology is used to estimate usage across the entire extent of the UK NCN annually, by calendar year. This methodology uses data from monitored sections of the UK-wide NCN to make an estimate of usage on the unmonitored sections. It is based on the premise that any sections of a network which share the same characteristics (which are known to affect walking, wheeling and cycling levels) would see similar level of usage. 390 traffic-free counters (256 including pedestrians) and 156 on-road manual counts were used to calculate the UK NCN usage estimate in 2024.

Note on the Whole Network User Estimate figures: The Whole Network User Estimate for 2024 suggests 43 million walkers, wheelers and cyclists used the Scotland NCN, which illustrates the importance of the NCN as an active travel and recreational resource for Scottish people. There does appear to have been a drop in usage of the NCN from 2023 when the reported WNUE was 52 million, particularly in walking and wheeling rural areas across the wider UK NCN. However, due to the broad error margins in this calculation method, we would suggest that these figures should be treated as indicative of usage and not directly comparable. Various contributing factors affecting the counts used will be amplified by the method used in calculating the WNUE – factors could

include: poorer weather in 2024 relative to 2023, variations in the counter dataset used each year.

YouGov Survey

To understand how the Scottish public feel about the NCN, a representative online public survey was commissioned through YouGov in 2024 (1,000 respondents). It has been used to gauge Scottish public awareness and attitudes to the NCN. Figures were weighted and representative of adults (18+) in Scotland.

SPANS Survey

The Scotland People and Nature Survey (SPANS) is carried out by Nature Scotland. It focuses on monitoring long-term trends in outdoor recreation behaviour, the benefits of nature/outdoor activity, and attitudes towards our environment. A collaborative, 'Team Scotland' approach – ties together the data needs of a range of stakeholders. Walk Wheel Cycle Trust submitted questions to the survey in 2024 and were able to analyse our own question results alongside the wider data set. Conducted over twelve months the survey captures information from around 1000 respondents each month.

Programme monitoring stages

As outlined above in the 'project monitoring' section, SIE monitors most of the projects being delivered by the Network programme with only a handful of small, lower cost projects not considered. The table below shows the number of projects monitored in each financial year from 2022/23, with forecast numbers for 2025/26 onwards.

Please note that due the methodological approach to infrastructure monitoring means there will be a mismatch in the number of projects in SIE's monitoring sample compared to the pipeline of projects delivered by the Network programme. This is due to a number of reasons:

Firstly, for infrastructure projects, follow up monitoring is usually conducted in the financial year following the completion of construction, to allow appropriate bedding in time and seasonal matching between the baseline and follow up monitoring. In some cases this will require monitoring to take place in financial years subsequent to construction financial years e.g. a project completed in March 2025 with baseline monitoring in April 2024, would result in follow up monitoring in April 2026.

Secondly, projects involving multiple phases of work usually receive follow up monitoring after the final phase of the work is completed, so will be monitored even later relative to the initial investment and construction.

Therefore, although 34 infrastructure projects progressed to completion in 2024/25 year it may be a number of years before the impact of these projects is fully evaluated. In some cases, these projects may be phases of a larger route improvement and monitored in combination with other phases when all completed. The figures are included on the assumption that funding will be sufficient to complete delivery and monitor the planned projects and may go up or down depending on investment.

Engagement projects (also included in the table) are often monitored more immediately, e.g. through surveys carried out while a temporary art installation is in place, or interviews with participants shortly after a project is completed. Longer term monitoring (i.e. 2 – 5 years post construction) is also carried out for some projects (e.g. Colinton Tunnel) to understand the legacy impacts of the work.

Table 4: Project monitoring numbers by financial year

Year	Baseline Monitoring number of projects	Follow up monitoring number of projects
22/23	6	3
23/24	11	3
24/25	9	5
25/26	12	15
26/27	<i>Not yet planned*</i>	<i>13 > (tbc)</i>

*Baseline monitoring will be decided by which projects progress to the delivery stage in 26/27

Strategic Alignment

The Walk Wheel cycle Trust's NCN programme in Scotland works to ensure that delivery and monitoring align with key strategic priorities in Scottish government. The table below shows how our programme outcomes align with those of other key strategies.

Table 5: NCN Outcomes alignment with key Scottish Government Strategy Outcomes

Key Scottish government outcomes	Scotland NCN Outcomes	Improved natural environment along the NCN	Reduction in health inequalities through use of the NCN	Reduction in car use	Increase engagement with the NCN	Increase awareness of the NCN	Increase diversity of users of the NCN	Improve safety of the NCN	Improve accessibility of the NCN	Improve quality of the NCN	Improve connectivity to the NCN	Increase number of users of the NCN
												x
											x	
								x				
ATF Outcome 1: Increase the Number of People Choosing Walking, Cycling and Wheeling in Scotland												x
ATF Outcome 2: High quality walking, cycling and wheeling infrastructure is available to everyone.									x	x	x	
ATF Outcome 3: Walking, cycling and wheeling is safer for everyone.								x				

Key Scottish government outcomes

Scotland NCN Outcomes	Improved natural environment along the NCN	Reduction in health inequalities through use of the NCN	Reduction in car use	Increase engagement with the NCN	Increase awareness of the NCN	Increase diversity of users of the NCN	Improve safety of the NCN	Improve accessibility of the NCN	Improve quality of the NCN	Improve connectivity to the NCN	Increase number of users of the NCN
						x					
				x	x						
	x		x								
	x			x							
		x				x	x				
						x		x		x	
					x					x	

Key Scottish government outcomes	Scotland NCN Outcomes	Increase number of users of the NCN	Improve connectivity to the NCN	Improve quality of the NCN	Improve accessibility of the NCN	Improve safety of the NCN	Increase diversity of users of the NCN	Increase awareness of the NCN	Increase engagement with the NCN	Reduction in car use	Reduction in health inequalities through use of the NCN	Improved natural environment along the NCN
	<i>NTS2 Delivery Plan 2022-23: reduces inequalities</i>		x	x	x		x					
	<i>NTS2 Delivery Plan 2022-23: takes climate action</i>									x		x
	<i>NTS2 Delivery Plan 2022-23: improves our health and wellbeing</i>	x				x				x	x	
	<i>NTS2 Delivery Plan 2022-23: helps deliver inclusive economic growth</i>							x	x			
	<i>PfG 24-25: Eradicating Child Poverty</i>		x		x			x			x	
	<i>PfG 24-25: Growing the Economy</i>		x		x		x			x		
	<i>PfG 24-25: Tackling the Climate Emergency</i>	x	x							x		x
	<i>PfG 24-25: Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services</i>		x	x							x	
	<i>NPF Children and Young People: We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential</i>					x					x	

Improved natural environment along the NCN										
Reduction in health inequalities through use of the NCN										
Reduction in car use		x								
Increase engagement with the NCN	x									
Increase awareness of the NCN										
Increase diversity of users of the NCN	x									
Improve safety of the NCN										
Improve accessibility of the NCN										
Improve quality of the NCN										
Improve connectivity to the NCN		x								
Increase number of users of the NCN										

Scotland NCN Outcomes

Key Scottish government outcomes

<i>NPF Culture: We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely</i>										
<i>NPF Economy: We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy</i>		x								
<i>NPF Education: We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society</i>										
<i>NPF Environment: We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment</i>										x
<i>NPF Fair Work and Business: We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone</i>		x								
<i>NPF Health: We are healthy and active</i>	x								x	x
<i>NPF Human Rights: We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination</i>				x	x	x				

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