

EVIDENCE BASE Q: Cycling and walking

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**NPPF paragraph 17:** *Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. [These principles include to]. . . . . actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable . . . . .*

**Core Strategy policy CS32:** *Transport proposals will be supported which increase accessibility by public transport, community transport, cycling and walking.*

**THIS EVIDENCE BASE REVIEWS CYCLING AND WALKING ROUTES IN BACKWELL. IT HAS BEEN DRAFTED BY BACKWELL SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL ACTION GROUP (BSTAG).**

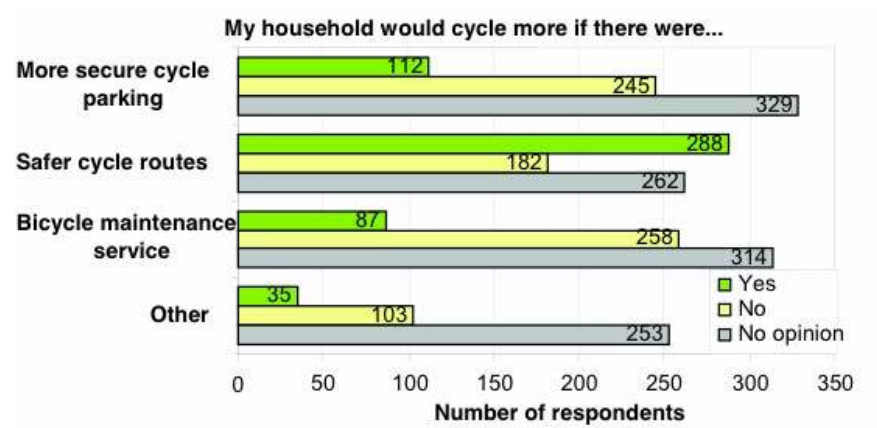
**Q.1. Introduction.** North Somerset Council's Core Strategy amplifies the NPPF by setting as a 'Priority Objective' the need to encourage people to make more sustainable transport choices. The supporting policies include references to the roles that cycling and walking can play in relation to transport and also in reducing carbon emissions, providing green infrastructure, and ensuring safe and healthy communities.

**Q.2.** The Backwell Community Plan 2010 ("BCPlan") informed that *"walking and cycling rates in Backwell are amongst the lowest in the South-West"*. According to a 2010/11 survey by the Department for Transport, in North Somerset approximately 15% of people cycle at least once per month, 10% once per week, 5% three times a week, and 1% five times a week.

**Q.3.** By comparison, the equivalent figures for Bristol are 24/14/10/9 and York 32/23/15/10, both known as 'cycling cities'. The absence of safe cycling infrastructure in Backwell and the narrow and congested main routes almost certainly

mean that cycling rates in Backwell are likely to be materially below those for North Somerset as a whole.

**Q.4. The BCPlan questionnaire.** This included questions on walking and cycling. The reader is referred to **EVIDENCE BASE 1** for details. Residents were asked: *what measures would encourage them to cycle more?* The response was:



**Q.5.** The 'Yes' responses indicated that the measure most likely to encourage more cycling was the provision of safer cycle routes. Many respondents identified specific requirements at locations within Backwell, along the A370, Station Road and improved links to Bristol and Nailsea.

**Q.6.** Additionally, more secure cycle parking was requested near the shops in the village centre, at schools, railway station, at the playing fields and recreation areas. Additional covered cycle parking at the station has since been provided.

**Q.7. Backwell's current cycling/multi-use infrastructure.** Cycling/multi-use infrastructure in Backwell is currently limited. There are no protected cycle lanes or shared-use paths along main routes. There is a short on-road cycle lane at the village crossroads outside the Estate Agents.

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**On-road cycle lane, A370**

Q.8. There are four Advanced Stop Lines ('ASL's') located at the crossroads, although not always observed by drivers. Notably there are no ASL's or on-road cycle lanes located at the railway bridge which represents a dangerous 'pinch point' for cyclists.



**Advanced stop line, Backwell crossroads**

Q.9. Cycle parking is located opposite the Spar in Rodney Road, outside Backwell Medical Centre, and at the swimming pool.



**Bicycle Racks near Rodney Road shops**

Q.10. There are two covered bike parking sheds at the station, accommodating a total of 38 bikes. These appear to be well used. There are plans to increase bike parking further as part of the forthcoming station car park extension.

Q.11. Sustrans online route mapping shows the paths adjacent to the Moor Lane play area as "traffic free" routes although there are no signs or markings indicating this status.

Q.12. There is signage to the National Cycle Network at the junction of Station Road and Backwell Common.

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NCN signage, Station Road

Q.13. Although not within the parish of Backwell, a shared-use path was constructed some years ago at Bucklands Batch as part of improvements to Station Road. Part of the path has been constructed with a raised kerb to full "Dutch" standards, and provides a local illustration of a high quality, safe route.



Bucklands Batch shared-use path

Q.14. **Possible new cycling/multi-user routes.** An extract from Sustrans' online mapping for Backwell is below. The green routes are "Traffic free", purple are "On-Road" and the blue dotted line is a "Proposed" route. The map shows National Route 33 (the 'Festival Way') from Backwell Bow towards Bristol, with a spur along Backwell Common to the junction with Station Road. To the west of Backwell the map shows part of National Route 410 (the 'Avon Cycleway') passing through Chelvey.

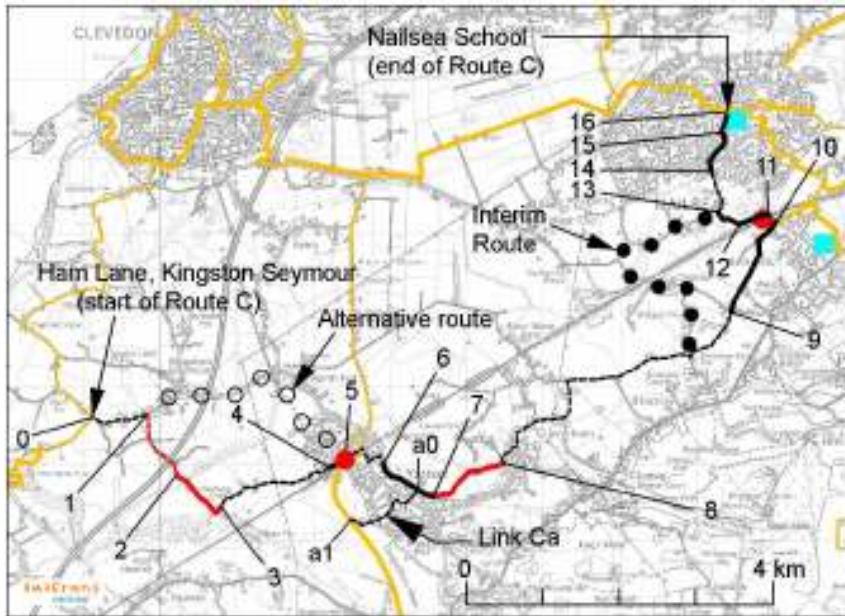


Sustrans online map - Backwell

Q.15. The map shows no current safe cycling link to the west of Backwell avoiding the A370. The need for such a link has, however, been identified, both by Sustrans and NSC.

Q.16. In 2002 a report was prepared for NSC by David Neale on behalf of Sustrans, "(to look) at existing routes suitable for 'family group cycling' and plans for a basic network of routes achievable within five years". Among the routes identified were routes from Kingston Seymour to Backwell & Nailsea ("Route C") and from Nailsea & Backwell Station to Bristol ("Route D"). Relevant map extracts are shown below with priority sections shown in red.

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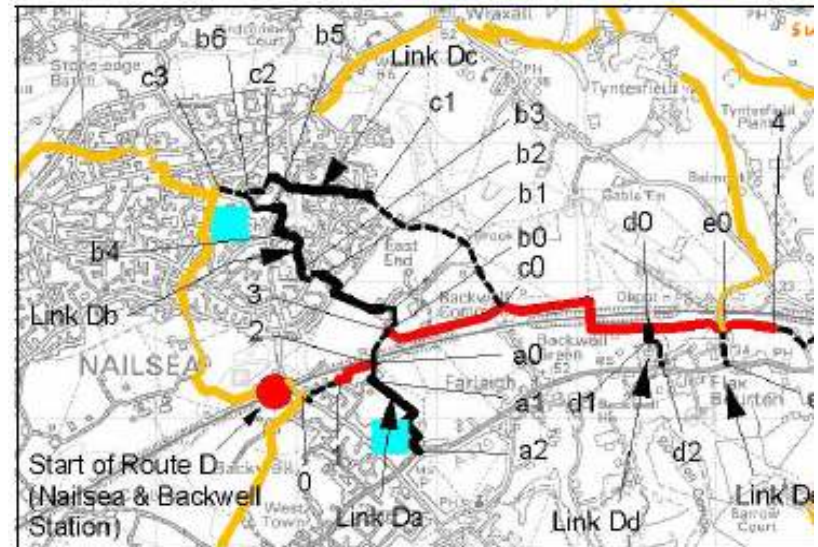
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**Route C : Kingston Seymour to Yatton, Backwell & Nailsea**

Q.17. So far as Route C is concerned, it is understood that John Grimshaw, ex-CEO and founder of Sustrans (now an independent consultant) identified a similar route running between Nailsea & Backwell Station and Chelvey Road but which follows an alignment to the west of the existing public footpath, and hence avoids Grove Farm itself. It is understood that, in mid-2010, initial discussions were held between *Sustainable Backwell* and the relevant landowner about the possibility of a 25 or 50 year lease of land for this purpose, but that no agreement was reached.

Q.18. Elements of Route D have been realised via the construction of the Flax Bourton Greenway and subsequent completion of the Festival Way into Bristol. Aside from that, no other sections of either route have yet been constructed, however NSC's Sites & Policies Development Plan ("SPD Plan") proposes

an extension of the Flax Bourton Greenway following a similar alignment to Route D (see paragraph Q.22 below.)



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**Route D - Nailsea & Backwell Station to Bristol (extract)**

Q.19. Route D also included a link from Backwell Common to the edge of Nailsea via Dibden's Farm, and from Backwell Common to the A370 via the grounds of Backwell School. It is understood that Backwell School agreed to dedicate part of their land to facilitate the construction of this route, but there were objections to the northern section of the route by some Nailsea residents and Nailsea Town Council, and no further progress was made.

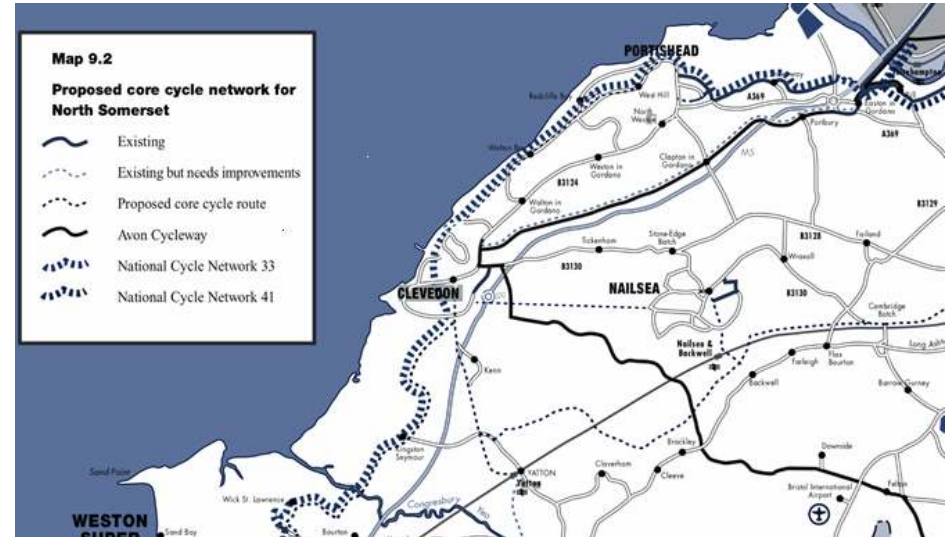
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**Draft route map - link from Moor Lane to Chelvey Road**

Q.20. In its 2007 Replacement Local Plan (Map 9.2), NSC identified a "Proposed core cycle route" between Station Road and Chelvey Road avoiding the A370 ("Proposed core cycle route"), following a similar alignment to Route C albeit rather less well defined. They also proposed an extension of the Flax Bourton Cycle path alongside the railway line to Backwell, with a spur to Nailsea along Station Road/Bucklands Batch.



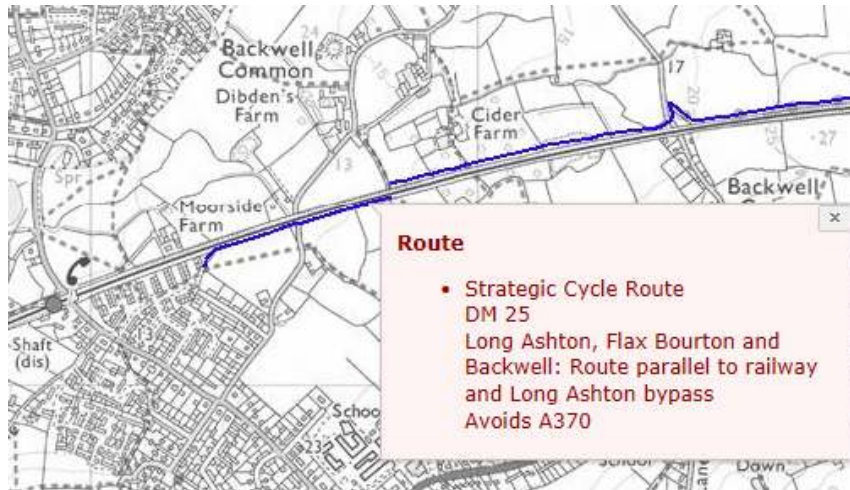
**Map 9.2 "Proposed core cycle network for North Somerset"**

Q.21. NSC's current 'Proposals Map' (adopted in April 2012) shows a "Strategic Cycle Route" which extends the existing Flax Bourton Greenway to Backwell, although does not show the link to Chelvey, nor the spur to Nailsea. It is unclear why those elements have not been retained.

Q.22. NSC **Proposals Map**. The draft 'Emerging Proposals Map' (which was subject to a consultation ending on 19th April 2013 as part of the Draft SPD Plan) includes the "Strategic Cycle Route" shown as a dotted blue line alongside the railway, passing under the railway at the Dibden's Farm accommodation bridge and joining with Waverley Road.

Q.23. The Map accompanies policy DM25 "Public rights of way, pedestrian and cycle access" and Schedule 6 ("Proposed Strategic Cycle Routes").

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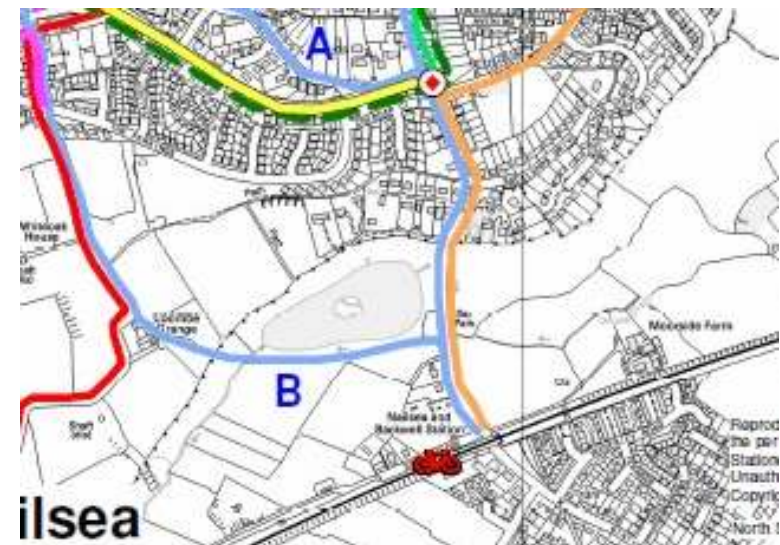
### Emerging Proposals Map

Q.24. It is understood that both the Moor Lane - Chelvey Road link (following the alignment suggested by John Grimshaw) and a short stretch of path adjacent to the Station car park are likely to be included in the finalised Emerging Proposals Map, although this will not be formally adopted as council policy until mid-2014 due to a legal challenge to the NSC Core Strategy. Certainly a "Strategic Cycle Route" which does not connect to any other routes to the north or west of Backwell and does not enable users travelling west to avoid the A370 (a stated purpose of the route) would make little obvious sense.

Q.25. It is important to note that the inclusion of such routes in NSC's plans is intended to ensure that the route corridors are protected from any development which might adversely affect the possibility of their construction in future. It is not in itself an indication that NSC will be bringing forward plans to construct such routes.

Q.26. There are no proposals relating to Backwell in the current NSC Cycling Infrastructure programme.

Q.27. For completeness, it is also worth mentioning two cycle routes to the north of the station which were identified by Halcrow Group as part of a report commissioned by NSC in 2007 (entitled "Nailsea Walking and Cycling Strategy") although it is understood the report was not formally adopted by NSC. An extract from the route map is shown. The route shown in blue is a "Signed Strategic Route" and the orange line denotes "Traffic calming". The red line shows part of National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 33 which at that stage was proposed to continue through Nailsea and along Youngwood Lane. The route adjacent to Backwell Lake would provide an alternative link to the quiet lanes west of Backwell avoiding the A370 although is arguably less convenient for Backwell residents than the Moor Lane-Chelvey Road link. Route C of the 2002 report also proposed a link to Youngwood Lane, via Station Close.



Extract from NSC report (Halcrow)

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Q.28. **Backwell Sustainable Travel Action Group ("BSTAG")**. BSTAG was formed in November 2012 by a group of residents concerned that:

- the narrow roads and increasing volumes of through-traffic on the main routes and 'rat running' on residential streets have combined to create an extremely hostile environment for residents wishing to make journeys within the village by bicycle or on foot;
- future predicted increases in traffic volumes will further reduce the proportion of journeys made on foot or by bicycle, increase the proportion of journeys made by car and increase vehicle emissions;
- this will adversely affect the health and quality of life of Backwell residents generally, and vulnerable groups (children, the elderly and disabled) in particular.

Q.29. BSTAG accepts that little can be done about volumes of through-traffic (there being no plans for a bypass in prospect), but believes that if high-quality provision were to be made for cyclists and pedestrians, this could significantly increase the proportion of local journeys made by bike or on foot within the village and its immediate surroundings. With this in mind, BSTAG's objective (in line with the Core Strategy) is:

*"the construction of an integrated network of safe, well signed and properly surfaced shared-use paths and 'Quietways' linking the different areas of the village and providing residents with an attractive alternative to car use for journeys within the village".*

Q.30. BSTAG has engaged with (amongst others) the Parish Council Steering Committee, Sustrans, NSC's Sustainable Travel Team, Sustainable Backwell and the headteachers of Backwell School and Backwell C of E Junior School/West Leigh Infants School.

Q.31. Following those discussions, and in consultation with its supporters, BSTAG has drawn up an illustration of what a possible path network could look like (see below). The immediate priority would be to create a safe route between West Leigh Infants School and Backwell C of E Junior School.

Q.32. Further discussion and consultation would be required (including with local schools, landowners and the Parish Council) before any detailed plans are brought forward, and the final shape of any network may look different.

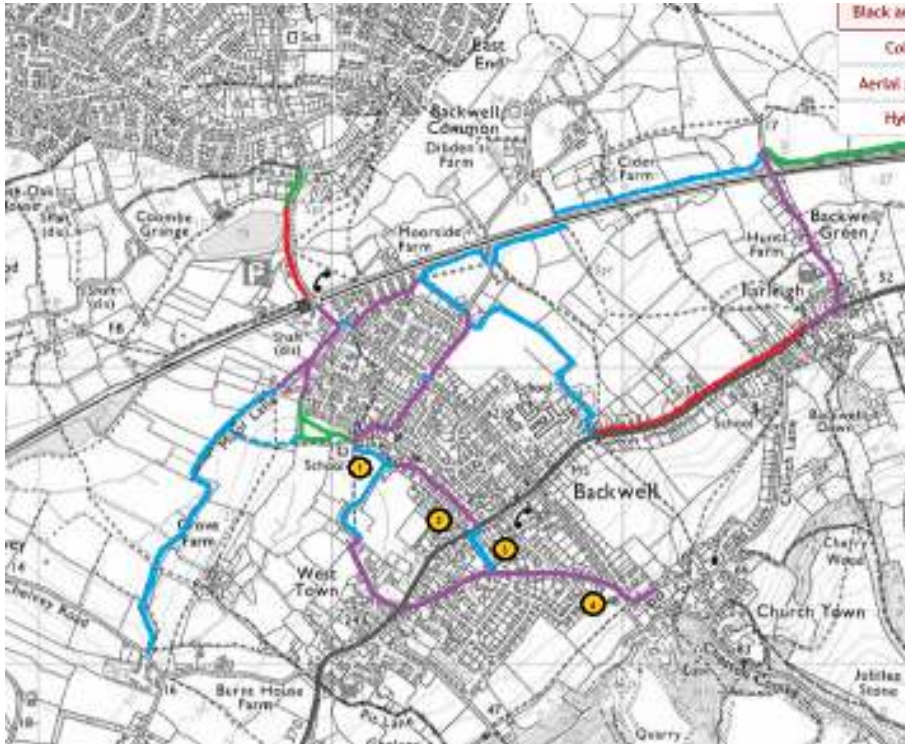
Q.33. BSTAG envisage that the main users of the network would be pedestrians, utility cyclists, and the disabled/those with mobility problems, although equestrian users and joggers would also be welcomed where practicable.

Q.34. The key to ensuring that any network is well-used is to provide routes which are both attractive (safe, contiguous, accessible, and well-surfaced) and go where people want to go. A local example of such a route is the newly opened section of the Festival Way, at Parsonage Farm, Long Ashton.



**Festival Way, Parsonage Farm, Long Ashton**

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### BSTAG route illustration

#### Key:

**Green:** existing Sustrans off road routes; **Red:** protected multi-use path, **Blue:** off road path; **Purple:** on road route/Quietway, **Dotted line** = possible additional route



High priority safe route between Infant & Junior School

- Q.35. Where space issues mean that segregation from vehicle traffic is not possible, shared-space principles could be applied, notably along Rodney Road and the A370, in combination with reduced speed limits of 20mph and 30mph respectively.
- Q.36. Funding for a network of safe paths would need investigation. These include the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, Natural England's 'Paths for Communities' Scheme, Bristol Airport Community Fund and the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- Q.37. This Evidence Base is included in *BACKWELL FUTURE* to demonstrate that there is a local organisation (BSTAG), willing to work with Backwell Parish Council to try and improve safe walking and cycling routes within Backwell.
- Q.38. Backwell Parish Council is not committed to any proposals in this Evidence Base. It is however committed to working towards creating a network of cycleways/footpaths and public transport routes that ensure safe and convenient access to local services and linkage with neighbouring settlements, subject to appropriate consultation.

### REFERENCES USED IN THIS EVIDENCE BASE

2010/11 survey by the Department for Transport (Para Q.2):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-walking-and-cycling-in-england-2010-11>

Sustrans online mapping for Backwell (Q.14):

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/map?searchKey=Search+our+mapping&searchType=search&Search=Find>

NSC's current 'Proposals Map' (Q.21):

<http://map.n-somerset.gov.uk/LocalPlan.html>

NSC's draft 'Emerging Proposals Map' (Q.23):

<http://map.n-somerset.gov.uk/EmergingProposals.html>

Local Sustainable Transport Fund (Q.36):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/local-sustainable-transport-fund>

Natural England's 'Paths for Communities' Scheme (Q.36):

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/rightsofway/p4c.aspx>

Bristol Airport Community Fund (Q.36):

<http://www.bristolairport.co.uk/about-us/community.aspx>