

Impact Assessment



Assessment of: Tarka Trail - Willingcott to Knowle

Service: Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Head of Service: Meg Booth

Version/date of sign off by Head of Service: Jamie Hulland (2023/10/30)

Assessment carried out by (job title): Katalin Fulop (Transport Planning Officer)

1. Description of project / service / activity / policy under review

Devon County Council seek to develop walking, cycling and wheeling schemes across the county.

The Government announced the development of the Willingcott to Knowle trail as one of the successful schemes of the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 (ATF4) in May 2023. This will help towards meeting the objectives of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

The proposal aligns investment with Gear Change and wider Government objectives, including local growth and productivity, tackling public health issues, decarbonisation, levelling up and cost of living challenges.

2. Proposal, aims and objectives, and reason for change or review

The proposed scheme starts at Willingcott Bridge junction (where Bradwell Road, Georgeham Road and Willingcott Hill meet), turning into a trail from Willingcott Valley to Knowle using the old railway route. The proposed trail runs parallel to A361 until it joins Nethercott Road, then follows River Caen to Knowle.

The proposal includes 6 Phases that Devon County Council seek to develop and construct in the coming years, the trail through the Holiday Village that is currently under construction by a 3rd party (connects Willingcott Bridge junction to DCC's Phase 1) and improvements at Willingcott Bridge junction.

Phase 1 is now constructed but needs surfacing, which will be completed at the same time as Phase 2 is constructed and surfaced. Phase 5 along Nethercott Road will be next to construct. In the interim time between Phases 1, 2 and 5 being completed and the rest of the route being completed, it is proposed to use the A361 for a short section. Then Phase 6 is likely to be progressed next, to make use of Phase 5. Phase 4 would likely follow,

reducing the length of the A361 needed to be used to reach phase 2. Finally, phase 3 and Willingcott Bridge Junction are likely to be the last phases due to the length of phase 3 and a number of large structures needed.

3. Risk assessment, limitations and options explored (summary)

Road Safety Audit

Stage 1 and 2 were completed for Phase 1, 2 and 5. Stage 1 completed for Phase 6. Further changes to the design will be subject to the outcome and could be agreed through delegated powers.

Environmental survey

Multiple environmental surveys were carried out for each phase, including assessment of wildlife, coastal and water environment, flood risk, historic environment and trees and hedges.

Limitations

Devon County Council has funded the construction of phase 1 already through Local Transport Plan Capital Funding, and it is expected to continue funding this project at a high level in the future, however the cost of phases 3, 4 and 6 for construction are expected to be in the order of millions of pounds, and further external funding will be required to complete the project.

There will be an ongoing future maintenance cost associated with the route.

Landowners

Not all the land required has been secured from landowners. There are ongoing conversations with landowners along the route, but there is a risk of cost increase depending on the to be secured land agreement with outstanding landowners.

Alternative Options

The current Tarka Trail ends south of Knowle, with a link to NCN 27 on a rough track through Deans Copse and via on road routes near to Georgeham.

Realistic major alternatives to the route are not available to the current proposed phases, as these have been considered in terms of gradient, desire line, land availability and planning policies. Using the existing route of NCN 27 and not progressing the scheme is the only realistic alternative.

There are some specific alternatives/options to consider as the detailed design progresses,

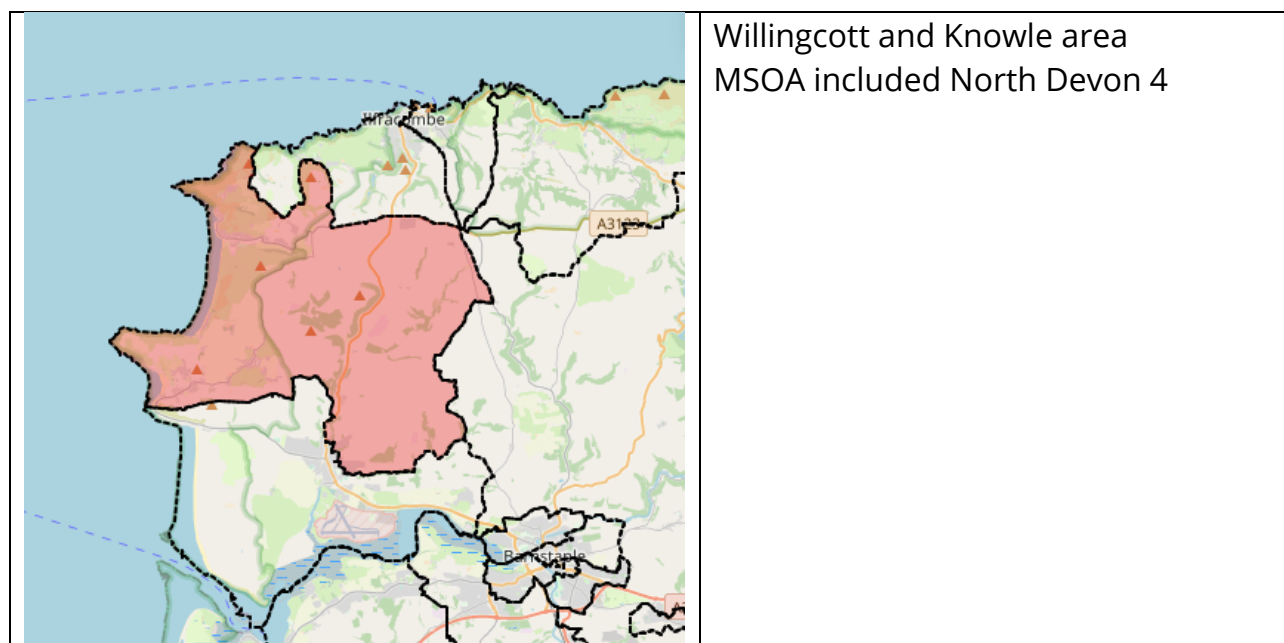
such as materials to be used, the exact width and specification of the path, the location and number of rest areas etc. These will be considered during the detailed design of each phase.

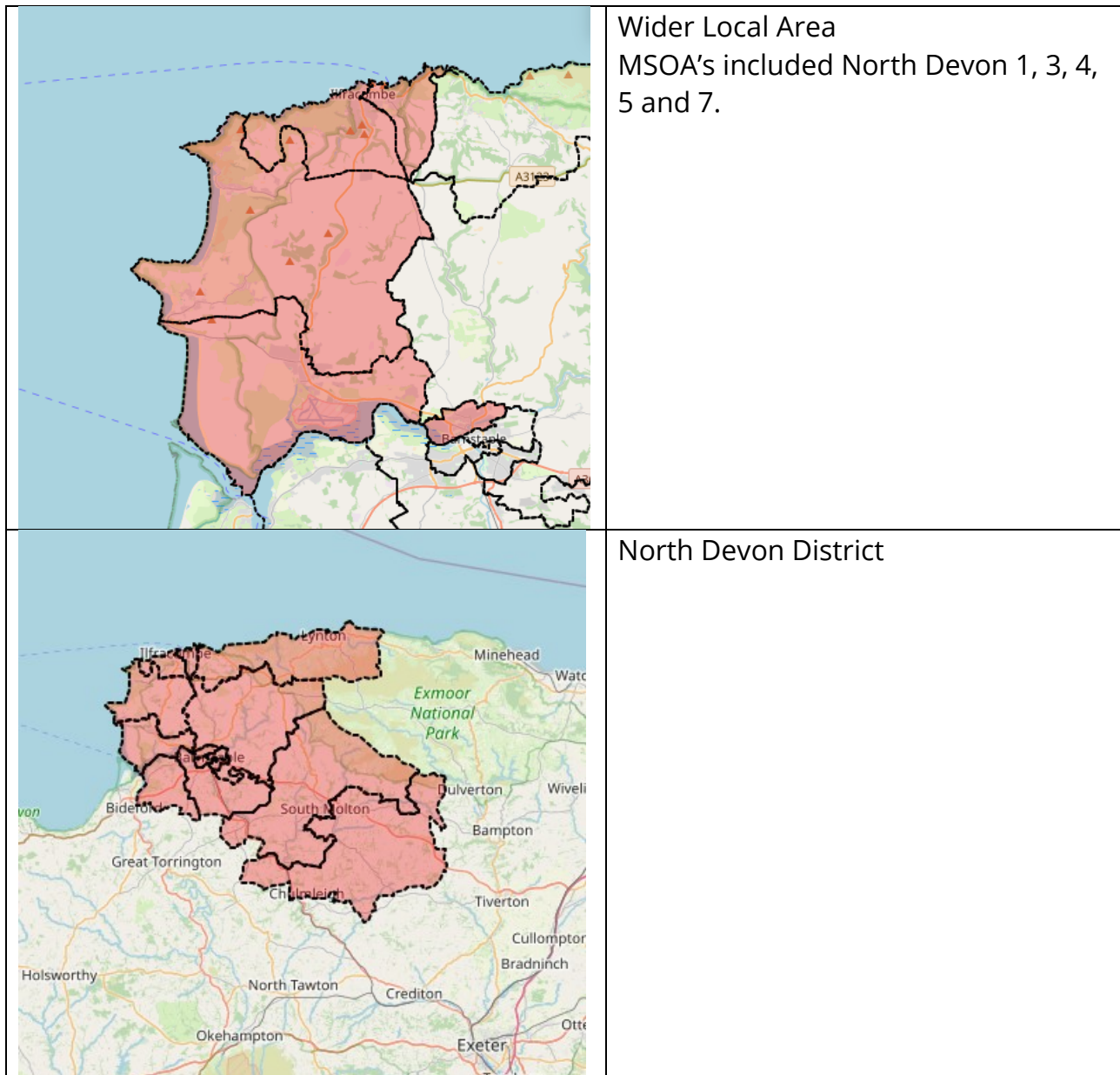
There are some possible changes to the alignment of phase 4, which could have fewer crossings of the River Caen. These are still being investigated and future consultation will occur on these options.

The alternative to the interim use of the A361 would be to complete phases 1,2 and 5, but not open them to the public at all. This would mean that the new asset is completed, and subject to maintenance and weathering, for no public benefit, and this is not considered the best approach.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

The people potentially affected by the proposals are principally those living or working in the areas of Willingcott and Knowle, as well as people wishing to travel actively between Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. Therefore, the diversity profile for the Willingcott and Knowle area is presented below, with the wider local area, including the longer corridor between Ilfracombe and the north of Barnstaple, North Devon. Devon and England are used as a comparator. The below maps show the extent of the boundaries of the Willingcott and Knowle area, the wider local area and North Devon. The propensity for certain demographic groups to walk and cycle is also discussed, to inform assessment of the potential differential impacts of the proposals.





Wider Local Area
MSOA's included North Devon 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7.

North Devon District

Age

Table 1 illustrates that the population of the Willingcott and Knowle area is older than the national average, with 65 years old and over making up 10% larger proportion of the areas population than the national average. Devon as a whole is comparatively older than the national average, with the wider local area and North Devon having similar proportions as the full County.

Geography	Total	% Age 0-19	% Age 20-64	% Age 65+
Willingcott /Knowle area	5,255	20%	52%	28%
Wider Local area	31,220	21%	54%	25%
North Devon	98,611	21%	54%	26%
Devon	811,638	20%	54%	26%
England	56,490,048	23%	58%	18%

Table 1: Age (Census, 2021)

As highlighted by the 2019 National Travel Survey, summarised in Table 2, the proportions of trips made by bicycle are fairly consistent across all age groups, with people aged between 17 and 60 making the greatest proportion. It is also seen that people under 30 tend to travel on foot more than those who are over 30. Therefore, the proposals may benefit people in the younger age groups more than other age groups.

Mode		All ages	0-16	17-20	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Bicycle	No.	16	13	19	19	22	22	18	13	6
	%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Walk	No.	250	301	272	243	279	268	222	213	177
	%	26%	35%	33%	28%	26%	24%	21%	21%	22%
Walks of over 1 mile	No.	65	63	80	68	66	70	68	72	46
	%	7%	7%	10%	8%	6%	6%	7%	7%	6%
All modes	No.	953	863	824	860	1,073	1,121	1,037	995	800

Table 2: Trips per person per year (National Travel Survey 2019)

Ethnicity

As shown in Table 3, the Willingcott and Knowle area, the wider local area, North Devon, and Devon as a whole is lower in ethnic diversity than the national average.

Ethnicity	Total	% Asian / Asian British	% Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	% Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	% White	% Other ethnic group
Willingcott and Knowle area	5,258	0.3%	0.2%	1.3%	97.8%	0.4%
Wider Local Area	31,228	1.1%	0.5%	1.3%	96.6%	0.5%
North Devon	98,612	1.2%	0.3%	1.2%	97.0%	0.3%
Devon	811,642	1.5%	0.3%	1.4%	96.4%	0.5%
England	56,490,048	9.6%	4.2%	3.0%	81.0%	2.2%

Table 3: Ethnicity (Census, 2021)

Cycle use is highest amongst people identifying as 'White', and lower amongst all other ethnicities. The proportions of trips made on foot are highest amongst people who identify as 'Mixed ethnicities', 'Other ethnicities' or 'Asian'. As the percentage of diverse ethnicities in the Willingcott and Knowle area is so low, the proportional benefits to walking aren't representative, however, the proportional benefits to people cycling will be moderately high.

Health and disability

People with less mobility make fewer trips overall, with the proportion of their trips made by bicycle or on foot being lower than the proportion of trips made by bicycle or on foot by people with mobility. A larger proportion of the population in the Willingcott and Knowle area were considered to have good or very good health compared with the wider local area, North Devon, Devon and England, suggesting a higher proportion of people will benefit from the new cycle path.

Health	Good health	Fair health	Bad health
Willingcott and Knowle area	85.3%	10.7%	4.0%
Wider Local area	80.7%	13.7%	5.6%
North Devon	80.4%	13.9%	5.7%
Devon	81.4%	13.5%	5.1%
England	82.2%	12.7%	5.2%

Table 4: General Health (Census, 2021)

The Willingcott and Knowle area has similar proportion of people disabled under the Equality Act with their day-to-day activities limited a little and a lot, as Devon and England.

Gender

In all geographies considered, there were slightly more females than males. Females tend to make a greater proportion of trips on foot than males, however males tend to make a greater proportion of trips by bicycle than females. The overall benefits are therefore to both genders.

Socio-economic

The proportion and number of trips made by bicycle is similar across all incomes. However, the proportion of trips made on foot tends to decrease with increasing income, primarily due to people with higher incomes typically having greater access to alternative transport modes e.g. private car. The table below illustrates among people in the lowest income quintile (1st), 36% of trips are made on foot, compared with 22% in the highest (5th) income quintile.

Mode		All income quintiles	1 st income quintile	2 nd income quintile	3 rd income quintile	4 th income quintile	5 th income quintile
Bicycle	No.	16	13	15	18	15	20
	%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Walk	No.	250	307	250	238	237	215
	%	26%	36%	27%	25%	23%	22%
All	No.	953	859	921	969	1,017	995

Table 5: Trips per person per year by income (National Travel Survey 2019)

Compared to England as a whole, the area in the immediate vicinity of the scheme is less deprived with 57% of households not deprived in any dimension compared to England's 48%. Similarly, the Willingcott and Knowle area is 6% lower in deprivation in one or two dimensions than England. The wider local area, the area which will benefit from greater active travel connectivity provided by the scheme, is seen to have similar levels of deprivation as England.

	% Household is not deprived in any dimension	% Household is deprived in one or two dimensions	% Household is deprived in three or four dimensions
Scheme area	57%	42%	1%
Wider Local area	49%	48%	3%
North Devon	48%	49%	3%
Devon	50%	48%	3%
England	48%	48%	4%

Table 6: Household Deprivation (Census 2021)

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

- The scheme is identified in the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011-2031 as policy ST10(1)(g) and the Devon Transport Infrastructure Plan (item ND20). It is one of the top priority trails for Devon County Council to build over the coming years for leisure users and potential commuters along the route, as well as to travel safely, conveniently and directly by non-car mode.
- Employers whose workers travel to work via the proposed trail.
- Businesses that are served via the proposed trail. People will use the route for commute and leisure.
- Councillors whose wards are served by the proposed trail.
- Community organisations e.g., walking and cycling groups and environmental pressure groups, who may advocate for improved rural trails that connect communities together.
- Devon County Council, for whom the Tarka Trail will support all the strategic objectives, most importantly help communities to be safe, connected and resilient.
- Residents who currently use the alternative A361 to either cycle or to drive.

6. Additional relevant research used to inform this assessment

- Environmental Surveys
- National Travel Survey Data
- Census Data

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

No formal consultation has been carried out on the strategy for this scheme.

Consultations for some individual phases will be carried out.

As part of the bid for the fourth round of the Active Travel Fund various letters of support were obtained. These include support for the scheme from:

- the Member of Parliament for North Devon
- the Leader of North Devon Council
- the Chair of One Northern Devon Active Travel Forum
- Morteohoe Parish Council
- West Down Parish Council

Background information

8. Equality analysis

Under the Equality Act 2010, the local authority must consider how people will be affected by a service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations across protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (for work), sex, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief. The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are: informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations; proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision); fair, necessary, reasonable, and those affected have been adequately consulted.

- a) Is this group negatively or potentially negatively impacted, and in what way?
- b) What could be done or has been done to remove the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage and inequalities?
- c) In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim?
- d) What can be done to advance equality further? This could include meeting specific needs, ensuring equality of opportunity and access, encouraging participation, empowering people, making adjustments for disabled people and action to reduce disparities and inequalities.

e) Is there a need to foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promote understanding) and help people to be safe and protected from harm? What can be done?

All residents by geographic area

It is expected that the scheme will benefit all residents in the geographical area due to increased connectivity between Ilfracombe and Barnstaple, without the need to remove highway space. It is expected that extension of the Tarka Trail will increase walking and cycling tourism in the area, improving economic prosperity.

A potential negative impact could be seen for land owners, whose land will be required for the trail, however these would be compensated through the mitigation process.

Age

The cycle path will benefit all walkers and wheelers of all ages. As highlighted by the 2019 National Travel Survey, people under the age of 30 tend to travel on foot more than people ages over 30, which makes up approximately 27% of the population in the Willingcott and Knowle area.

Off road route would make elderly and more vulnerable people safer cycling on it. Current alternative is the NCN27 (a longer alternative), or the A361, with a 50mph speed limit for vehicles.

Disability (includes sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people

Extension of the Tarka Trail will provide off road walking and wheeling infrastructure which will enable all people to carry out their journey in a safe and comfortable environment without needing to use the current alternatives like the longer NCN27, or the A361, with a 50mph speed limit.

This proposal will especially benefit people who have some form of disability as there would be a safe and flatter surface of the cycleway to complete their journey.

Race and culture: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin, skin colour, religion and belief, asylum seeker and refugee status, language needs

Active travel infrastructure which is for all to use is encouraged. People identifying as mixed ethnicities, other ethnicities or Asian make a greater proportion of trips by active travel than the general population, therefore providing safe, off road routes may particularly advance access to employment and services for people in these groups.

Sex and gender identity and reassignment (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed)

Active travel infrastructure which is for all to use is encouraged. As detailed in section 4, females tend to make a greater proportion of trips on foot than males, and males tend to make a greater proportion of trips by bicycle than females. Thus, the proposals may benefit both genders across the different modes.

Sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership if work related

Active travel infrastructure use is encouraged for all.

Other relevant socio-economic factors and intersectionality

This includes, where relevant: income, housing, education and skills, language and literacy skills, family background (size/single people/lone parents), sub-cultures, rural isolation, access to services and transport, access to ICT/Broadband, children in care and care experienced people, social connectivity and refugee status/no recourse to public funds. Also consider intersectionality with other characteristics.

Walking and wheeling is higher among lower income groups who in general may have less access to alternative transport modes, such as the private car. Providing safe, off road infrastructure may particularly benefit people in the lower income group.

9. Human rights considerations:

We need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection to a private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/avoidable death).

No direct implications, however, enhancements to walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure may enable individuals to exercise certain human rights more easily, such as the right to employment or the right to education (both enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) by improving access to employment/education. Active travel is open to everyone.

10. Environmental analysis

An impact assessment should give due regard to the following activities in order to ensure we meet a range of environmental legal duties. The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please mark X in the relevant box below and proceed to the 11, otherwise complete the environmental analysis information below):

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	
Planning Permission	Parts of the route will require planning permission.
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

- a) Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- b) Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost

The use of recycled materials in the construction of the proposed infrastructure will be considered during the development of each proposal.

Conserve and enhance wildlife

Ecology and environmental surveys will be undertaken to ensure adequate mitigation to conserve wildlife and ancient woodland is safeguarded.

Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape

The proposed route is along the disused railway line with trees protecting the areas landscape. There will be no negative consequences. Increase in walking, wheeling and cycling can lead to less use of cars, creating less pressure for new road building.

Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage

There are some listed buildings and monuments near to the proposed route but the impacts on these are likely to be very minor, and addressed through relevant planning applications.

Minimise greenhouse gas emissions

The construction of the infrastructure proposed for each phase may generate greenhouse gas emissions in the short term. The infrastructure proposed will likely encourage modal shift from car to walking, wheeling and cycling, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport. This will be improved as far as possible by delivering the improvements as efficiently as possible, enabling benefits to be realised as quickly as possible.

Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise)

The construction of the infrastructure proposed for each phase may generate pollution in the short term. The infrastructure proposed will likely encourage modal shift from car to walking, wheeling and cycling, reducing pollution from transport. The route will not increase the light and noise pollution as the trail won't be lit at night and none of the users will use motorised vehicles on the route. The drainage system needs to be assessed and improved to ensure water doesn't damage the trail in the future.

Contribute to reducing water consumption

No negative consequences. No direct outcomes.

Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level)

No negative consequences. This scheme meets the objectives of DCC's declaration of a Climate Emergency. For example, it will lead to more people walking and wheeling and less use of private cars, resulting in less traffic noise and greenhouse gases.

Other (please state below)

11. Economic analysis

- a) Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- b) Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

Impact on knowledge and skills

No negative consequences.

The 2019 National Travel Survey highlighted that younger demographics of 30 years and below including school and university aged people disproportionately walk and cycle more.

Thus, improving active travel connectivity supports individuals travelling to academic institutions, early carers jobs and training courses.

Impact on employment levels

No negative consequences.

The scheme will improve pedestrian and cycle access between Willingcott and Knowle, enhancing the active travel link between Ilfracombe and Barnstaple. Improved active travel links will help improve access to employment for people who walk or wheel to work. Additionally, increased walking and cycling tourism could boost the local economy, leading to greater employment opportunities.

Impact on local business

No negative consequences.

The scheme will improve the walking and wheeling experience, encouraging locals to visit their local businesses. Additionally, the continuation of the Tarka Trail will encourage an increase in walking and cycling tourism, which would boost the local economy, having a positive impact on local businesses.