

Southend residents reclaim their streets

By the time you read this we hope to have completed our work in Southend to make local streets more people-friendly. With funding from the People's Health Trust and Southend on Sea Borough Council, we've helped residents transform shared community spaces so people can walk and cycle through them, socialise in them and enjoy them.

One location near Southend Victoria station was a large open square that lacked vibrancy – people just passed through it. After consulting

with residents and local businesses, we've added seating, additional lighting, planting and new trees to brighten up the area and make it a place for people to stop and enjoy.

Another short section of road close to the A13 has been closed off to drivers and grassed over. It's now a small 'pocket park' with cycling and walking routes crossing through it. With the town centre and a local school nearby, this will be a more pleasant route for people making their everyday journeys.

Reaching the hub of the community in Dunstable

Just two years after opening, our hub in Ashton Square, Dunstable, recently had its 10,000th visitor. And this is all down to the variety of information and advice our staff give, and their enthusiasm to help the public.

The information hub is a crucial way of introducing people to our work, including school children. During the Christmas holidays we ran a competition which they were encouraged to enter, called 'Cycle to Santa'. Over 100 school pupils brought their parents along to the hub to post their entries. This was the perfect opportunity for schools officer, Derek Smulders, to talk to parents and promote our broader work in Dunstable.

We've been really pleased with the uptake for the weight loss and healthy lifestyle programmes that are operating from the hub. Our staff and volunteers are always on hand to sign people up for a local walk or ride, or to provide information on local journeys that can be made on foot or bike, and this really seems to be making a difference.

A hub visitor, who became a Sustrans volunteer, said: "My level of physical fitness

dramatically improved and I lost weight. I felt better and people told me I looked better and I noticed I was closing my belt three or four notches further in. Mentally I felt sharper and increasingly confident; suddenly life was less grey."

The hub has become a focal point for the community. And it's helped ensure the success of initiatives such as regular Luton and Dunstable Cycle Forum rides which we have supported and which many of our volunteers are involved with.



An information board in Dunstable's popular travel hub

Marriott's Way gets an upgrade

Norfolk County Council and Norwich City Council are set to make the region's longest off-road National Cycle Network route, the Marriott's Way near Norwich, an even better way to travel between the city centre and the beautiful Norfolk countryside. Resurfacing near the city has taken priority, but we hope to see more maintenance work in the future thanks to funding from the Cycle City Ambition Fund set up by the Department for Transport, plus other funding.

Local councils are as keen as us to see improvements. In February, we supported a series of events to put together a 10-year plan for the route, which was once earmarked for a new road.

Unique roundabout in Bedford reduces vehicle speeds

We've been involved in an interesting piece of work involving the remodelling of a Bedford roundabout by Bedford Borough Council, to improve cyclists' safety. The experience turned out to be controversial and difficult for Sustrans – many people have strong feelings about roundabouts, which can be danger points for cyclists. However, since it opened we've seen lower vehicle speeds, and new zebra crossings are proving a big hit, especially for the large numbers of school children who use the area.

The design is unique – there are two lanes of traffic on the approaches to the roundabout, but users have to get in the correct lane before they enter the roundabout. It was unique for the UK to remodel an existing roundabout in this way. This sort of design is fairly common in the Netherlands, but it wouldn't be used by cyclists. However, it was felt that some cyclists would be bound to use it in this country even though there is an off-road alternative available. So this was considered from the outset.

We advised and administered the work as part of a consortium, with funding from Department for Transport. We're still pushing for some improvements. Bedford Borough Council designed and delivered it, and we're continuing to work with them to monitor its success.



Brian Savidge

Cyclists would have the chance to spot wildlife on the way to the RSPB office!

Linking up Potton and Sandy

A safe alternative to cycling on the busy B1042 Potton Road, between Potton and Sandy, Bedfordshire, is one step closer. We've been looking at options for a new walking and cycling route for many years, talking with landowners, the RSPB and local councils to try to get something that everyone is happy with and that can attract funding.

A funding bid has now been submitted for the first part which would link with National Route 12 and potentially form part of a bigger stretch between Sandy, Wimpole Hall and Cambridge.

The RSPB's head office sits between the two towns, and many Potton residents work at the office. The charity is keen for staff and visitors to have a safe cycling route from Sandy Railway Station and Potton, to give people alternative options to driving.



If you would like to get involved or have any questions, please get in touch with Nigel Brigham and the East of England team: 01733 319981 or eastofengland@sustrans.org.uk