

Flint Town Urban Area Links

Produced as part of Sustrans' Linking Up Project

Final project report

June 2019



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About Sustrans

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle. We are engineers and educators, experts and advocates. We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Sustrans works in partnership, bringing people together to find the right solutions. We make the case for walking and cycling by using robust evidence and showing what can be done. We are grounded in communities and believe that grassroots support combined with political leadership drives real change, fast. Join us on our journey. www.sustrans.org.uk

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1. Introduction



Figure 1 Drop in session at Flint Market

This report summarises the work Sustrans has conducted for the improvement of walking and cycling connections in Flint (Flintshire County Council). The work is connected with the re-alignment of National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 5 between Flint and Connah's Quay, currently running on a busy road and therefore not suitable for safe walking and cycling. This part of the project aims to provide sustainable access opportunities between the large residential areas of Flint, the town centre retail district and the train station which is connected to the NCN Route 5 alignment.

The report is addressed to Flintshire County Council and Flint Town Council and is aimed at supporting future works and funding applications for the delivery of these improvements.

Between 2016 and 2019, through the Rural Development Programme funding awarded by the Welsh Government, Sustrans has worked with local residents, local town and county councillors, Cadw, local volunteers and officers from Flintshire County Council to identify preferred options for the improvements.

The report presents the engagement process to date and the initial design solutions that will need to be further developed to deliver a connected walking and cycling network within the town.

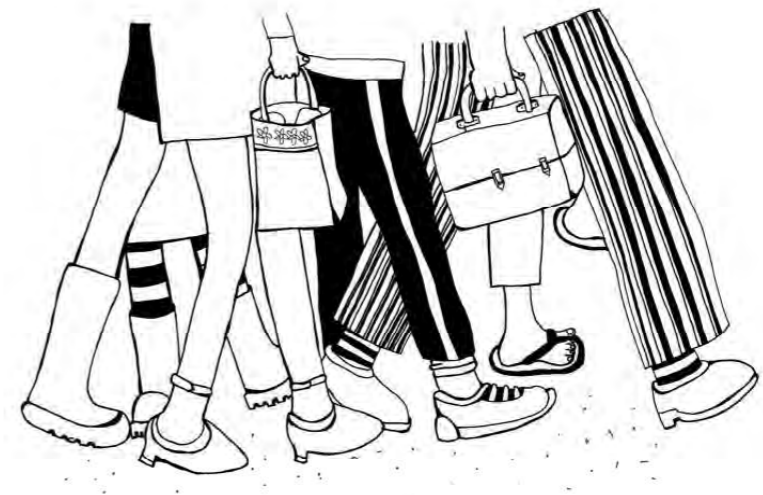
2. Aims and objectives

The overall aims and objectives of the project were:

- Collaborate with the local community to create a better environment for walking and cycling within Flint
- Improve the urban links to the future traffic free path that will link Flint town centre with its Castle and foreshore area
- Provide Flintshire CC and Flint Town Council with evidence-based solutions to improve walking and cycling infrastructure into Flint, in line with the Active Travel Act INM map issued for the town
- Engage the local community to better understand the barriers to walking and cycling within the town and use their knowledge to design and support infrastructure improvements

Outputs:

- Identify preferred routes for walking and cycling according to the feedback collected by the community and the schools
- Identify and prioritise preferred links to the Castle and foreshore area
- Provide initial design solutions to improve walking and cycling provision in town



3. Key achievements - outputs delivered to date



Workshops

3 technical workshops delivered with the participation of local stakeholders (Flintshire County Council, Flint Town Councillors, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Flintshire Tourism Destination partnership, Cadw, local volunteers)



Community event

1 community event, open to the whole community for 3 weeks



Schools

2 schools engaged - 5 classes in total



Attendees

200 attendees in total



Online survey

1 online survey (preferred routes and expectations from the project)

4. Activities

4.1 Initial online survey

Date - March - April 2017

Number of respondents: 20

We set up online surveys to get the views of a wide range of stakeholders, as key local authority officers, local community members, local businesses, etc. to inform discussions in meetings from June 2017.

The surveys included the following questions:

- Impact of the improved traffic free path on the day to day attitude towards walking and cycling
- Perception of existing barriers to the development of the path
- Existing relationships that could contribute to, or influence, the development of a new walking and cycling route, including who is involved, how they may contribute to the scheme development and any barriers to their involvement
- Training needs
- Perceptions on the existence of effective local tourism partnerships and stakeholders' participation
- Perceptions on the impact of increased tourism in the destination
- Preferred option for the link to Connah's Quay
- Personal experience of walking and cycling around Flint town

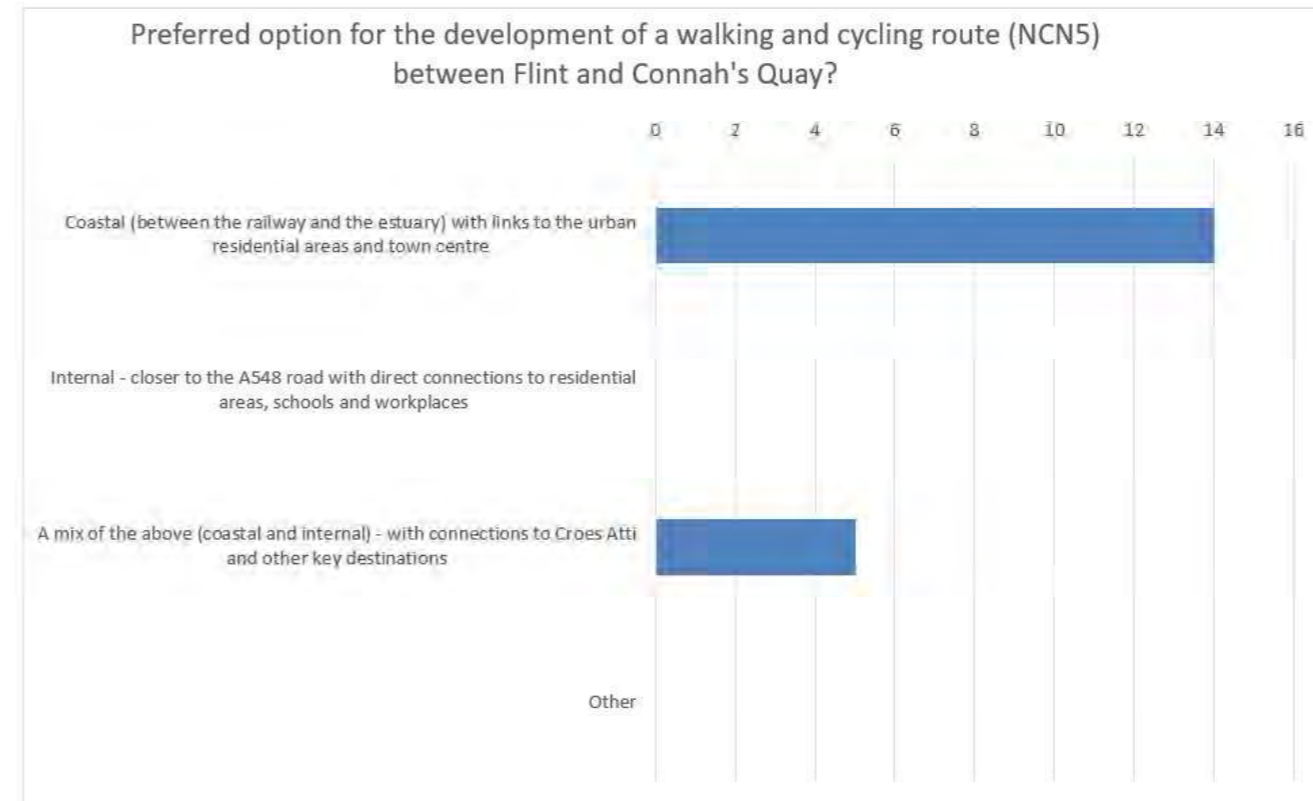


Figure 2 Output from online survey - Preferred option

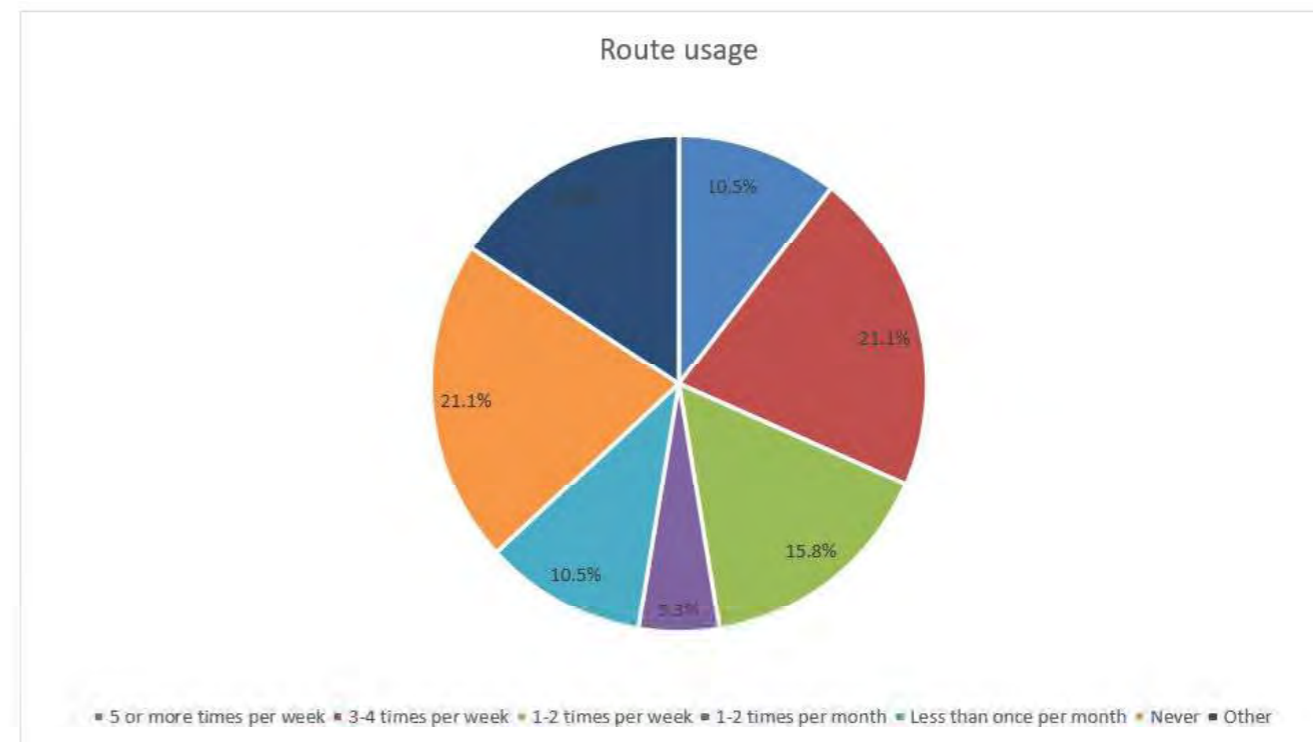


Figure 3 Output from online survey - Route usage

4.2 Initial stakeholder meeting

Date - June 2017

Number of attendees: 12

The event

Project staff met with a number of local stakeholders including council officers, statutory bodies representatives, local town councillors, and representatives of business groups. Discussions were focused on initial options to re-align the link between Flint and Connah's Quay and to improve the urban links and the connection between Flint town centre and the Castle and Foreshore area.

Approach

The purpose of this initial meeting was to clarify the scope of the Linking Up project and to identify with the stakeholders groups the expected outputs and outcomes generated by the project activities. The diversity of the stakeholders present in the room allowed an initial conversation about additional stakeholders to involve, existing assets in the area (i.e. tourism destinations), possible funding streams, land ownership issues and key barriers (busy roads etc).

Outputs

The meeting helped to initiate a conversation with the local group and to start planning for future activities. The following actions were agreed:

- Plans will feed into the Active Travel Act consultation for the Integrated Network Map and with Regeneration plans for the area (both led by Flintshire CC)
- Sustrans would conduct further feasibility work to look at preferred options, land ownership and key barriers

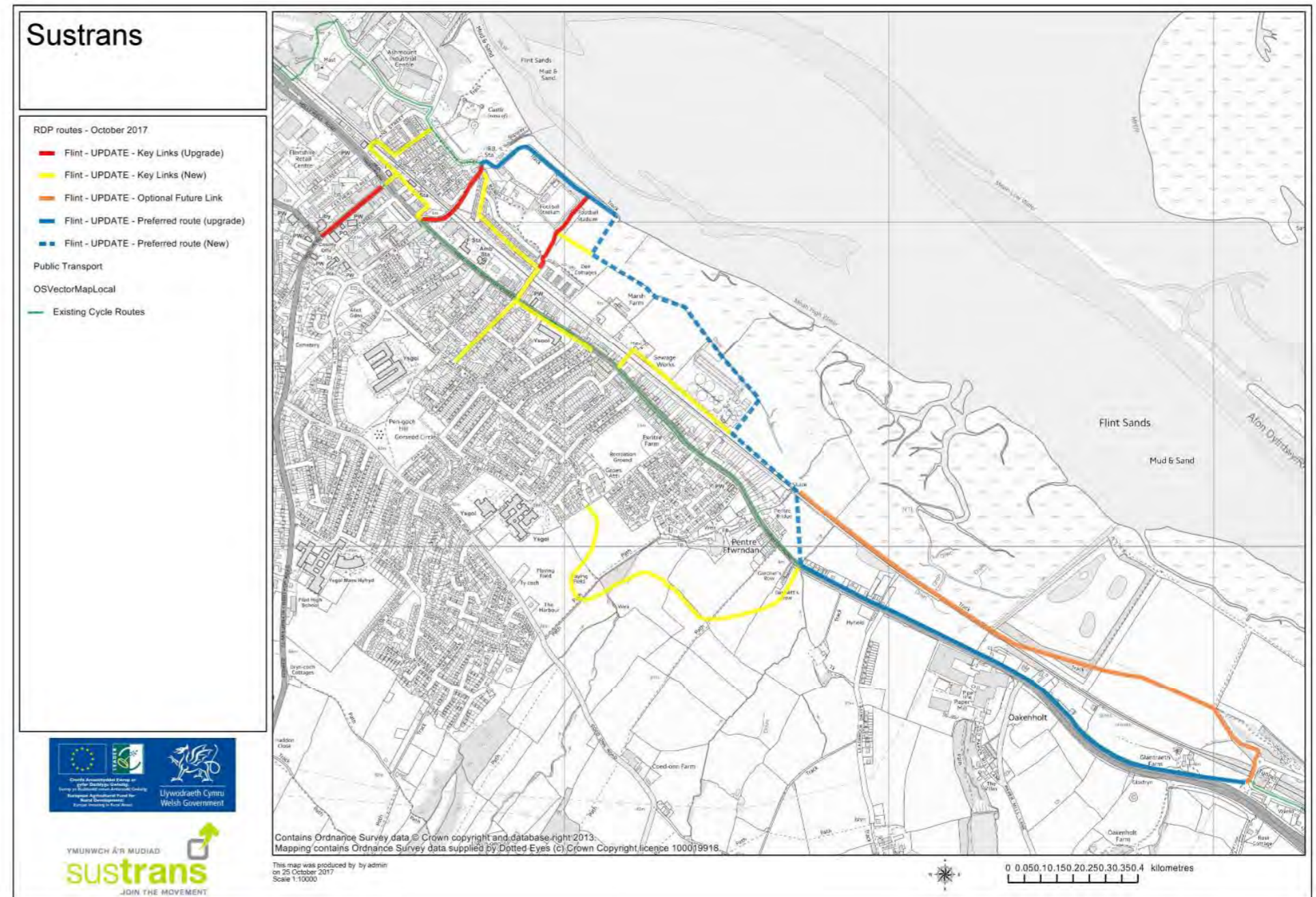


Figure 4 Map used for discussion (Flint - Connahs Quay A3 V3)

4.3 Second stakeholder meeting

Date - November 2017

Number of attendees: 15

The event

Project staff met with local stakeholders to update about the progress on the delivery of the project until that date.

Approach

The meeting was structured into two main moments. During the first half, Sustrans provided updates on the development of the link to Connah's Quay, Flintshire CC officers updated the group on the content of the Integrated Network Map as part of the Active Travel Act work. A presentation about the "Our Backyard" project was delivered by a member of Connah's Quay town council.

During the second half, we had breakout sessions aimed at identifying opportunities for infrastructure improvements, tourism potential and community engagement.

Outputs

The feedback collected during the session helped us to identify further actions in terms of the infrastructure development and the community engagement work. In particular:

- Engagement with statutory bodies such as NRW and the Active Travel team at Flintshire CC
- Schedule a session with Flint Town Council
- Plan wider community and school engagement sessions in Flint



Figure 5 A view of Flint from the Castle

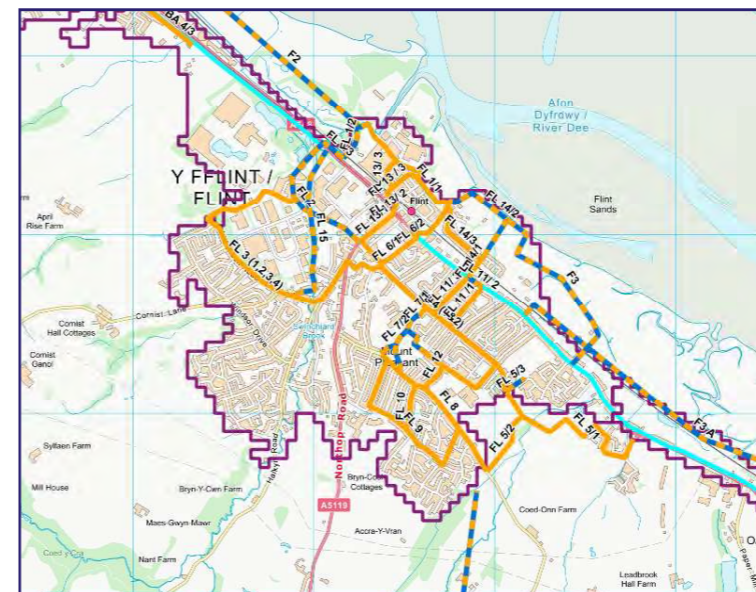


Figure 6 Extract of Flint area from FCC Integrated Network Map

4.4 Meeting Flint Town Council

Date - February 2018

The event

Sustrans project team delivered a presentation about the Flint town connections project during a Town Council meeting.

Approach

In addition to presenting the work on NCN 5 and the link to Connah's Quay, Sustrans staff presented opportunities to engage the community in having their say in how the town layout can be modified in order to provide improvements for safer walking and cycling facilities. Particular attention was focused on the link between Church Street and The Castle and foreshore area and on the development in the larger residential Croes Atti estate.

Outputs

Flint Town Council formally agreed to support the project and to support further community and school engagement activities, in order to gain a better understanding of the perceived issues around walking and cycling in the town.



Figure 7 Example of presentation slides to Flint Town Council

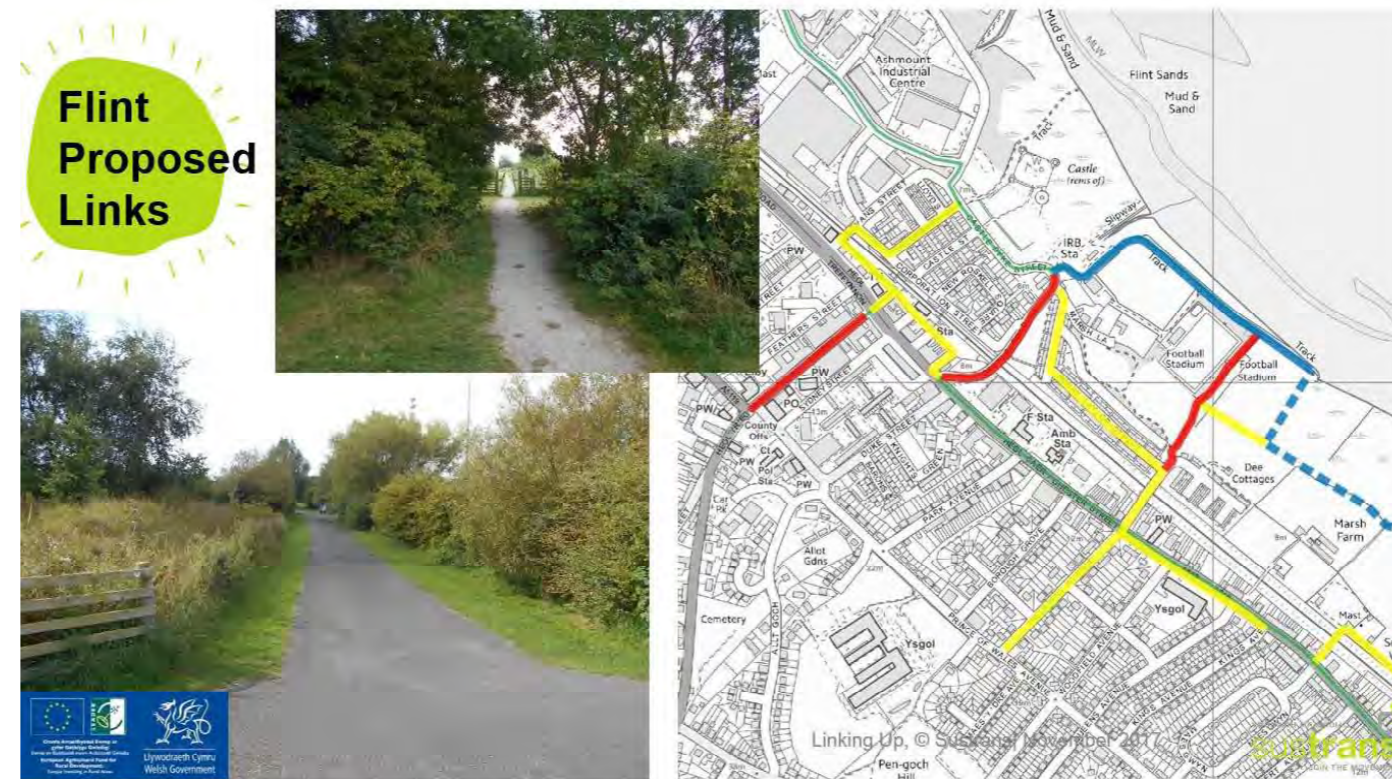


Figure 8 Example of presentation slides to Flint Town Councils

4.5 Community engagement

Date - February and March 2018

Number of attendees: 66

The event

Sustrans staff liaised with Storyworks and took part in the Storyshop, a wider art & engagement project to collect stories and information about Flint and its residents.

Approach

At the Storyshop, Sustrans set up a stall with maps of the town centre and we provided a postcard with a series of simple questions about travel habits in town. The stall was open on an ongoing basis for three weeks. We also had a session at the Friday market where we engaged with local residents and visitors.

Outputs

We identified and prioritised several streets where improvements will be needed and we agreed that:

Outputs of the engagement work would need to be shared with the local stakeholder group, Flint Town Council and Flintshire County Council

Sustrans would provide a plan to engage residents in designing solutions for the issues highlighted (see figure 12).



Figure 9 Example of 'red dot' issues from the engagement process – these highlighted barriers or locations where improvements could be made



Figure 10 Participants to the market session

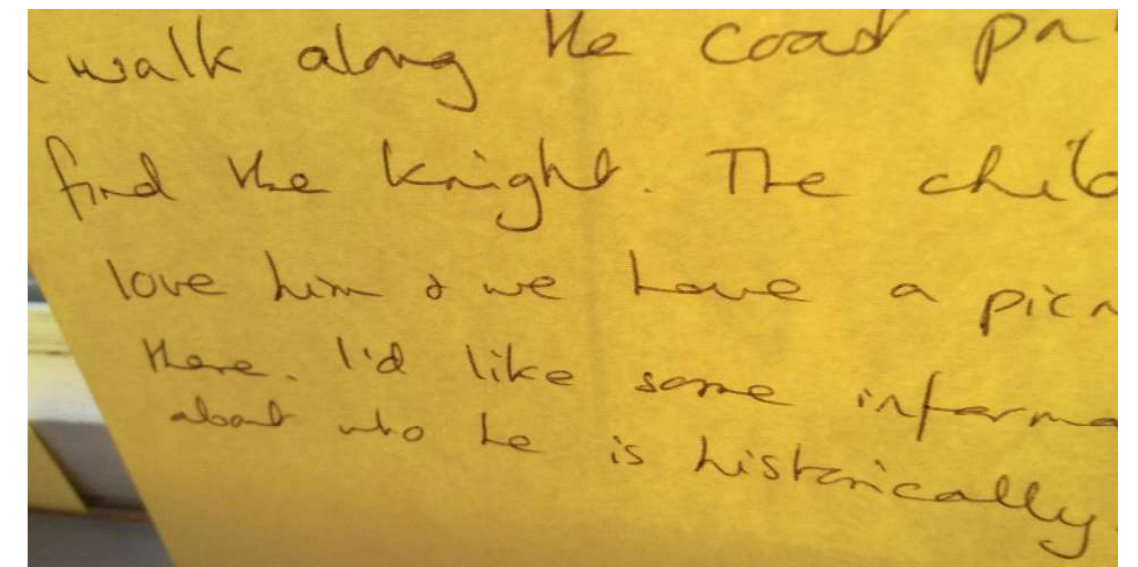


Figure 11 Feedback from Story Shop workshop

4.6 Schools engagement

Date - February and March 2018

Number of attendees: 150

The events

Sustrans Schools officer planned engagement sessions with Ysgol Gwynedd (2 classes) and Ysgol Croes Atti (5 classes).

Approach

Using hands up surveys, the pupils were asked to talk about how they travel to school every day.

After that, they were asked to work in groups on a map representing Flint town, including the schools involved, the Croes Atti housing estate and the foreshore and Castle area.

Pupils were asked to draw their route to school and their preferred way to get to the Castle and foreshore area, highlighting barriers to walking and cycling in town.

Outputs

As a result of the hands up survey, it was found that roughly just over half of Year 5 & 6 pupils currently walk to school and cycling to school is not allowed due to issues around traffic volumes. Also, in school Ysgol Gwynedd, one of the access gates to the school has been closed due to Estyn safeguarding recommendations. This means some pupils have to walk around to one of the other two access points.

It is recommended that a new hands up survey is conducted, by asking desirable ways for pupils to travel to school.

“

We need more cycle paths and they also need to be wider, so bikes can go through

”

Pupil at Ysgol Croes Atti

“

Traffic lights never work near Spar Shop on Chester Road

”

Pupil at Ysgol Croes Atti

“

Maes Hyfryd is always busy with traffic after school!

”

Pupil at Ysgol Croes Atti

“

There aren't enough crossing places by Toppies

”

Pupil at Ysgol Croes Atti

“

It's hard to walk and cycle as cars are often parked on the path

”

Pupil at Ysgol Gwynedd

4.7 Third stakeholder meeting

Date - June 2018

Number of attendees: 15

The event

A third stakeholder meeting was organised to share the findings from the community engagement event.

Approach

Sustrans, shared the result of the community engagement work and suggested opportunities for improvements of active travel links in Flint.

Cadw provided an update about the regeneration plans for the foreshore and Castle area, focusing on the vision for the new interpretation centre and the connectivity with the coastal route (NCN 5) and Flint town centre.

Finally, Flintshire CC provided an update on their Flint 2025 campaign, aimed at addressing health inequalities with a focus on food poverty and physical activity.

Outputs

We agreed the following activities:

- Engage Flintshire Tourism Association with a session about benefits for businesses generated by this project
- Engage with Flintshire County Council and Flint Town Council to align Sustrans' recommendations with the long terms plans for the area

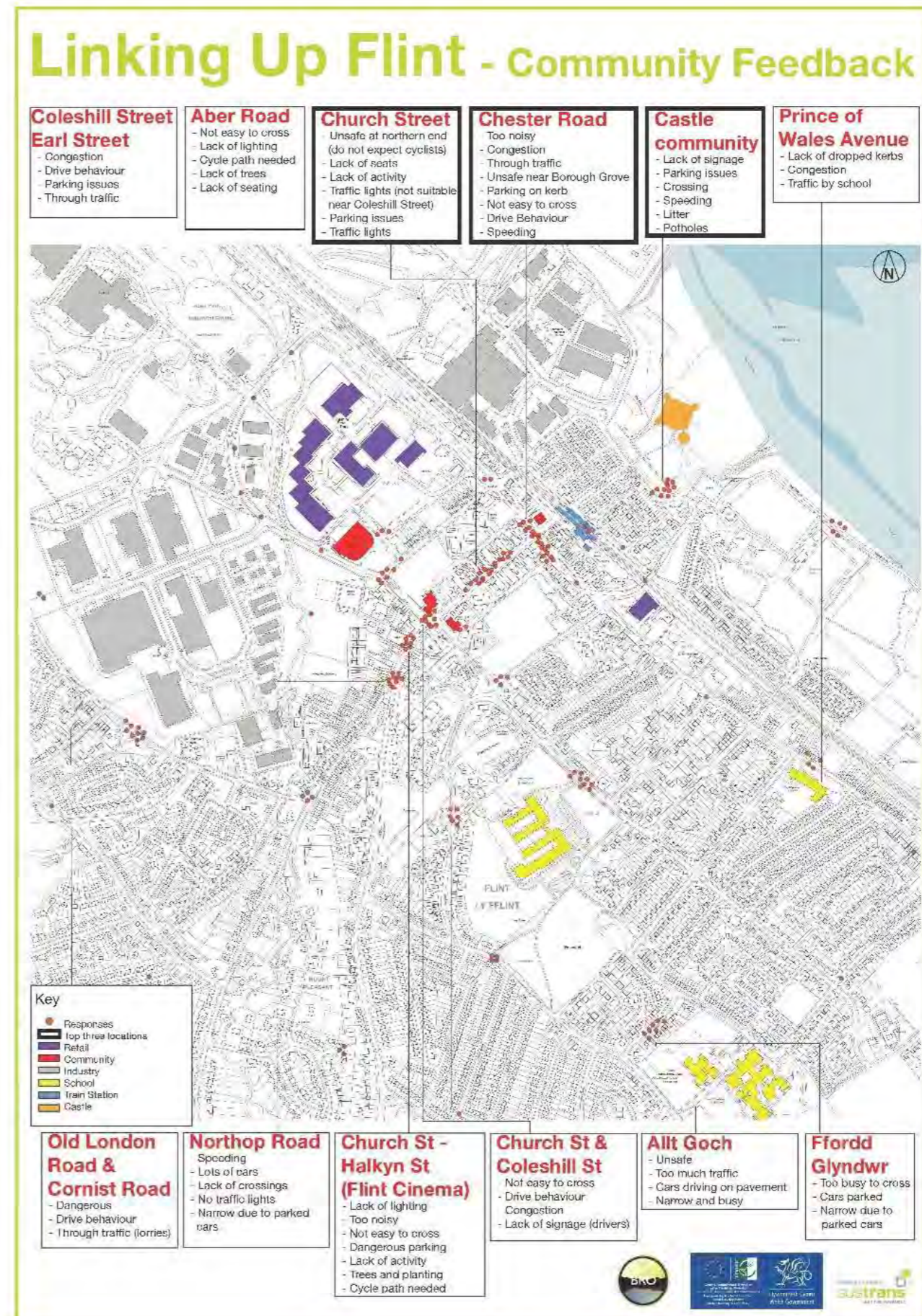


Figure 12 Community feedback map

6. Post consultation outline design

Following on from the stakeholder engagement sessions Sustrans has been working with officers from Flintshire CC on potential improvements in the town centre area.

The Walks is a residential area within the town centre, just to the south of Church Street, that has recently been improved and includes a number of walking and cycling links. Sustrans has worked with Flintshire CC officers to provide signing solutions to enhance the area as well as investigate improved links from The Walks to the Prince of Wales Avenue residential estate so as to provide safe connection to the town centre.

The Church Street – Chester Road junction was highlighted by the local community as an area that could be improved and Sustrans has been working with the council to develop options that also include an improved link to the Castle and Foreshore area. There are a number of issues in this area that need to be considered and outline designs have been prepared. These options now include bus time improvements that will assist in providing better and safer crossings of Chester Road which will enhance the connections between the town centre and station, as well as the link to the Forseshore.

Discussions are also on-going about a Safer Routes in Communities type project across the wider Prince of Wales Avenue estate that is looking to provide a 20mph zone, traffic calming measures and improved crossing points as well as upgraded footways and links to the town centre.

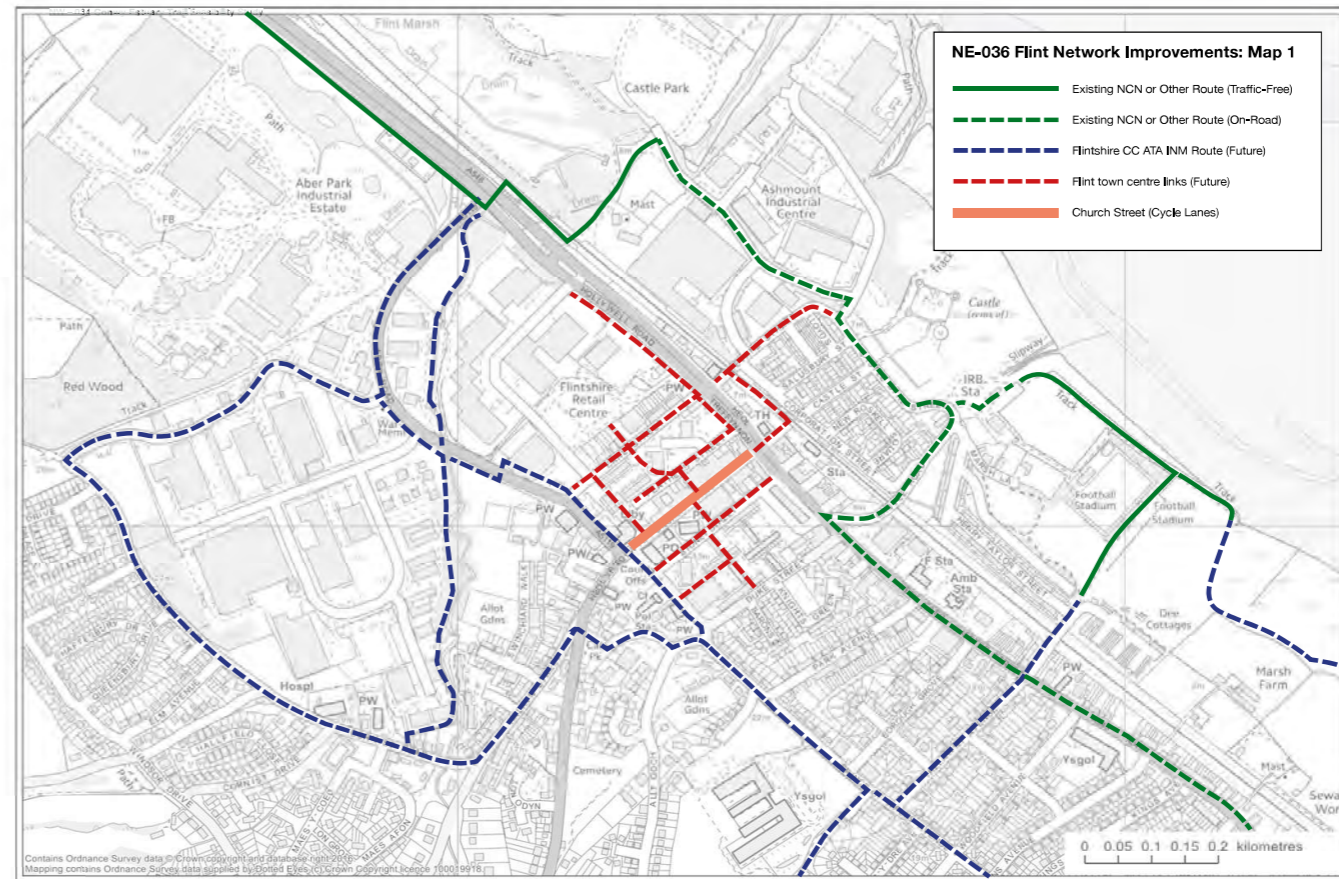


Figure 13 Outline plans of walking and cycling links in and around the town centre

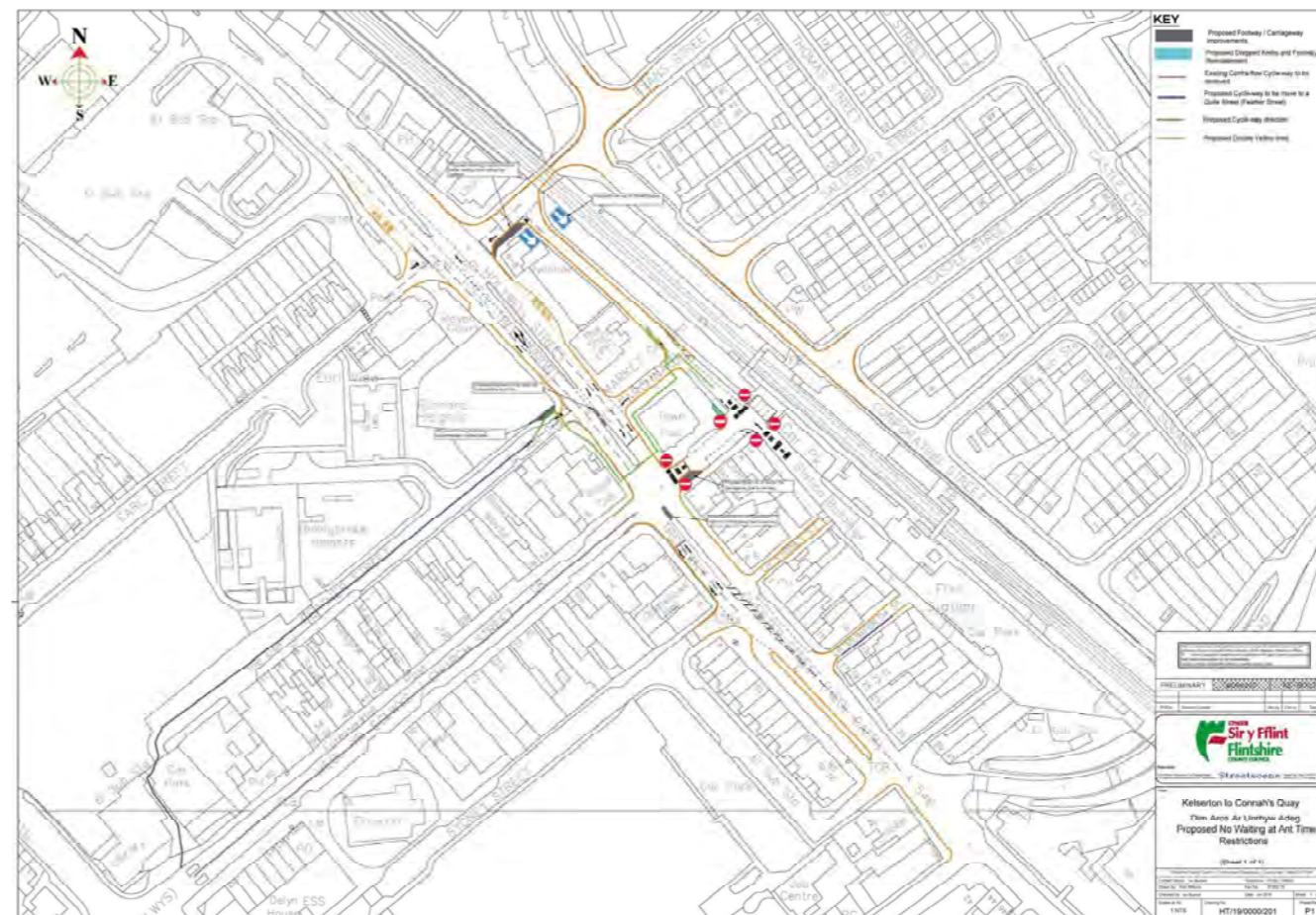


Figure 14 Outline plans for amendments to walking and cycling links between town centre and Foreshore

6. Conclusion and recommendations



We should make Church Street a nicer street to stop and linger on, perhaps adding some benches in the sun!



Workshop participant



'Below the Line' used to be an arrival point many years ago



Workshop participant



We should make it easier for parents to walk to school and prevent people to park on pavements



Workshop participant

During the 3 years of project delivery we have:

- Raised awareness of the project proposals and raised interest across the community
- Engaged the local community and wider stakeholders in thinking about how people walk and cycle around Flint for everyday journeys
- Identified initiatives that assist the improvement of walking and cycling connectivity in Flint and at the enhancement of Flint Castle and foreshore area.
- Identified and prioritised areas of improvement within the town in order to make it easier for residents and visitors to walk and cycle
- Identified economic benefits generated by improved infrastructure and increased use of the path both by visitors and residents.

Recommendations

In order to take the project forward, we recommend:

- Engage stakeholders and local residents in a participatory design process, to make sure the infrastructure responds to the local needs
- Continue to liaise with local stakeholders, the Town and County Councils and local schools to extend the strong partnership to support any funding applications and future developments
- Engage the local community in the proposed bus frequency improvements project that will also enhance the connections across Chester Road for pedestrians and cyclists
- Continue to support the development of improved links between the Foreshore area and town centre as part of the joint project for a new visitor centre