

Developing cycle hubs in a destination – a ‘how-to’ guide



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1 Introduction

This 'how-to' guide draws on our experience of planning and delivering a project designed to enhance provision for leisure cycling in rural Northumberland. By sharing the lessons learned during 18 months working in Haltwhistle and Wooler between autumn 2009 and spring 2011, we hope that other market town communities in Northumberland and further afield will be able to stimulate and cater for this increasingly important tourism sector.

In this booklet we cover the following topics:

- What is a 'cycle hub'?
- Target audiences
- Raising awareness of your project within the community
- Engaging stakeholders in the process
- Route identification
- Preparing route guides for sale or distribution
- Distributing route guides
- Signing the routes
- Managing the routes
- Setting up a legacy group
- Monitoring and evaluation

Route testing in Northumberland



2 What is a cycle 'hub'?

In recent years there has been considerable investment by a wide range of organisations in provision for cycling across the UK. Much of this has been to help commuters travel to and from work, in order to provide an alternative to public transport or the private car. There has also been a lot of work developing long-distance cycle routes to attract the growing cycle tourism market.

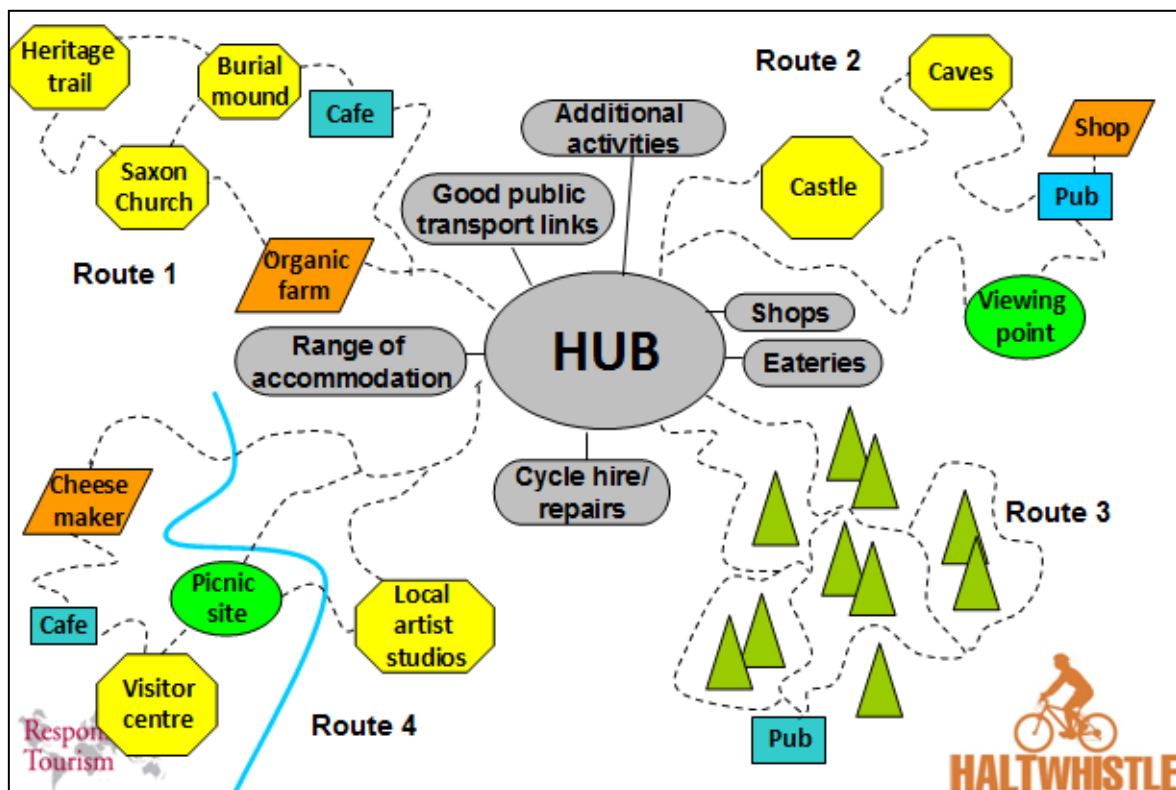
Indeed, there are many such long-distance routes passing through Northumberland, such as the Pennine Cycleway and the Hadrian's Cycleway. However, cyclists using these 'A to B' routes tend to arrive at their accommodation late in the day and leave early next morning, having little positive impact on the local economy.

The idea of a 'cycle hub' is to encourage cyclists to use a market town as their base for several nights, allowing them to explore the area by bike by way of a series of circular loops which link up with local tourist attractions, refreshment stops and other local businesses. Local produce (food, crafts, art etc.) should also be a feature of the routes where possible, thus encouraging people to spend more money in the local area and reducing leakages from the economy.

The short and clear definition we chose for the purposes of our project was:











*A cycle hub is a **base** for holidaymakers and local residents offering **good quality experiences for leisure cyclists** in terms of **services, facilities and routes** which create **linkages** with all kinds of **visitor attractions, food outlets and accommodation**.*

This schematic diagram explains the concept of a 'cycle hub':



Remember that the term 'hub' can be confusing as it can be used to describe a multitude of things, and different people interpret it differently. If you are going to use the term 'cycle hub', make sure you explain clearly what it means from the outset and stick to that definition. To ensure consistency across the region, for other Northumberland-based projects it would be beneficial for other such projects to use the definition introduced for Wooler and Haltwhistle. Below is a checklist that covers the 10 basic points which need to be in place in order for you to even consider developing a cycle hub:

CHECKLIST

- a. Sufficient reasonable terrain for cycle route planning in the area surrounding the market town (i.e. not too hilly, enough minor roads, no serious safety issues such as having to use unavoidable heavily trafficked roads etc.) 
- b. Sufficiently attractive scenery surrounding the town 
- c. Sufficient business clusters to link in with routes – a key aim is to encourage cyclists to spend money in the local area 
- d. Decent public transport to access hub town, including carriers who will take bicycles 
- e. Sufficient cycle services based in or close to the hub town (bike hire, repairs, equipment sales) 
- f. A sufficient tourism 'offer' in the town (i.e. nice places to eat and drink, entertainment, additional activities, shops with good opening hours etc.) 
- g. An indication from a sufficient number of local businesses that they are interested in supporting the project – you need to get a critical mass of support from within the hub town itself 
- h. A willing and enthusiastic Development Trust, Parish Council or other community organisation backing the project with sufficient time to spend on the project 
- i. A steering group of interested and proactive partners, each of whom understands their own and everyone else's remit 
- j. A local base of cyclists and other interested parties who will act as volunteers 

Assuming that you are able to say yes to the above, the next thing to think about is who will actually carry out the work? Will it be a local committee of volunteers or are you able to get sufficient funding to be able to recruit and appoint a project officer.

The Northumberland Cycle Hubs project benefitted enormously from the project officer's presence in the two communities over the 18 months we were planning the routes and developing all of the supporting services and activities. If you are not able to appoint someone on a paid, full-time or part-time basis, then there might be a recent graduate or other professional looking for some work experience and who might be able to provide quite a lot of time to the project on an expenses-only basis, or even at no cost at all. But remember, volunteers have many other demands on their time and can find it difficult to juggle commitments. So if you are able to secure funding to pay someone to act as project officer, the rest of the Steering Group's work will be a lot easier.

Heading towards the hills



3 Target audiences

The target audience for a cycle hub represents a very broad user group, which is part of the beauty of the 'hub' concept. The point is not to exclude any groups - other than the most hardcore of cyclists looking to clock up the miles rather than focusing on exploring the area.

Our project has tried to cater for a wide range of abilities/interests but we have to recognise that there are some constraints in terms of the family market – in Northumberland for instance it is impossible to create completely hill-free routes and to avoid all main roads.

Also, be realistic about how much cycling people will do during their stay. For instance, we didn't expect visitors to necessarily come to Wooler or Haltwhistle and go cycling all day every day during their stay, but rather that they would combine cycling with other activities. This, plus the fact that the cycle routes themselves involve non-cycling related things to do along the way, ties in with the latest research concerning 'cycling plus' holidays which suggests that the largest growth in the market is amongst people wanting to combine cycling with other activities.

It is also important not to forget the local market. As our pilot events in Wooler and Haltwhistle showed, we were able to attract residents from the wider North East region and especially from Newcastle where residents have limited access to pleasant countryside rides.

For future cycle hub projects in Northumberland, there is a range of relevant market information available in the market town visitor surveys (<http://www.tourismnortheast.co.uk/northumberland-tourism/toolkit/things-to-use/know-how>). These give an indication of the types of existing visitors to the town and the sorts of activities they choose to take part in. Local and regional tourism/development/economic strategies may also give an indication of audiences to target.

4 Raising awareness of your project within the community

From the outset, it is important to raise awareness within the community that the work to develop a cycle hub is being carried out. You will want to make sure that all relevant businesses, cycle groups and individuals know what is going on and that they understand what it means for them and what the benefits will (or could) be.

Start with identifying all potential stakeholders. It is crucial to involve this wide range of stakeholders from early on in order to develop a sense of local ownership of the project and, hopefully as a result of this, a lasting legacy.

Possible stakeholders will include accommodation operators, cafés, pubs, restaurants, bike shops, outdoor shops, visitor attractions, hardware stores (they may stock bike repair kits for instance), local schools, taxi firms, public transport operators, locally based tour guides and tour operators and, of course, interested local residents.

Keep adding to your list of contacts and send them regular project updates or newsletters. The most unlikely groups could turn out to have relevance to the project – spread the message far and wide.

The project manager should make their face known in the town amongst local businesses – nothing can beat face-to-face contact and the personal touch, though this is of course time-consuming.

Some practical things to think about from the outset:

- Do you want to set up a project website (stand alone site or just a page as part of an existing organisational website) or even a page on a social networking site such as FaceBook?
- Will you set up a project blog to update people on progress? This can be linked to personal websites or the project website – tools such as www.blogger.com make it very easy to set up a blog – the challenge is to keep it updated regularly!
- Will you send out regular ‘tweets’, providing updates on progress using www.twitter.com ?
- It is a good idea to hold events early on to raise local awareness of the project – these can be linked to other village or community happenings and will help you identify possible partners and local volunteers with whom to develop routes and cycle tourism products, as well as to try out routes. You can also get some good press coverage from the events, especially if there is something particularly unique or special about the event. These local events should not focus exclusively on already keen cyclists – seek wider involvement to broaden project scope. The private sector should be particularly targeted given the essential role of local businesses in the project’s success. Events might include such things as a public meeting/presentation to mark the launch the development phase of the project, route mapping sessions, route taster sessions for local businesses and (themed) group cycle rides etc. (NB: any guided group cycle ride events are best held between April-July when the National Bike Week events public liability insurance should be valid for any cycle-related events registered on their website - <http://www.bikeweek.org.uk>.)
- From the outset it is important to have a PR strategy so that local papers, radio and TV stations are aware of what is going on – through them you will get more local awareness and

involvement as well. A 'drip feed' approach should be employed to maximise awareness and build towards the final launch.

- What is the project 'brand'? Do you want to design a new logo, and/or tie in with an existing local marketing campaign run by a (potential) partner? The brand needs to be developed at an early stage to maximise product recognition and add credibility. We recommend that Northumberland-based projects tie in with the established market town branding for Northumberland (<http://www.tourismnortheast.co.uk/northumberland-tourism/toolkit/things-to-use/how-to-guides>).

Participants on the Glendale Heritage Ride held in June 2010 and used to promote the Cycle Hubs Project



5 Engaging stakeholders in the process

5.1 Forming a steering group

It is very important to identify potential partners early on. If one is not already in place, look to set up a steering group to include representatives of local groups/bodies and, ideally, some influential movers and shakers in the region who have the resources and credibility to **proactively** support the project and help drive it forward. This should include key public sector organisations such as the local authority, Highways Authority, National Park or AONB and local development trusts. The local tourism body should also be invited to sit on the group. Arrange face-to-face meetings as soon as possible with as many organisations as possible to avoid anyone feeling 'left out'. Put the project on people's radar and ask how it might fit into partners' work remit/ current and future work plans. Consulting local and regional strategic documents should assist in this to give an overview of the strategic fit of the project and who key partners might be.

5.2 Involving the private sector

Remember that the private sector is profit-driven and they will only get involved if they think that there is something in it for them. When you are trying to get their attention, mention that a key goal of the initiative is to increase the amount of visitor spend in the area through cycling. Part of this will be aiming to increase the number of local accommodation operations with 'Cyclists Welcome' accreditation¹ so that you can increase overall levels of business in the town from cyclists. It might be an idea to hold workshops for accommodation businesses with key agencies that are able to provide financial, business planning or marketing support to the accommodation sector, as this should help get their attention.

If you want to involve businesses other than accommodation providers, you could set up your own self-assessed cycle-friendly scheme to appeal to other local businesses than just the quality assured accommodation providers who might qualify for the official VisitBritain scheme. We suggest drawing up a simple charter of key cycle-friendly criteria (see the list of criteria that we used in Northumberland in Appendix 1), and offering participants incentives like window stickers to identify participating businesses, and electronic version of the project logo for use on websites and in marketing materials, plus extra promotion of these cycle-friendly businesses on the project website.

5.3 Volunteers

The long term success of the project is reliant on sustained input from volunteers. Anyone who takes part in a meeting or event or provides general input into the project should be kept in the loop – get their email addresses and set up an email group so that they all receive your regular news updates – and can also make contact with each other without the project manager necessarily having to be involved. Follow up meetings, events etc. quickly with "thank you" emails and outline next steps to sustain momentum. Overall, make sure volunteers feel valued as they are likely to play a key role in the project's overall success.

¹ www.visitnortheastengland.com/site/what-to-see-and-do/activities/leisure-cycling/cyclists-welcome-accommodation

5.4 Organising meetings and workshops

A good tip when looking to hold meetings or events is to choose venues strategically, i.e. hotels, pubs, local attractions where you want to try to get owners to engage with the project. Make sure the chosen venue is handy for people to get to! Also think about the timing of the event to ensure that it is held at a convenient time for potential participants to attend. For instance, accommodation providers are normally busy with guests till 9.30 or 10.00 so can't do early morning starts – and it's generally a better idea to run important workshops outside high season!

Make sure that any workshops involving group activities are well structured, very focussed and be clear to yourself and those present what you want the outcomes to be – make the most of everyone's time. Also, if developing two cycle hubs in tandem, alternate which town hosts the first workshop/meeting etc when you are running two similar events, as the second one inevitably benefits from the experience of the first.

Presenting the cycle hubs concept to businesses in Haltwhistle



6 Route identification

In our projects in Wooler and Haltwhistle we decided to include 7 routes radiating out from each market town. This is sufficient for a visitor staying a week to have at least one new ride to do every day should they wish, and encourages shorter staying visitors to return to finish the routes they did not have time to try during the first visit. Having a good number of routes also enables more communities and businesses in the surrounding area to benefit from the development of cycle tourism.

Some things to think about include:

- How long have you got to spend on identifying routes? This process could last a lifetime with endless possibilities being discovered; give yourself a deadline and stick to it.
- To start off identifying possible routes, remember to involve local cyclists – get them to give you their recommendations. But don't forget that non-cyclists will also be able to help with the identification of local places of interest, lesser known beauty spots and good refreshment stops, if not the actual routes themselves - everyone has a contribution to make. Local heritage and wildlife enthusiasts in particular should be encouraged to take part.
- Check out existing cycle route leaflets covering the area and routes people have uploaded to sites like www.mapmyride.com. Local cyclists may have already mapped some of their favourite rides on these sites and this information is freely available to all. Looking at these sites, seeing what locals have mapped may help save you time in identifying those roads and tracks most suitable for cycling. You might even be able to get in touch with the cyclist him/herself and ask them to get involved in delivering your project. Larger landscape organisations such as national parks and AONBs may also have produced ideas for cycle routes available for download from their websites. There's no point spending time re-designing the wheel where good, popular routes already exist. The key thing is to pull several routes together into a marketable 'package'.
- When testing the route yourself, remember to think about the needs of fitter and less-fit cyclists, also safety issues. What sort of audience are the routes aimed at? How will you grade the route?
- Think about whether some routes can be done equally well in either direction - or does one direction afford better views, involve less steep gradients and have a more convenient itinerary for places to stop off? For instance, there is no point reaching the only refreshment stop on the route 10 or 15 minutes into the ride, or only 10 minutes from the end!
- Try to select routes that link catering establishments, paid-for heritage sites and good views. Remember that people won't want a hugely long route if they are planning to stop off at a few places along the way. The most successful routes from an economic development angle are likely to be of short to medium length (up to 25 miles) with a range of places of interest and places to eat and drink along the way. This will give people a 3 to 4 hour trip including stops.
- Remember that to get good views, you generally need to go to the top of a hill!
- If possible, take a GPS recording of the route when you first ride it, as this will save you time later. Also take plenty of photos to help identify the potential locations of waymarking signs and for reference when writing route directions. You may find it useful to take a voice recorder along for this purpose also. Riding routes is time-consuming and you may not have the luxury of riding each repeatedly to gather all the information you need – try to think ahead.

- Invite other people to market test the routes – go through social networks or cycle clubs, promote the opportunity on your website for people to send in their feedback. This is really important as it will ensure the final routes have market suitability and local support. Remember to acknowledge the volunteer testers’ feedback (maybe send them a free route map when they are produced).
- When assembling the final portfolio of routes, remember you need a variety of lengths and a variety of grades. Include at least one ‘challenge’ route and, if possible, an easier route for younger family members.
- Agreeing the final portfolio of routes should be a shared process between as many stakeholders as is feasible.
- One person should oversee the final grading of routes to ensure consistency. We have used the following grading structure:
 - a. Easy = short/medium length routes with few, if any, challenging climbs or difficult terrain
 - b. Moderate = medium length routes with some challenging climbs and/or long ascents
 - c. Strenuous = generally longer routes, with challenging climbs and possibly stretches of rough terrain

It would be beneficial for the project manager to contact Neil Wilson (adm@wooler.org.uk) at the Glendale Gateway Trust who has offered to market test a route for another hub town as a benchmark. Equally, the project manager could trial a Wooler or Haltwhistle cycle hub route to get a gauge of how to grade routes – this would represent excellent partnership working.

7 Preparing route guides for distribution

Here are some fundamental issues that you need to think about when mapping the routes (because almost everyone will be expecting a printed map or leaflet as part of the output of your project):

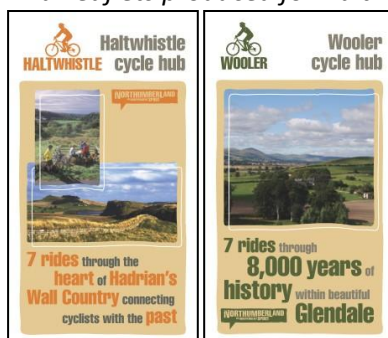
- What is the purpose of the printed materials you are producing?
 - Promotion
 - Orientation
 - Navigation
 - Interpretation

In reality, it will be a little bit of all four so you need to be very clear how these fit together.

- Do you want to only produce printed versions?
- Will you be purchasing/have access to an OS licence or will you or your graphic designers need to rely on the free to access mapping data available (e.g. OS open data, OpenStreetMap)? Remember that open access data probably doesn't have all features you will be looking to include on your maps so you will have to plot these yourself. For instance, the line of Hadrian's Wall isn't currently available on any open access mapping data!
- Do you want to plot the routes on www.openstreetmap.org to build up this community resource?
- Will you offering GPS downloads of the routes, and if so, through which website(s)?
- What mapping scale to use? (Will all your routes fit on?)
- Will you disseminate them in hard copy or will people have to download and print off the maps themselves?
- Will you use a professional design company?
- What additional information do you want to include on the leaflet other than the routes themselves? (Can you fit all this on without overcrowding?)
- Will you include any photographic (or other) images on the maps? If so, from where will these be sourced; will you have to pay for and credit any copyright images?
- Which partners' logos will need to be included on the printed material?

You can expect to pay up to £10,000 for a professional design company to design the mapping leaflets and manage the print/production process. Costs for producing leaflets will vary considerably according to the size and quality of paper used, whether you go for single colour or multi-colour leaflets and whether or not you encapsulate the maps to make them more weatherproof.

Final leaflets produced for Haltwhistle and Wooler



8 Distributing the route leaflets

It was decided that stocks of the Haltwhistle and Wooler cycle hub leaflets would be held by the respective Development Trusts in each town. Distribution was organised by the Trusts, with the principal outlets being Tourist Information Centres and National Park Visitor Centres. In addition, accommodation providers and attractions along the routes were offered the opportunity to retail maps. In all cases, the retail price was £2.95 so that retailers are able to make a realistic mark-up over the wholesale cost of £1.50.

A viewable PDF version of the leaflets, GPS downloads and individual (free of charge) printable versions of each route were made available through the Northumberland Tourism website (<http://www.visitnorthumberland.com/site/activities/cycling/cycle-hubs>). Consumer orders for hard copies of leaflets are also possible via this website.

Flyer used to promote the project at outdoor shows, brochure days etc.



9 Signing the routes

You should seek agreement from partners early on as to whether routes will be waymarked and, if so, in what way so that this can be budgeted for in both time and financial costs. There was a unanimous decision to waymark the Haltwhistle and Wooler cycle hub routes for two main reasons: a) to assist cyclists with navigation and b) as a marketing tool to alert passers-by that there are a series of cycle routes to explore in the area.

Some things to think about if you decide you want to waymark your routes:

- What budget is available?
- What design will you use, and who will produce the design?
- What form of waymarking is desirable? (stickers, plastic discs, wooden signs etc.)
- Which company will you use to manufacture the signs?
- How will you distinguish the routes – by colour, number, name?
- Who will install the waymarkers? If local volunteers can be encouraged to take part this is an excellent way of trying to encourage a sense of local ownership for the routes and, with luck, a lasting legacy of people involved in the future management of the maintenance of the signs/routes. However, volunteers will require some basic guidance in order to be able to do this.
- Where exactly will you place the signs? Have you sought local permissions?
- Who will take responsibility for checking up that the waymarking infrastructure remains in place months and years after installation?
- Will you link your waymarking scheme with other initiatives, such as the Sustrans National Cycle Network or other local routes?

Installing route waymarkers in Northumberland



10 Guidelines on Route Management for Cycle Hub teams

10.1 Introduction

Once your routes have been identified, signposted and marketed, then people will start using them. One of your responsibilities will be to make sure that the cycle tourism offer that you are promoting meets users' expectations. This section presents guidelines on managing the cycle routes developed as part of the Cycle Hubs project in your market town. They are based largely on guidance notes prepared by the national cycling charity Sustrans for its own routes, and have been adapted to reflect the particular circumstances facing cycle hubs in Northumberland, namely:

- The main purpose of the hubs is to promote and support cycling in the area by tourists and day visitors, hence there is a requirement to maintain a high quality of infrastructure and particularly route marking, as most people will be unfamiliar with the area
- Almost all routes will use only public rights of way and hence responsibility for route maintenance lies with the Highways Authority or their designated contractor. For the Wooler and Haltwhistle hubs, the exceptions to this include a permissive path across part of the Ford & Etal Estate, off-road sections on the 'Broadstruther Bash', and forest tracks in Wark Forest.

The main objective for adopting a structured approach to managing the route is to ensure that any potential problems with access, surfaces and waymarking can be identified in advance of them creating problems for route users. As your routes become established, waymarked and are being promoted, there will be an expectation that they are appropriate to the markets being targeted by the cycle hubs initiative. Unless there is a high standard of delivery in terms of the quality of the routes, users may get disenchanted and spread the word that we are inviting them to our area under false pretences. Moreover, we might get into a situation where the health and safety of route users is compromised, with implications for the entity overseeing and promoting the route.

A secondary objective is to seek to establish levels of usage of the routes, and to assess the economic impact they have in the local area. This is also important as it provides supporting information for future investment bids by the Cycle Hubs teams.

10.2 Route inspections

The starting point for the management of the cycle hub network is regular inspection. Inspection should be carried out over the whole network around your town on a regular basis in order to identify any items causing concern from a public safety but also from a marketing & promotional perspective.

The results of these inspections should be logged (see below) and a record kept to advise future decisions on what aspects of the hub network might need review at some time in the future.

It should be noted that these are **pro-active** proposals – the organisation taking responsibility for overseeing the management of the cycle hub routes should also be prepared to **react** to changes in route condition, waymarking etc if they are informed of them.

Experience shared by Sustrans suggests that much information about damage, vandalism, misuse and condition comes from neighbours, users, Parish Councils, the local authorities and the public. Information on some routes may also be gathered by Sustrans volunteer rangers who report back to their regional office in Newcastle. It will be important to set up a process that allows these groups to pass on relevant information to you.

10.3 Recording information

Consideration should be given to utilising a tracking database to record and track all information gathered during route inspections and also provided by route users and other sources. A simple log book containing sections for each of the routes in your cycle hub should be sufficient. An alternative to a log book could be an MS Excel spreadsheet. Information can be entered as soon as it is received, with the following information headings being used:

- Location (name, road number where appropriate)
- Grid Reference
- Issue
- Mitigation measure taken
- Source of information (e.g. inspection, notification by route user etc)
- Any other relevant information

A careful record of inspections (dates, weather conditions etc) needs to be kept and, if necessary, make available to third parties.

10.4 Inspection guidelines

The following inspection frequencies are recommended:

- **Route surfaces** – twice a year, preferably once in the spring and again in the autumn. Where problems exist, the relevant Highways Authority (on public roads), Public Rights of Way Officer (on off-road tracks open to public use) or landowner (on private routes) should be informed and a repair requested. Sustrans noted the following defect types that might be found on route surfaces:
 - potholes and other surface defects
 - damage and erosion to edges
 - loose material on surface
 - accumulations of detritus that would make the surface slippery
 - road markings worn or illegible
 - herbicide requirements
 - excessive standing water
 - erosion channels and drip lines (crushed stone surfaces)
 - uneven with trips or gaps >20mm (flags or paving stones)

During the early consultations for the Wooler Cycle Hub project concern was expressed by some local cyclists about the presence of thorns on road surfaces after hedges have been trimmed. This is

a localised, seasonal issue that is worth recording although there appears to be limited scope for Cycle Hub groups to be able to respond to the problem.

- **Signage/ waymarking** – every route should be checked at least twice a year. Of course, this can be done at the same time as the surfaces are being inspected. Each Cycle Hub legacy group in the Wooler and Haltwhistle project has a reserve of waymarking stickers that can be distributed to volunteers checking the waymarking so that replacements can be made immediately. A note should be kept of every time a waymarking sticker needs replacing, so that any patterns can be identified over time (e.g. in one settlement, or on land belonging to a particular owner). This information should also be recorded in the route maintenance log book.
- **Littering** – this should be assessed on a two-monthly basis, and the relevant authorities advised. Volunteer clean-ups can be organised as required, for instance immediately before a special event.

10.5 Biennial Review of Route Conditions

It is recommended that every two years a full review is made of the route log books and any key issues identified. These might include locations where waymarkers regularly need replacing, a stretch of road whose surface has deteriorated to the extent that it represents a real danger to the health and safety of cyclists using it. A mapping exercise that looks in spatial terms at where problems are happening might be implemented in order to direct future management activities and possible investment projects.

11 Setting up a legacy group

It may be that you have been lucky enough to have received some grant support to help you set up the cycle hub. Perhaps you have even been able to employ a project worker to start things off. But you need to think about how the early momentum is going to be maintained once the euphoria of the opening celebrations begins to wear off.

In an ideal situation, your original steering group might want to continue sitting on an occasional basis to oversee the project's implementation phase. But this might not always be possible, as people have many other commitments and might not be able to spare the time.

If you are not able to continue with the original group, then you should try to convene a small group of people who are prepared to commit their time and energies to ensure that the basics of monitoring, managing and promoting the routes are undertaken. A group of three or four people should be enough – an obvious starting point to find them is through a local cycling club but other networks might also be useful. Try for instance recruiting members through the local tourism association, the Parish Council or sports clubs. As always, the process will be facilitated if there is a local project 'champion' who is prepared to take a lead on recruiting members and chivvying people along to make sure things get done. If your project has been led forward by an unpaid local project manager rather than a paid member of the project team, this 'champion' is likely to continue their involvement.

The group doesn't need to be formally constituted although if it is going to be handling money (say for example it takes on responsibility for producing and selling revised versions of the route maps) then this might be something you want to consider for the sake of transparency. It may be possible for example to set up a Community Interest Company (CIC) dedicated to this purpose, or use the legal structure of an existing group, for instance a sports club.

The key point to remember is that many hands make light work, so keep trying to recruit members of the legacy group on a regular basis – they may bring new ideas for marketing or product development that allow you to keep developing the cycle hub initiative long after the initial launch.

12 Monitoring & evaluation

A range of issues need to be monitored in order to assess the impacts of the investment in your cycle hubs network and to help legacy organisations and other partners identify where future investment will be most appropriate. Key areas to think about are:

- Who will take responsibility for checking that the route surfaces are of good enough quality, and if not, who should be alerted to the fact that they need repair? This could be an individual effort or a group exercise, with different people taking responsibility for different routes. Having a single email address for users to send their comments to is a good idea, providing that it is regularly checked and comments are acknowledged and acted upon. Section 10 of this guide has provided more information on what is needed.
- Who will take responsibility for making sure the waymarking infrastructure (signs, stickers etc) remain in place? As with the route conditions, this could be an individual or group effort. See Section 10 of this guide for more suggestions on how to do this.
- Who will take on the responsibility for monitoring stocks of the leaflets and ordering new print runs? Ideally this should be one person or organisation, who will be the person holding the stocks of spare leaflets and distributing them to the various retail outlets. Ideally it will be the legacy group (see Section 11).
- Do you want to monitor the number of people actually using the routes? If so, what is your budget? This will require installation of mechanical or infra-red counters along traffic-free sections of the routes, something that is expensive to install and maintain. As a more basic form of monitoring, keeping track of the number of maps sold will at least give an indication of interest in the routes.
- Will you want to assess the economic benefits associated with the project? Will your project funders actually expect this? If so, it will depend on your budget as to how comprehensive the evaluation framework is. At a basic level, someone will need to collate and analyse information from local businesses that can ascribe a growth in their turnover specifically to people coming into the area to enjoy the routes. Remember, not everyone will want to share confidential financial information relating to their business, so you may need to gather more basic information, such as whether or not they have seen an increase in business from cyclists since your project was implemented.

Given that we have already looked at issues surrounding route management in Section 10 of this guide, in the remainder of this section we look at the other main topic which is usage of the route network, and the economic benefits derived from this usage.

- Overall levels of interest in the routes
- Overall levels of usage of the routes around each market town
- Profile of route users
- Level of additional business enjoyed by local tourism businesses that can be attributed to cycle tourism

Suggested measures for each area, data gathering proposals and suggested responsibility for action are presented in the matrix overleaf.

Area of impact	Measure(s)	Data collection procedures	Suggested organisation
Overall levels of interest in the routes	<p>Number of maps sold</p> <p>Number of webhits</p> <p>Downloads of route directions from website</p> <p>Downloads of supporting materials</p>	<p>Each cycle hub to monitor sales of maps through appointed distribution agencies</p> <p>Monitor web usage</p> <p>Monitor web usage</p> <p>Monitor web usage</p>	Cycle hub legacy group
Overall levels of usage of the routes around each market town	Total volume of usage of each route (collate and present on monthly & annual basis)	<p>Sustrans counters where already in existence</p> <p>If resources available, new counters in key locations (agree with Sustrans/ Highways Agency)</p> <p>Occasional surveys of routes not covered by mechanical/ remote counters</p>	<p>Sustrans, local rangers, Northumberland County Council with information passed on to cycle hub legacy group</p> <p>Volunteers from legacy group, possibly working with local 6th form or university students. Northumberland National Park might be able to supply mobile counters for routes passing through its area</p>
Profile of route users	<p>Day user or tourist staying locally?</p> <p>First or repeat visit?</p> <p>Origin (UK/ international?)</p>	<p>Questionnaire surveys of route users (annual)</p> <p>Questionnaire surveys of cyclists staying in local accommodation (annual)</p>	Cycle hub legacy group, possibly working with local college or university students
Level of additional business enjoyed by local tourism businesses that can be attributed to cycle tourism	<p>Total income earned from cyclists</p> <p>Income earned from cyclists additional to baseline status (i.e. prior to implementation of hubs project)</p>	Questionnaire surveys of local businesses (annual)	Cycle hub legacy group, possibly working with local college or university students

The findings of this usage monitoring and evaluation work can be recorded and reported on a biennial basis, to monitor changes over time.

Useful Contacts in Northumberland

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Appendix 1: Sample criteria for a cyclists welcome charter tailored to your own community or area

These are the basic criteria we used in Wooler and Haltwhistle:

The facility should provide a cyclists information point, including details of:

- local cycle routes
- local cycle hire
- local cycle-friendly accommodation
- nearest cycle parking

Information on local public transport and what cycle carriage facilities will also be available, plus details of baggage transfer and taxi companies operating locally which cater for cyclists

Alternatively, the facility managers and staff will know where to signpost people to for all the above information

Facilities will also provide/ have accessible:

- Water bottle service (fill up water bottles for free)
- High energy snacks and/or drinks
- Basic first aid kit
- Puncture repair kit & basic tools to loan
- Safe (covered) cycle storage
- A separate space to put panniers, helmets and dry wet clothes
- In serviced accommodation, a packed lunch to be available (for a charge)
- In self-catering accommodation, provision should be made for the pre-ordering of basic grocery items prior to arrival for guests without a car

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