Report on Sustrans 'One Path' Initiative: pilot on the Comber Greenway : June – October 2016



One Path – a programme on the Comber Greenway, helping to achieve mutual respect between users, and develop a sustainable solution for shared path use paths.

FEBRUARY 2017

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of activities and findings of the first One Path initiative in Northern Ireland, a project supported by Ards and North Down Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and the Department for Infrastructure Cycling Unit and carried out on the Comber Greenway in response to the current situation relating to behaviour on shared use paths and a recent increase in reported conflict between different types of users.

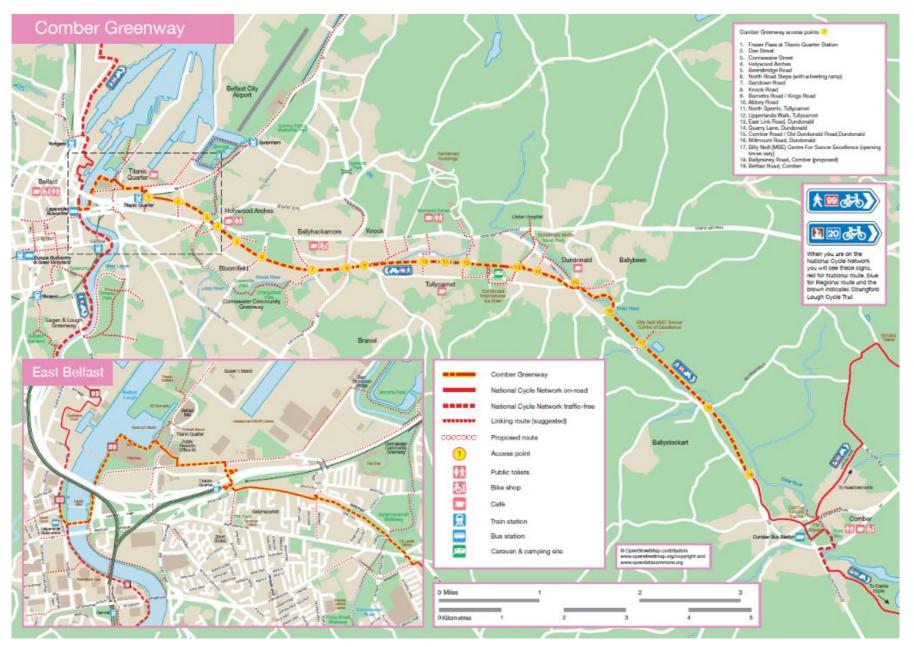
2.0 BACKGROUND

There are 732 miles of National Cycle Network (NCN) in Northern Ireland, 100 miles of which are traffic free routes. The shared use sections of the NCN offer public spaces serving, leisure and commuting cyclists, walkers, dog walkers, joggers and families, and is designed for users of all ages and abilities. With the increase in outdoor activity the popularity of these spaces has increased.

This increased usage has also led to an increase in complaints from path users about the behaviour of other users. Issues about conflict on greenways occur across the UK and have led to a range of responses, mainly physical interventions such as segregating user groups by painting lines on paths, signage and barriers. Our research has shown that often these measures are ineffective and are often targeted at one particular user group.

The idea of the One Path initiative as an alternative to physical interventions came from some initial work Sustrans had carried out in England.

In order to test these initial findings the Comber Greenway in East Belfast was chosen as a demonstration project. This report and its findings, while specific to the Comber Greenway, we believe can be adopted and used on all shared paths.



2.1 History of the Comber Greenway

The Comber Greenway is a seven mile route built on the corridor of the disused Belfast and County Down railway line which closed in 1950.

Over the years sections of the disused railway line were turned into walking routes from Beersbridge to Knock.

Following the laying of a water main pipe in 2003 the section from Bloomfield to Knock was upgraded to greenway standard with a 3 metres tarmac path.

With funding of circa £1,000,000 that Sustrans accrued from a number of Government Departments and the EU, the path was completed to Comber in 2008. The route won a European Greenway Award in 2009.

Since then safe road crossings have been installed at most locations and major improvements made at Millmount by a housing developer. There is a desire amongst users to see the greenway lit with better links to communities and into Comber and central Belfast.

2.2 Information on Usage of the Comber Greenway

The main data on usage of the Greenway comes from three intercept surveys at the Beersbridge Road carried out in 2003, 2007, 2012.

The main findings arising from the reports are:

2003

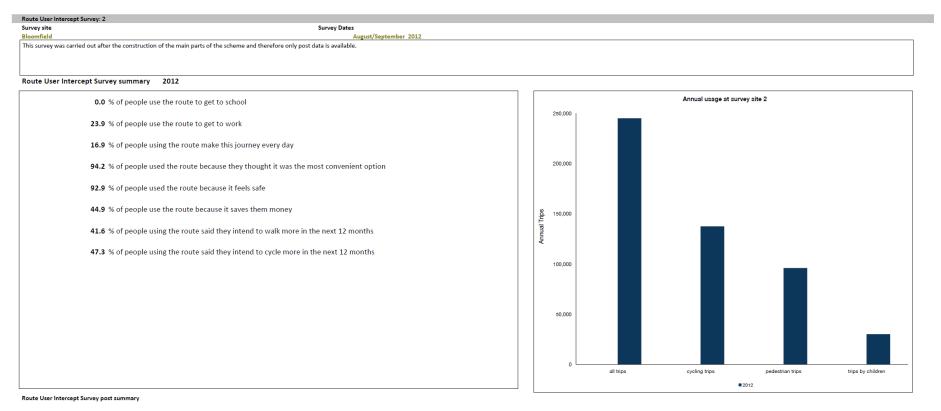
- Pedestrians were 74% of users
- Cyclists were 24% of users
- Joggers were 2% of users
- 77% of trips for leisure
- 21% of trips were utility such as commuting and shopping
- 43% use route daily
- 40% use route weekly and 17% less frequently

2007

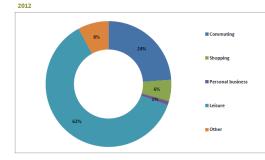
- Pedestrians were 54% of users
- Cyclists were 40% of users
- 80% of trips for leisure
- 17% of trips for utility such as commuting and shopping
- 33% use route daily

2012

The main finding from 2012 was that estimated annual usage rose from 45,000 in 2004, to 122,000 in 2007 and then 245,000 in 2012. Findings from the 2012 survey are shown overleaf.



Journey profile and transport modes



Journey Purpose

% of respondents	2012
Commuting	24
Education	0
Shopping	6
Personal business	1
Leisure	62
Other	8

Annual usage estimates

	2012
all trips	245,422
cycling trips	137,614
pedestrian trips	96,214
trips by children	30,207

Demographics and behaviour

6-24	
6-24	2
	8
5-34	12
5-44	32
5-54	34
5-64	9
5+	6

Ethnicity: % of respondents

	2012
White	100
Mixed	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	(
Bangladeshi	0
Other asian	0
Caribbean	(
African	0
Other black	6
Chinese	0
Other	6
Prefer not to say	(

Gender: % of survey respondents	
	2012
Male	70
Female	31

Employment status: % of respondents

2012
70
8
2
5
11
4
0

Cycling status: % of respondents

Cycling status. // or respondents		
	2012	
New to cycling	0	
Starting to cycle again	25	
Occasional cyclist	13	
Experienced, occasional cyclist	24	
Experienced, regular cyclist	39	

Journey profile and transport modes

Other modes used	
% of respondents	2012
Car or van	
Train	
Bus	
Taxi	
Jogging	
Horse Riding	
None	94

Physical activity and health

Route access increases physical activity % of respondents 2012	
Yes, by a large amount	72
Yes, by a small amount	14
No	14

Intend to cycle more: % of respondents

	2012	
Strongly agree	36	5
Agree	12	2
Neutral		2
Disagree	9)
Strongly disagree	41	1

10

Frequency of trips 2012 % of respondents Daily 17 65 2-5 times a week Weekly 5 Fortnightly Monthly Yearly 8 Less frequently 0 Other

The route is only or additional exercise % of respondents 2012 Strongly agree 10 12 1 15 Agree Neutral Disagree 62 Strongly disagree

Intend to walk more: % of respondents	
	2012
Strongly agree	27
Agree	15
Neutral	2
Disagree	19
Strongly disagree	37

Distance travelled by other modes	
% of respondents	2012
Under 1 mile	7
1-2 miles	4
3-5 miles	2
6-10 miles	0
11-15 miles	87
16-20 miles	0
20+ miles	

Modes that could be used 2012 % of respondents

Days with 30 minutes of exercise in last week

% of respondents	2012	
) days	29	
L days	2	
2 days	11	
3 days	27	
1 days	9	
5 days	9	
5 days	11	
7 days	3	

Likely to cycle more: % of respondents

Strongly agree

Strongly disagree

Agree Neutral Disagree 2012

40

Car or van	58
Taxi	1
Bus	35
Rail	0
Wouldn't make journey	3
Other	4
Don't know	1

Self reported health over last four weeks % of respondents 2012 Excellent 49 Very Good 32 15 Good Fair 3 Poor Very poor

Likely to walk more: % of respondents

	2012
Strongly agree	25
Agree	17
Neutral	4
Disagree	17
Strongly disagree	38

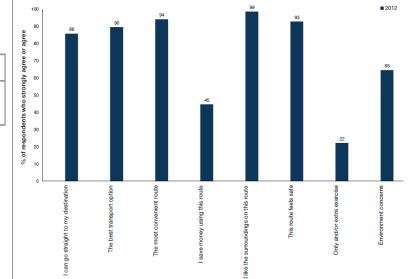
Factors influencing people to use the route: % of respondents

2012

2012								
			The most		I like the			
% of respondents	I can go straight to	The best	convenient	I save money using	surroundings on	This route	Only and/or extra	Environment
	my destination	transport option	route	this route	this route	feels safe	exercise	concerns
Strongly agree	69	60	71	26	88	54	10	16
Agree	17	29	24	19	11	39	12	48
Neutral	10	10	2	42	1	6	1	28
Disagree	4	0	3	1	0	2	15	7
Strongly disagree	0	1	1	11	0	0	62	0

% of respondents who strongly agree or agree

	2012
I can go straight to my destination	86
The best transport option	90
The most convenient route	94
I save money using this route	45
I like the surroundings on this route	99
This route feels safe	93
Only and/or extra exercise	22
Environment concerns	65



2.3 Increased Use – Complaints

Over the last number of years the number of complaints received by the Council, Dfl and Sustrans has steadily increased as usage has increased. Complaints about speeding cyclists, dogs not on leads, joggers with headsets on, groups of walkers taking up all the path space have been reported.

2.4 Suggested Responses

In response there have been calls to segregate users, to put up signage restricting speeds, dogs to be on leads and the introduction of byelaws to address these problems. At a practical level a linear space such as the Comber Greenway, with multiple entry points, would prove extremely difficult to sign and then enforce. 'One Path' offers an alternate approach which focuses on behaviour rather than regulations.

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2.5 Not All Bad

It is up to individuals to change behaviour. The pictures demonstrate good behaviour and such individual response to situations were commonly observed.



Outcome: path users observant of each other, dog owner sees cyclist who manages dog, cyclist slow to pass. Equitable solution naturally.

2. Various path users – possible clash?



Outcome: path users observant of each other, dog owner sees cyclist approaching and shortens dog lead to manage dog, cyclist slow to pass.

3.0 THE ONE PATH INITIATIVE

Greenways are a hugely popular resource but as usage increases so does reports of rising tension between certain individuals and user groups. Conflict between users can be reduced by individuals modifying their behaviour and being considerate to their fellow path users.

The One Path Initiative is intended to promote positive actions and behaviour through consistent messaging for all users, whatever way they access the path and for any journey purpose.

Using a variety of approaches to engage with users we will first listen to their concerns and then work with them to promote the key principles of One Path, including:

- Share
- Respect
- Enjoy
- Protect
- Look after
- Encourage
- Support

A key element of One Path is communicating the message of **Share Respect Enjoy** with path users. Using a variety of methods including events, on-path signage, press and social media the project will result in ongoing communication to promote key message to path users.

3.1 Initial Work in Bristol

Sustrans first trialled One Path in England in 2014 in order to develop a communication campaign to promote good behaviour patterns. As part of researching to influence the campaign Sustrans gained insight into the views of cyclists and other users of the Chester Greenway through a focus group to inform the way forward.

At Chester there was a strong feeling the campaign should be aimed at all users rather than just cyclists. Sustrans then carried out events on greenways to experiment with on-path engagement techniques and to develop shared use messages.





One Path research in England

3.2 Approach & Methodology: June - October 2016

The One Path approach demonstrates how to create a positive culture with and amongst the path users in relation to behaviour and the values of equality, community and awareness.

Aims of the One Path Initiative

- Reduce conflict and thereby complaints
- Improve relations and understand the needs of users
- Avoid the expense of signage
- Consistency of messaging by agencies involved in greenway and traffic free shared path management

The One Path steering group members: Countryside Manager at Ards and North Down Borough Council, Director of Parks & Leisure at Belfast City Council, Head of Service - Parks and Amenities at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and a Project Officer at Department for Infrastructure Cycling Unit, met along with Sustrans team made up of the Deputy Director, Project Coordinator and the Policy & Media Advisor.

The One Path programme had the following three stages:

- 1. Audit and analysis of issues with path owners and greenway users through focus groups
- 2. Creative engagement, through ten on path events
- 3. Action Plan and legacy : proposals to be agreed with steering group

One Path Timelin	e June	e - Oc	ctobe	r 201	6	
Stages	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Jan-17
Focus groups 1-5						
Creative engagements						
Action Plan and legacy						

4.0 INFORMATION GATHERING AND SHARING PRE ONE PATH

4.1 User Survey (Pre One Path)

In advance of the 'One Path' initiative Sustrans undertook some initial survey work on the Comber Greenway. The objectives of this work were to:

- 1. Understand user group patterns during the week and weekend.
- 2. Ascertain purpose of journey.
- 3. Better understand issues and attitudes.

4.2 Sustrans One Path research during September and October 2015

The Comber Greenway is a traffic free path, part of the NCN, running from east Belfast to Comber, enjoyed by a range of users, at different times of day. The Sustrans research in 2015, before the One Path Initiative, is reported in detail in the 'Monitoring of usage on the Comber Greenway: October 2015' [Full report is available from Sustrans Belfast office - T: 028 9043 4569] and was carried out by Sustrans in response to concerns raised by Council, Government Departments and individual shared path users.

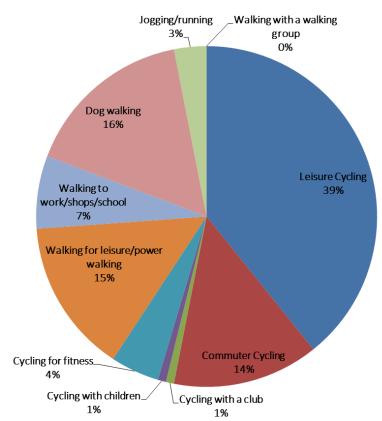
This research formed the basis for the One Path initiative, which is intended to build positive usage and avoid the introduction of 'blanket' measures which would impede particular user groups.

We carried out user counts and an attitude survey on the Comber Greenway in 2015 at the Kings Road. It is interesting to note that when users have comments of concern, these relate to both behavioural and infrastructure issues.

4.3 Users by Journey Purpose

This part of the survey demonstrates the range of different purposes for which people use the greenway. Cycling was the most common use of the greenway, with leisure cycling being the most common individual activity. Walking for leisure and dog walking were the next largest user groups on the greenway. Figure 1 shows the breakdown by journey purpose recorded on one day at the King's Road in September 2015.

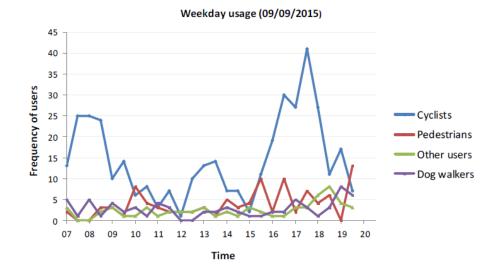
Figure 1: % of users by journey purpose

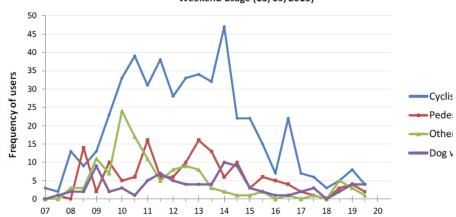


4.4 User Group Usage Week Days and Weekends

The key findings of this work demonstrated:

- 1. Cyclists using the route during the week peak in the morning between 7.00 and 9.00 am. There is a small peak around 1.00 pm and a major peak between 4.00 and 6.00 pm. This would reflect the numbers of cyclists commuting to and from work during the week.
- 2. Usage by other users such as dog walkers and pedestrians is fairly constant throughout the day.
- 3. Cyclists using the route at weekends have quite a different pattern of usage, almost the reverse of week days. Usage is greatest between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm.
- 4. Usage by dog walkers and pedestrians is greater at weekends and tends to peak in the mornings.
- 5. These user group patterns demonstrate that potential conflicts (times when the path is most intensively used are most likely to occur at early morning and early evening during the week and throughout the day at weekends.
- 6. We would conclude from this that to be creditable signage and byelaws would have to have different messages for week days and weekends.





Weekend usage (13/09/2015)

4.5 Attitude Survey

During the 2015 survey a total of 215 comments were received from users on the oath. A summary of these is outlined below:

- 27% of comments were favourable about the Greenway
- 10% of comments related to the issue of dog mess on the Greenway
- 9% of comments related negatively to dogs and the use of leads – either not being on leads or issues around the use of extending leads
- 8% of comments related to fast cyclists being a concern to Greenway users
- 8% of comments related to the need for lighting on the Greenway
- 8% of comments related to the need for more bins along the Greenway
- 6% of comments related to the non-use of bells by cyclists
- 6% of comments related to concerns around maintenance of hedges and verges
- Other comments received related to a range of issues, for example the lack of seating, toilets, litter etc.

5.0 INFORMATION GATHERING AND SHARING – ONE PATH

5.1 Focus Groups

We identified main focus groups – dog walkers, cyclists, runners, walkers, based on outcomes from the monitoring carried out in 2015.

We advertised, and invited each of the 4 key groups to meet in separate focus groups, held with small numbers, in venues best suited to the group over the course of June, July and August 2016. Separate focus groups enabled discussion and exploration of that user group's experience of using the Comber Greenway.

The table below lists the five Focus Groups Sustrans facilitated:

Group	Where	When	No.
Walkers	Ballybeen Estate	Wed 15 June	13
Dog Walkers	Ballyrainey Road, Comber Greenway	Wed 15 June	3
Runners	Victoria Park, Belfast	Thur 21 July	4
Cyclists	Tullycarnet Community Centre	Tues 26 July	10
Various	On Comber Greenway at Sandown Road junction	Wed 10 Aug 4 – 7 pm	36

Focus groups were facilitated using an inclusive process that included:

- An introduction to the Comber Greenway
- An introduction to the One Path initiative
- A discussion around various user scenarios through presentations, quizzes, displayed images, small groups, and picture word matches
- Enabling participants' understanding of the issues and providing opportunity for their input on how they use the path, and consideration as to how behaviour could be changed.



The Walkers Focus Group meeting 15th June 2016 in Ballybeen



Interviews with users on the Comber Greenway 10th August 2016

Participant quote:

One participant, at cycling focus group, commented: 'Never one perfect answer, respect is crucial'.

Summary of focus group outcomes

Of over 100 path users at focus groups, Sustrans spoke to an equal number that walked and cycled, and although the total numbers represented were small we found in general a consistency of support for the aims of One Path.

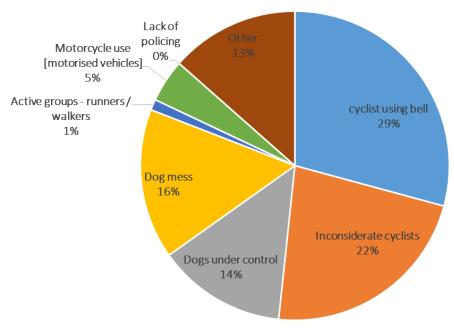
Also participants:

- agreed there were issues to be addressed
- supported the focus of One Path engaging with users to encourage users to change their own behaviour
- supported the Share Respect Enjoy message
- agreed there was a need for improvements to infrastructure and management of path
- thoughts that the Comber Greenway overall is a successful, positive facility

The users were supportive that Sustrans communicated the Share, Respect and Enjoy message to path users by:

- 1. On path messaging
- 2. Engagement with all user groups through direct communication letter and face to face
- 3. Web media such as information on websites, social media, promotion of shared message.





Sample of 100 participants

5.2 Creative Engagement

It is understood that if people have the opportunity to take part in shaping the debate and co-creating the campaign, they will feel more connected to their community, their local network and will ultimately be more likely to respond in a positive way and adjust their behaviour.

Running a series of fun community engagement events at various locations along the Comber Greenway started a collective conversation between all types of path users with the aim of creating a 'One Path'

ethos and positive culture fostering consideration, inclusivity, happiness and community spirit amongst all users.

In response to the project aims, issues raised through the focus groups and additional direct communications with a number of cycle clubs and representations from other path users the following action took place:

- Sustrans tested the message of Share Respect Enjoy
- Ran a programme of fun community engagements at a variety of locations within each Council area
- Chose various days during the week and weekends between August and October
- Raised awareness and discussed behaviour with path users at all 9 events
- Sustrans staff and volunteers, trained in motivational interview techniques, engaged with path users at all events
- During each event the public views were noted. Participants were not asked to complete a survey, as carried out in 2015, but to consider user behaviour, and how their and others experience could be improved



Drop in at Walkway family fun day



Drawing competition for users at early engagement events, to help people engage visually

TABLE OF EVENTS

Event	Location	Date	Numbers	
Changing Places – learn to ride a bike	At Billy Neill Playing Fields	Tue 16 Aug 10.00 – 12.00	3	
Walkway Family Funday – public drop in and drawing competition	At Walkway Community Centre and Bloomfield Playground	Sat 17 Sep 13.00 – 16.00	300+	
Campervan of Dreams, express ideas	On greenway: Tullycarnet Community Centre, Tullycarnet	Wed 21 Sep 17.00 – 19.00	15-20	
Batty about bats guided walk	Start: Walkway Community Centre, Finvoy Street, Belfast	Fri 23 Sep Start 9.00	11	
Campervan of Dreams, express ideas	At Comber – start of greenway, Old Belfast Road	Sat 24 Sep 13.00 – 15.00	Cancelled	
Along the railway line, led history walk	Start: Walkway Community Centre, Belfast. Return by bus.	Tue 27 Sep 10.00 – 13.00	4	
Greenway forage by bike	Meet Barnett's Road, King's Road crossing on greenway	Wed 28 Sep Start 19.00	3	
Batty about bats guided walk	Start: At Comber – start of greenway, Old Belfast Road	Fri 30 Sep Start 19.00	13	
T-shirt & Totebag printing	At Billy Neill Playing Fields beside greenway	Sat 1 Oct 13.00 – 15.00	50-75	
T-shirt & Totebag printing	At Barnett's Road / King's Road crossing of greenway	Sat 2 Oct 13.00 – 15.00	100-125	

Feedback

While the focus was on listening to peoples' responses a record was kept of the general concerns raised by the public to help inform further actions to embed behaviour change.

The events were well attended and there was a common message from path users that their experience of using the greenway was generally positive and they appreciated seeing Sustrans on the path hosting events, and speaking with the public.

Case study:

The Camper van of Dreams was set up on the greenway at Tullycarnet, beside the path and close to Tullycarnet Community Centre and playground. During the event we spoke to 15 path users some of their responses are quoted below:

- Amy visited the Camper of Dreams and stated she is delighted with the greenway: 'I walk to work daily, it takes about an hour' and 'I think people respect each other'
- Paul cycles and loves the greenway, he said: 'the commute is so quick into Belfast, I have more time for my breakfast in the morning!'
- The owner of Gonzo the dog would like people to protect and respect the greenway: '*pick up dog poo*!'
- Robin would love to see a culture of Park and Ride a Bike for the commute into Belfast

Paddy s just discovered the Greenway and has just started running in it @SustransNI #ComberGreenway4All



Camper Van of Dreams conversations – Snapshot from Sustrans Twitter feed

Behaviour message for path users – **Share Respect Enjoy** on path engagement

- Image for print and stencil was shared at events on the Comber Greenway
- Clear message of Share Respect Enjoy was well received
- All users including cyclists, runners, dog walkers and walkers were keen to engage and responded positively
- Message shared on printed T-shirts, posters and tote bags.



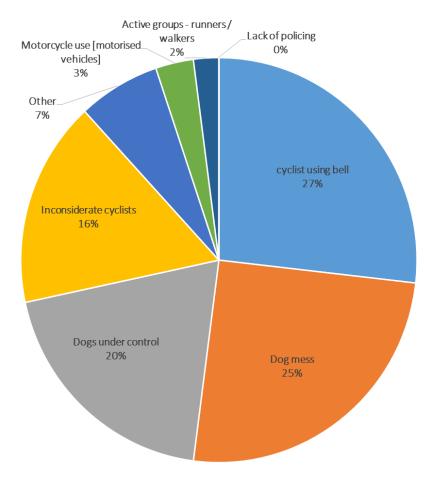
Artist impression of **Share Respect Enjoy** message as created from path users entries





Printmakers cart at King's Road junction on Comber Greenway

The chart below shows feedback arising from focus group and on path engagements in relation to behaviour concerns, captured from nearly 650 participants



Key Findings

The events were well attended and it was found that the stages within the One Path initiative ensured that a large number and variety of path users engaged with behaviour change and were receptive to considering their user experience and how it could be improved for themselves and other path users. The key findings include:

- Usage by user group varies during the day, so solutions that may help at one time of the day would not work at other times
- People think Comber Greenway is a good and valued resource
- Conflict, where it exists, is mostly between dog walkers and fast cyclists
- Share Respect Enjoy message is well received by public using the path
- Share Respect Enjoy should be promoted by all greenway bodies
- Individuals need to adapt their behaviour to Share Respect and Enjoy the greenway
- A consistency of messaging is required by management bodies to path users
- Ongoing positive programmes and events are required to ensure users are reminded they need to use the path in an appropriate way.

6.0 COMMUNICATIONS

At its heart the One Path Initiative is about improving communications between the people who use the Greenway.

The first step was to raise awareness of the initiative and invite the public to engage in the series of Focus Groups. We issued a press release in early June to local media, explaining the initiative and publicising the dates and times of the focus groups. We illustrated the desired aim of the initiative through a photo-call on the greenway showing walkers, cyclists, joggers and dog walkers sharing the path harmoniously.

We issued the release and photos to the Lisburn Star, Ards Chronicle, Down Recorder, The Loop magazine and East Down Advertiser. Regionally it was sent to the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, News Letter and NI4Kids. We sent it to local radio stations and online community hubs.

Coverage:

- BBC Radio Ulster, Evening Extra interview with Sustrans Director Gordon Clarke (18 April 2016)
- Belfast Community Radio
- Q Radio News
- <u>http://getbritaincycling.net/mutual-respect-needed-on-nis-shared-paths-says-sustrans/</u>

The story and an event page was created on Sustrans website and shared on social media channels Twitter and Facebook.

We also created text to share online or email to various user groups to promote the focus groups.



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We created an A4 Poster for display in key places and an A5 Flyer which was distributed for example on the greenway, at churches, libraries, parks and cafes in local areas.

A second press release was issued in September to promote the engagement events. We did a photo-call with the respective Council mayors or representatives which was issued with the release. This was published in The Loop magazine, east Belfast and Newtownards Chronicle.

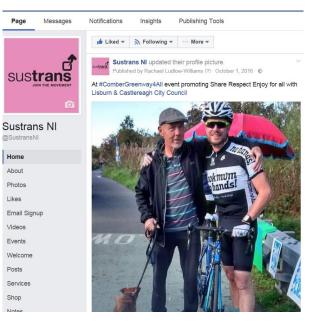
We produced and distributed a poster and flyer promoting the events.

We used the hashtag #ComberGreenway4All on Twitter communications which was picked up by the public.Webpage:

http://www.sustrans.org.uk/news/one-path-initiative-sharegreenways







7.0 ACTION PLAN AND LEGACY

This phase of the One Path Initiative has come to a close and we know from the outcomes of focus groups that high level road style signage, on upright posts, is not the best way to communicate a message to the path users, such as walkers, cyclists, runners and dog walkers.

To embed a culture of **Share Respect Enjoy** on traffic free shared paths an Action Plan should be developed to include:

- A communications plan: including continued use of website and social media
- Template developed and agreed by all stakeholders to communicate public message via Council and Department websites
- Identification of on-path signage to be used as part of an ongoing One Path programme - pilot various types of signage and evaluate before finalising signage guidelines
- Reiterate and reinforce message through an extended programme of regular face to face communication events on traffic free shared paths and park areas across all Councils areas. With support from Councils and Dfl
- Outline of new initiatives such as working with PSNI and other organisations such as DfI to embed shared path user safety message
- Ongoing monitoring of behaviour through the development of Volunteer Programme

- Greenway Festival 2017 promoting One Path
- Continued coordination through Comber Greenway One Path Steering Group
- Share Respect Enjoy ethos embedded in all messages
- Infrastructure improvements to be identified and actioned.

The delivery of all or individual elements of this Action Plan will require resource from organisations involved in the management of the greenway. Sustrans would be keen to discuss the possibility of our further involvement.



Example of on-path shared use signage

8.0 INFRASTRUCTURE

While One Path was not directly related to elements of infrastructure a considerable amount of feedback was received from participants in relation to it.

The Comber Greenway does not currently fall under guidance for road way or parks.

- During the focus groups and creative engagement stages we listened to the views of path users focusing on their experience with other path users
- In addition to behaviour people responded with a number of suggestions relating to infrastructure and maintenance improvements such as lighting, seating, additional bins
- The chart illustrates the desired infrastructure improvements recorded from path users during the One Path programme
- There are a lot of improvements that could be made to the infrastructure

8.1 Masterplan

Sustrans has developed a masterplan which outlines a series of changes to the path. We would hope that Central and Local Government Departments will work together to implement these improvements. See map overleaf which shows Sustrans' proposed enhancements to the Comber Greenway.

