

Feedback summary in response to the proposed access improvements in Saltney Footbridge Area

Suitability of radar locks

It was noted that some disabled people such as those with motor neuron difficulties and amputees may not be able to open the lock. It was also stated that Radar locks are not accessible to the majority of disabled users.

Gap width

It was highlighted that the width of the proposed A frame restricts movement of larger mobility aids through them. A request was made to install the most accessible A frames.

There are suppliers of A frames that can be installed with a different gap width, widening the gap would also allow motorbike access.

One user stated that his tricycle has a track width of 780mm and overall width of 830mm and a wider rickshaw type bike was also used with a width of 900mm and a length of 2300mm.

Respondents highlighted that the minimum width permitted at physical constraints is 1.5m within the Active Travel Guidance. Comments also highlighted the need for a 4m minimum external turning radius, 10kph minimum design speed for the Cycle Design Vehicle (rigid quad cycle 2.8m long by 1.2m wide)

It was requested the removal of all A frames from designs and all closing gates including RADAR locking gates from designs, except for existing vehicle access gates where these can be retained.

It was requested that locking bollards spaced with minimum 1.5m air gaps and straight approaches where vehicle access needs to be maintained were installed.

Unauthorised Use by Vehicles

Concerns were raised that unauthorised vehicle users will also be able to gain access through the radar gates. Radar keys are easily purchased over the internet and therefore pose the risk that unauthorised vehicles will be able to use them.

It was suggested that CCTV is used at known access points and liaison with local police to establish monitoring and enforcement and signage to promote considerate shared use.

It was also commented that there was open access in this area from Bumpers Lane and Sealand Road at the other end of the path making the proposal ineffective in controlling unauthorised use by vehicles.

One response noted that as far as they were aware, the replacement of the old barriers at the Mickle Trafford end of the Millennium Greenway has not led to an increase in Motorcycle use.

Path Safety

Local members felt that the proposals would result in improving access whilst also providing a level of control on unauthorised use by motorbikes. Safety concerns were highlighted regarding the speed of electric bikes travelling along the path.

Landscape Impact

Concerns were raised about the impact on the new structures on the skyline.

Equalities Act 2010

Respondents felt that the proposals was in breach the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) and may give rise to discrimination claims. Legal action has been started against Newcastle City Council by the owner of a recumbent bike as he is unable to get through the chicanes installed to prevent unauthorised motorbike accesses on a cycle path.

Future Funding Impact

Transport for Wales (who award Active Travel Transport Grant on the Welsh Government's behalf) have indicated that by having barriers that do not conform to the Active Travel Act or the Equalities Act, future funding for Active Travel within the county could be jeopardised.

Specific Feedback received to the Access Improvements in the Saltney Footbridge Area

<p>Respondent 1</p>	<p>What types of disabled access are radar keys usually used for ...? My experience of them is for accessible toilets which are able to be opened one handed with a radar key. I am concerned that what you are proposing will be difficult for anyone with motor skills issues.</p> <p>Also re the current A frames, which we all know are not best practice in terms of size (if they were, we wouldn't be where we are now), why aren't you fitting the most accessible ones that you can rather than replacing like for like?</p> <p>Re asb, I think you may be under estimating those who indulge in asb what have the police said re radar key access to stop asb? Ironically that cohort of users will probably be quicker through the access than I will be!!</p> <p>Re this work, are you actually listening to any users with disabilities and working closely with them to ensure that precious public money actually makes a difference here?</p> <p>What testing of equipment has been done with disabled users to ensure that what is proposed is fit for purpose?</p> <p>Although I have been talking to various people in Flintshire for the last 3 years, it does not feel like people are really listening</p>
<p>Respondent 1 – questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can the radar key gates be unlocked by a person with one hand? • is the radar gate wide enough for a trike to pass through? • it looks like there is a lip to get over on the radar gate design eg a lower bar across, is that correct? • is it step free access through the radar gates? • what if asb users have radar keys which are readily available? • are the new A frames wider than the current ones?
<p>Respondent 2</p>	<p>Out of medical necessity I am now a tricycle rider in the 60+ age demographic.</p> <p>I cannot gain passage through the A frame barriers at Saltney Ferry bridge or immediately adjacent at either side of Ferry Lane.</p> <p>My tricycle has a track width of 780mm and overall width of 830mm.</p> <p>My disabled wife and I also use a a tricycle best described as rickshaw like, its width is even wider at 900mm and 2300mm length meaning that passage through both the various A frames and chicanes on route is equally not possible. The turning circle</p>

	<p>of closely set together chicanes is the problem. Handling of the trike is not possible given it is just shy of 60kg without my wife passenger.</p> <p>I would welcome any solution that provides passage through these many obstacles, upon the path and via the access points onto the Wales coast path alongside the River Dee linking to the Greenway.</p> <p>I enclose three images of my tricycle at the A frame unable to leave the path at Ferry Lane from Hawarden bridge direction.</p>
Respondent 3	<p>I have looked at the amendments to the A frame and radar gates but can't find any significant change to the height and width of the A frame to allow access for all terrain wheelchairs and mobility scooters most suitable for the outdoors. I did talk about the issues disabled people have managing radar locks and have attached the detailed information I sent to Tom Woodall. I have asked other disabled groups such as wheels for all to send comments to you directly.</p> <p>Info and resources I have gathered with regards response to the barriers review report.</p> <p>Design Guidance and recommendations from several sources including Active travel Wales, the DDA, Equality act, Sustrans, disabled cyclists and groups (Wheels for Wellbeing and Chester cycling campaign access officer) providing evidence and reasons to show : *Radar gate locks are not accessible for the majority of disabled cyclists and mobility aid users.</p> <p>* Staggered gates must be fitted to minimum requirements for turning radius using a swept analysis.</p> <p>*The type of bollard to use, but ONLY when proved absolutely necessary, to prevent motor vehicle access.</p> <p>Key points</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A swept path analysis is required with 4m minimum external turning radius, 10kph minimum design speed for the Cycle Design Vehicle (rigid quad cycle 2.8m long by 1.2m wide) for any proposed barriers to be installed or altered. 2 Many Disabled people aren't able to use Radar locks due to limb deformities, amputations, restricted movement which makes any kind of gate or lock inaccessible to a significant proportion of Disabled people, and is therefore discriminatory 3 Radar keys are available on the internet, anyone can buy them and radar gates would be open to abuse.

4 All of the A frames and barriers listed in the report are identified as being below the compliance standards measurements recommended by Sustrans and have potential to disadvantage disabled users according to the Equality act.

5 Any cyclist who is not disabled using a larger bike with panniers, basket or trailer etc is at present unable to fit through the A frames (which measure 900mm) without difficulty because they are below minimum standard widths of 1.5 so they are causing major obstruction to many people.

Attached are the guidance sheets provided by Wheels for wellbeing, the London disabled cycling group who emphasise - 'installing barriers of any kind in narrow locations is not a user safety measure – it's dangerous to obstruct access in an isolated location and at a point where Disabled users are unlikely to be able to turn around should they be unable to get through the barrier that may already be restricted by broken glass, fallen branches etc. – obstructing narrow access points is really dangerous !

Staggered gates are absolutely not in line with LTN 1/20 or Welsh guidance. They will definitely be inaccessible to a significant proportion of potential path users. The only barrier they could use would be paired bollards, and ONLY where prevention of cars and larger vehicles entering a space is required.

Guidance from the Welsh Active Travel https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2020-02/active-travel-guidance_1.pdf :

12.12.5 "...any one-way cycle lane or track should be at least 1.5m wide, or it will risk excluding some types of user. The use of chicanes or gates aimed at restricting unauthorised access to paths (e.g. by motorcycles) may also obstruct these users, and therefore must not be used unless in EXCEPTIONAL circumstances."

12.18.4 "A minimum width of 1.5m is required between bollards, chicane barriers or at gates to accommodate the full range of cycles and mobility scooters. Kissing gates should not be used on cycle tracks."

14.36.6 "Restrictive access controls, vegetation growth that encroaches on the track surface, poor or inadequate lighting, poor sightlines or poorly maintained track surfaces will deter users"

18.12.4 "A single bollard, and clear sight lines will be effective in many locations. Double rows of bollards, with a minimum spacing of 1.50m can reduce cycle speeds and prevent motor vehicle access, whilst retaining better permeability for users than chicane barriers."

Minimum turning circles radii are given in table 3-3 with 3.4m minimum external turning radius.

	<p>To conclude Minimum clear straight-line access widths at access controls are 1.5m in England and Wales</p> <p>A simple and effective solution is to replace vehicle access gates (where these are present) with lockable bollards spaced with min 1.5m air gaps to allow emergency, maintenance and special access.</p> <p>Bollards below 1.65m will stop any modern car (that's the axle width of a Smart car). Most cars will be unable to get through a gap less than 1.8m. Larger SUVs etc are over 2m wide.</p> <p>Signage is required regarding rules of shared path use, speed, illegal vehicle access, penalties. Path users can help by reporting if they see anti social.</p>
Respondent 4	<p>I have seen the proposals for modifications to the modifications to access to and from the cycle path at Saltney Ferry</p> <p>Whilst I welcome the removal of one of the A-Frame barriers, I am appalled that the plan is to install another (on the East side of the northern bank of the river). This is contrary to all the guidance embodied in "Gear Change" and LtN 1/20. There seems to be a failure to look at the issues holistically (the existing chicanes on the path which already slow cyclists are not shown) and of keeping 'allowing access for all' in mind..</p> <p>A-Frames are a significant barrier to cyclists, particularly those using non-standard cycles and trikes or pulling a children's trailer or Tag-a-Long. They are also a significant barrier to those or those using mobility aids (trikes and scooters), frequently denying them access altogether.</p> <p>It is not at all clear why these barriers are considered to be necessary – if for the exclusion of motorcycles (the usual reason given) - then it cannot work as there is open access from Bumpers Lane and Sealand Road at the other end of the path. As far as I am aware, the replacement of the old barriers at the Mickle Trafford end of the Millennium Greenway has not led to an increase in Motorcycle use. It is also well documented that the more that such paths are used by walkers and cyclists, the less the likelihood of motor cycle abuse.</p> <p>I hope that the proposal can be redesigned in order to make it more user friendly and to be less discriminatory in terms of access.</p>
Respondent 5	<p>Good idea. Will do. Pleased to see one A-frame removed, which has caused me problems with the trailer before (it did just about fit through with some cajoling).</p>

	<p>However, as the proposed new A-frame in the other location is to be 360 metres wide at its narrowest point, I think most bikes should be able to get through fine. We should probably be concerned about the impact of this structure on the skyline.</p>
<p>Respondent 6</p>	<p>One of our supporters has brought your Wales Coast Path scheme designs to our attention. We are very disappointed and concerned to see that your designs include the installation and retention of A frames and RADAR gates. These barriers will be impassable for many Disabled cyclists, users of mobility scooters, wheelchair users and others using larger cycles such as family cycles or cargo trikes. The installation and retention of these barriers is likely to breach the Equality Act (2010) and may give rise to successful discrimination claims.</p> <p>Please see the following guidance sheets Wheels for Wellbeing have produced to help authorities understand the reasons these barriers are discriminatory, and to provide alternative options to ensure equitable access to active travel: Guide to inaccessible barriers Guide to RADAR locking barriers Guide to vehicle access restriction bollards</p> <p>The Welsh Active Travel Guidance 2022 is clear that the barriers you propose to install will prevent access by Disabled people. It appears entirely unreasonable to us to consider large stretches of national active travel infrastructure as “exceptional circumstances” where preventing Disabled access to an important traffic-free route is an acceptable response to concerns about use by motorcycles and quad cycles. From the Welsh active travel guidance: 9.3.2 “Disabled people may need to use mobility scooters, wheelchairs, adapted or nonstandard cycles (such as tricycles, quadricycles or hand cycles), which require the careful design of facilities to make sure that their greater width and turning space requirements can be accommodated.” 9.3.4 “Disabled people are not a homogenous group, and it is important that the full range of diverse needs is considered and accounted for in the design process.” 9.9.2 “Designs should meet the needs of everyone who cycles at any age or physical condition. Cycle routes should cater for a wide spectrum of people with different levels of confidence and experience; and those who use adapted cycles (see section 9.3 and figure 9.4).” Table 9.8 shows absolute minimum widths permitted at physical constraints are 1.5m. Since many Disabled people cannot open gates and pass through them with their mobility aid, all gates which must be opened manually therefore can be considered as having a minimum width of 0m. 9.17.10 “A minimum width of 1.5m is required between bollards, chicane barriers or at gates to accommodate the full range of cycles. Gates should be avoided on cycle routes and ‘kissing gates’ must not be used.” 15.3.2 “Designers should start with a presumption against the use of any form of access control, installing only in response to evidence of actual problems of abuse of cycle</p>

and pedestrian facilities, and never simply in response to perceived problems.”

15.3.3 “Access controls can cause difficulties to many legitimate users and can render routes inaccessible to people who rely on mobility aids.”

15.3.5 “A single bollard, and clear sight lines will be effective in many locations”

Minimum turning circles radii are given in table 9.3, with 3.4m minimum external turning radius to provide access for the Cycle Design Vehicle, which is 2.8m long and 1.2m wide.

Inaccessible barriers which make access to public spaces (including cycle paths and footways) more difficult for Disabled people than non-Disabled people are discriminatory under the Equality Act (2010).

The Equality Act requires public authorities including councils to alter and remove physical features which would otherwise exclude or significantly disadvantage Disabled people (Section 20) and to advance equality of opportunity for Disabled people by actively enabling Disabled people to participate in public life and activities (Section 149, Public Sector Equality Duty).

There is a risk of successful discrimination claims being made against Flintshire County Council under the provisions of the Equality Act (2010) if active travel routes are inaccessible, even if causing or retaining inaccessibility was not the intention of this project.

However, it will be not be difficult or have significant cost implications to remedy the situation at this stage. We suggest that to be fully compliant with the Equality Act (2010) and Welsh active travel infrastructure guidance if the following action is taken:

1. Alter designs to ensure clear straight-line access of minimum 1.5m at all proposed vehicle access restriction locations.

a. Remove all A frames from designs;

b. Remove all closing gates including RADAR locking gates from designs, except for existing vehicle access gates where these can be retained

while enabling sufficient straight-line cycle access;

c. Install locking bollards spaced with minimum 1.5m air gaps and straight approaches where vehicle access needs to be maintained.

2. Where there is a history or significant risk of inconsiderate path use, consider adding signage to encourage considerate shared use, for example

“pedestrian priority, cycles slow” and “please keep dogs on short leads”.

3. Where there is a significant history of illegal path use including by motorised vehicles, liaise with local police to establish monitoring and enforcement options, including use of CCTV at known access points.

We would be grateful if you could respond to us indicating that you will alter your designs to enable equitable access for Disabled path users, including a timescale by which these alterations will take place.

We would appreciate you sharing your designs with us, so that we can ensure Disabled people living in and visiting Flintshire will be able to enjoy your active travel routes equitably.

Respondent 7	This will hopefully be an improvement to allow disabled access and prevent the use of motor bikes. Not sure, but will it stop that electric bike that's travels at 40/50 mph down the pedestrian cycle path?
Respondent 8	This looks like an improvement.
Respondent 9	<p>Further to the email below and our team's concerns around potential reputational damage for the Authority as a result of the barriers, I thought it might be useful to let you know about this recent legal challenge against Newcastle City Council as it would appear to be a situation that we could possibly find ourselves in.</p> <p>We would welcome an opportunity to discuss Fiona's and our team's concerns and have the opportunity to have an input into your recommendations to Members.</p> <p>https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-tyne-66818217.amp</p> <p><i>As a result of campaign groups escalating the issue with the barriers, TfW (who award Active Travel Transport Grant on the Welsh Government's behalf) have been in touch to say that, by having barriers that do not conform to the Active Travel Act or the Equalities Act, we could jeopardise future funding for Active Travel. Their comments can be seen in the extract below.</i></p> <p>Access Barriers</p> <p><i>Just wanted to flag an early risk in relation to Active Travel Fund support on routes which include non-compliant access barriers, as appreciate these are in place on a number of routes on Flintshire's Active Travel Network Map of future aspirations - which might otherwise be eligible for capital funding support through the programme.</i></p> <p><i>The funding guidance states: Funding for active travel schemes will only be granted where scheme design reflects the Active Travel Act Guidance.</i></p> <p><i>Section 15.3 of the Active Travel Act Guidance Active Travel Act guidance (gov.wales) covers advice in relation access controls.</i></p> <p><i>As an example, the current frames in place on sections of the proposed network (such as those in and around the Deeside area) do not comply with the guidance, as they would prevent legitimate users of certain cycles (e.g. cargo, adapted, recumbent) and users of certain mobility aids (e.g. mobility scooters, certain wheelchairs) from accessing the route.</i></p> <p><i>Further advice on design considerations is available here: Sustrans greenways design guide: 9. Accessibility to routes - Sustrans.org.uk</i></p>

	<p><i>And case studies relating to the some of the issues they cause to legitimate users (and risks to the local authority in relation to duties under the Equality Act 2010) available here:</i></p> <p>Why barriers on cycle routes stop me from cycling independently: Amanda's story - YouTube Barriers on cycle paths Cycling UK</p> <p><i>Just a final note as a reminder that the current ATF grant advice states applications can be made for use of the core allocation for removal or redesign of non-compliant access barriers (Annex 3).</i></p>
Respondent 10	<p>We have been made aware you are currently planning changes to access controls in several locations along the All Wales Coastal Path and NCN Route 5 in Deeside and note the cabinet decision to approve RADAR gates and chicanes, retaining the existing extremely restrictive A frames.</p> <p>We are of the view from many years of experience with developing and maintaining the NCN across the UK that these types of barriers simply exclude many legitimate users, especially those in mobility scooters and using adapted or non-standard cycles, whilst having a very limited effect in preventing anti-social behaviour, particularly from motorbikes, given the ability for these to find alternative access points and does nothing to address this behaviour at source. Larger vehicles can be prevented from access through agreed designs, such as bollards or very wide chicanes which would be compliant with current guidance.</p> <p>Whilst RADAR gates might seem an effective solution for those with disabilities, we know that many disabled people cannot use them effectively and any need to open multiple gates along a relative short stretch of route will deter all but the most determined users from accessing the path, whilst actively restricting the ability for the path to cater for a wider range of users particularly local residents and tourists. The message this sends is plainly wrong and does nothing to attract visitors to the area, or those accessing the route without extensively planning their journey first.</p> <p>Wheels for Wellbeing, an organisation specifically supporting wheeled users with disabilities has issued guidance on RADAR gates ICI Guide which makes their position clear.</p> <p>Further, we have doubts if the radar key operated gates proposed are compliant with the Equality Act, and we are not aware that an equality impact assessment has been carried out for these sites. If complaints are received and upheld, we believe that Flintshire County Council may face a further financial liability. For example, in the past year, we are aware that RADAR key operated gates have been replaced by Natural Resources Wales due to a single complaint about access for one specific type of mobility scooter.</p> <p>We are disappointed that Sustrans was not consulted at an earlier stage, before the “Access Barrier Review – Wales Coast Path” report was considered by Cabinet on 18th July 2023. We founded and are the custodians of the National Cycle Network, receive funding from the Welsh Government to maintain and improve it and, following an audit of all access controls on the National Cycle Network in Wales completed last year, our assessment information on access controls forms the basis of the Welsh Government’s Active Travel Act Guidance.</p>

	<p>Several Local Authorities in Wales have already acted on this guidance and removed or amended many access controls on the NCN in their areas to make the network much more accessible to all users. This is a far more inclusive approach and has proved that barriers can be removed without any significant adverse effects from greater levels of anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>We strongly urge that in the future, Sustrans must be offered the opportunity to bring our considerable expertise on access controls to the process, or at the very least be consulted at an early stage, on all active travel routes and particularly along the coastal National Cycle Network in Flintshire.”</p> <p>I trust the above makes Sustrans’ position clear. We would be happy to engage further on the matter if this would be helpful.</p>
Respondent 11	<p>I have significant concerns regarding the removal of the barriers however I understand the need to adjust. My concerns are for the safety of the public to prevent the use of off road motorbikes along the coastal path. We have seen an increase in county lines (drug selling) along the coast path which we are working on methods to prevent. Also, the barriers are reducing/preventing any accidents by slowing pedal cycles/preventing motor bikes from accessing the area. Therefore, I am requesting that they are not removed and that they are adjusted to enable any disability groups access to the coastal path but also stopping any illegal bikes.</p>