The proposed Non-Motorised User Integration Initiative forms part of the Highways England Improvements Programme to be implemented as part of the Cycling, Safety and Integration Designated Funds package for Area 12 Yorkshire and the Humber Region.

As part of this integration initiative several Non-Motorised User (NMU) crossing points along the A628 and A616 within the administrative boundaries of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and High Peak Borough Council were identified as sites for improvement. Such crossing points were severed by the existing A628 and A616, both heavily trafficked routes, and the facilities provided for NMUs at these locations were currently very poor. The problems were linked to the general layout of the crossing points, lack of provision for equestrian users, inter-visibility for users of the crossing points as a result of traffic signage and overgrown vegetation, all of which were adversely affecting safety and/or contributing to NMU route severance at these locations.

Therefore, in order to provide improved safety measures at each of the crossing points on the A628 and A616 the following measures were proposed:

- Provision of extended footway areas to allow crossing movements to be carried out perpendicular to passing traffic;
- Dropped kerbs should be laid flush with the adjacent carriageway on both sides, along with tactile paving areas to aid the visually impaired;
- Widening and surface improvements to the footway linking the crossing with adjacent lay-by areas;
- Hardened waiting areas to be provided, designed to accommodate equestrian users in addition to pedestrians and cyclists;
- The existing warning sign assembly to be relocated or removed, to increase inter-visibility between drivers and NMUs waiting to cross the A616 and A628;
- If necessary, vegetation to be removed at each location to ensure clear visibility to/from the rear of the new NMU waiting area; and
- The existing carriageway surfacing at each location over the width of the crossing should be upgraded, for example to black High Friction Surfacing, in order to provide adequate grip for crossing horses.

The development of the above measures into the detailed design for each of the crossing points was complicated by the location of each crossing point wholly within the Peak District National Park. This was designated Britain’s first national park in 1951 and is a formal recognition of the national importance of the landscape of the Peak District. The primary objective of the designation is the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty, including protection of landscape features. The A628 and A616 is part of an historic route connecting Sheffield and Manchester forming an integral element of the landscape. Therefore, it was considered vital that great care was taken in the design and implementation of the crossing improvement works at each of the locations to respect the setting within the National Park.

Crossing point for improvement works on the A628 approaching the junction with the A616 showing significant vegetation encroachment.

As part of this process consultations were undertaken with the Peak District National Park Authority were undertaken as part of the design development and it was recognized that such improvement works would align with the second statutory purpose for National Parks in England and Wales, which is ‘...to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public’.

This was achieved through the upgrading and improvement to several crossing points to facilitate the safe provision for NMUs to cross the A628 and A616, encouraging usage of the network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and bridleways in the Peak District area.

In developing the scheme design proposals, each of the crossing points and adjacent habitat were subject to an ecological walkover and landscape and visual assessment, with the findings incorporated into an Environmental Study Report and Record of Determination. Consultations were undertaken with statutory environmental bodies, including Natural England and the Peak District National Park Authority. Necessary approvals from Natural England were gained prior to the commencement of works given the proximity to the Peak District Moor SPA, South Pennine Moors SAC and Dark Peak SSSI. This included the completion of a Habitat Regulations Screening Assessment and application for Assent for works adjacent to the boundaries of the SSSI. The measures identified through the environmental assessment process were factored into the scheme design including methods of working, supervision requirements and recommended best practice measures to be implemented during the works – all of which were positively received by the statutory environmental bodies.

The measures proposed through the scheme design aimed to provide improved facilities at each of the crossing point locations in order to increase the safety and security of NMUs and encourage increased patronage by reducing severance of the NMU routes by the A616 and A628 respectively through an improved layout and greater inter-visibility. In addition, the provision of flush dropped kerbs and tactile paving at each location also ensured that the NMU facilities adequately accommodated all NMUs in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Overall, the opportunities to improve the crossing facilities to benefit non-motorised users along this part of the network were emphasised by the A-one+ Horticultural Manager who noted that “...the NMU improvement schemes on the A628 and A616 being delivered via Cycling, Safety and Integration Designated Funds have introduced various measures that will reduce severance and improve safety at the differing crossing points. The scheme proposals also align with the second statutory purpose for National Parks in England and Wales through providing safe points for NMUs to cross the A628 and A616. This in turn encourages the greater usage of the network of PRoW and bridleways that the crossing points connect to, thus providing the public with the opportunities to understand and enjoy the special qualities that the National Park offers.”

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