

A5117 ROAD IMPROVEMENTS TO DEESIDE PARK

On the 22nd Jan 2009 I was pleased to take part in an audit with other NMUs (Non-Motorised Users) of the new section of the A5117. The improvements are from the M56 Junction 16 at Dunkirk to the Deeside Park Junction A550/A548, a distance of 5k. This particular section had a poor safety record and facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders were very poor.

The main aim of the road development scheme was to improve traffic flow along the route, which is part of the Trans-European Network connecting Ireland with Scandinavia. New routes for cyclists, horse riders and walkers are impressive, especially the new road bridge over the A5117 – now the A494. Three-quarters of the new NMUs' routes are of tarmac construction where access is shared with local farms. Remaining routes are of stone construction, which are preferred by horse riders.

The purpose of the audit, which included representatives from walking groups, cycling groups and horse riding groups, was to point out any problems while walking the whole route.

The audit was carried out by representatives from Carillion, the main contractor, the designers Owen Williams, the Highway Agency and Cheshire's Footpath Officer, and included invited representatives from walking, cycling and horse riding groups (NMUs). NMUs identified minor problems such as incorrectly placed signage, the need to change some gate positions, and various modifications suggested by the horse riders. The contractors agreed to carry out our suggested modifications to the route.

I also suggested that potholes in Lodge Lane should be filled in, which the Contractors agreed to do, even though it was not part of the original scheme. Negotiations are continuing with Flintshire County Council (FCC) to repair gates and erect new signs where new routes converge with existing routes at Green Lane West and East on both sides of the new road. NMUs were promised that these points would be taken up with Flintshire County Council.

The contractors agreed to approach Cheshire Highways Department to request that WOODBANK LANE and SHOTWICK LANE are re-designated as 'quiet' roads to reduce the speed limit to 20mph.

During the construction of the improvements to the A5117 three separate farms and buildings, and two ponds were lost. Three new ponds and a new habitat for the Crested Newt have been created. Thousands of new whips and substantial hedging are being planted along the whole route to establish it as a 'green' route.

Peter Williams

CTC Right to Ride Representative - Chester and Ellesmere Port.