



# **What do walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders want from National Highways?**

Case study: A590, South Cumbria

May 2025

# Introduction

When we think of National Highways, it's usually fast-moving motorways that come to mind—busy with cars, lorries, and motorbikes. But nearly half of the network is made up of 'A' roads, which are also used by people walking, wheeling, cycling, or riding horses.

Across England, National Highways manages almost 900 miles of footways, cycle tracks, and shared paths. In the North West alone there are 74 miles of footway, eight miles of cycle track, and 21 miles of shared footway/cycle track. This research captures the experience of those road users - from families trying to cross a busy road with no safe crossing point, to cyclists navigating narrow paths beside fast-moving traffic, these journeys can often feel unsafe or stressful. Looking specifically at the A590 in South Cumbria this is the seventh area we've assessed from the perspective of walkers, wheelers, cyclists, and horse riders. While each location has its own specific concerns, common themes consistently emerge.

We use these themes to work closely with National Highways, addressing issues and helping to establish best practice across the network. On the A590, for example, common concerns include the need for alternative off-road routes that run alongside the main carriageway, and for more consistent, continuous paths where gaps currently exist. There is also a clear demand for more safe and accessible places to cross the road.

Many of the improvements needed—such as maintaining existing crossing points, clearing overgrown vegetation, fixing uneven surfaces, or updating signage—are relatively simple and inexpensive. Yet they can make a big difference to the safety and comfort of those walking, wheeling, cycling or riding horses. These 'attention to detail' issues often go overlooked, but addressing them can lead to significant improvements in the overall experience for non-motorised users.

Based on these findings, Transport Focus will:

- Work with National Highways to identify and prioritise both small, quick improvements and larger interventions that require more investment, focusing on the needs of walkers, wheelers, cyclists, and horse riders.
- Advocate for the wider application of best practice across the network, especially where recurring themes—such as severed Public Rights of Way, missing links in active travel routes, or poor day-to-day maintenance—are identified.
- Continue to push for these road users to be fully considered in future infrastructure upgrades and renewals, ensuring that poorly performing routes are brought up to a consistent, high standard.



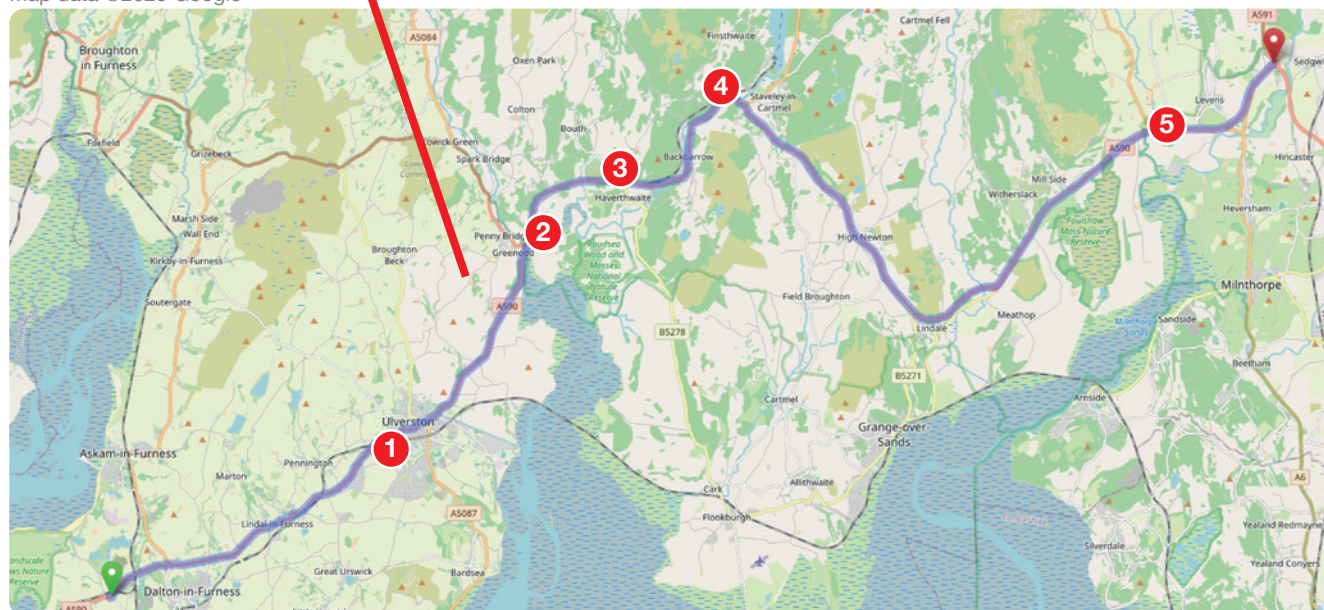
## Going along the A590: summary of findings

The A590 in South Cumbria is a significant part of the 530-mile Strategic Road Network (SRN) in north-west England, covering 28 miles. In this study we considered a considerable stretch of the A590 between the A591 near to Sizergh down to the end of the National Highways' route at Park Road in Barrow-in-Furness. While the length of the road was considered, the research mainly focussed on the experiences of walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders at the following locations along the A590:

- 1 Ulverston Centre.
- 2 Greenodd.
- 3 Haverthwaite.
- 4 Newby Bridge; and
- 5 Gilpin Bridge Inn.



Map data ©2025 Google



In terms of successes stakeholders identified that going along the A590 on-road was typically more direct, and a more level gradient than travelling on alternatives. The A590 was also perceived to be better maintained than many smaller, alternative side roads, with fewer potholes and better lines of sight.

Some parts of the A590 have a marked one metre edge of carriageway strip, and a wide road alignment, offering a safe buffer for cyclists compared to travelling

with heavy traffic on narrower sections. Cyclists and walkers also noted that National Highways had made changes to the speed limits at some parts of the A590 (for example in Haverthwaite and Newby Bridge) and this was viewed positively.

Connections to the National Cycle Network and other active travel infrastructure, such as the disused railway path between Greenodd and Haverthwaite, were used frequently and described as pleasant detours away from the busy A590.

## How might things be improved for walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders making journeys on the A590

For each of the locations along the A590 which have been included within the research, several enhancements are suggested which walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders say would improve their experience. They can be summarised as:

- Where budget and land use allows, extend and maintain the disused railway path that connects to Greenodd Crossing, taking it the full length of the A590 to create an alternative route which encourages active travel in the area.
- Construct a short section of off-road cycleway on the north side of the A590, from the Lakeside and Haverthwaite Steam Railway to Backbarrow Road.
- Add a footway between Newby Bridge Roundabout and the Shell garage to provide safer access for walkers.
- Introduce and maintain the quiet lanes which approximately follow the A590 alignment on both sides of the road – for example Heather's Lane near to Gilpin Bridge Inn. It is noted that these changes would be difficult due to constraints with road alignment and budget.
- Install signalised crossings at high-risk areas (for example bus stops).





# Location-specific findings

A short summary of the findings for each location is provided below, with detailed findings available in the research agency report on our website.

## Location 1: Ulverston Centre

### Overview of the location

Ulverston is a major town within the Furness Peninsular. The A590 runs through the centre of the town, meaning that interaction with the road is common for residents. To the north of Ulverston some sections of the A590 become dual carriageway. Cyclists are known to use this route to connect with Haverthwaite. For the purposes of the research, the location was divided into five sections:

- **Section 1** – from the south to the Pennington Lane junction.
- **Section 2a** – from the Pennington Lane junction to the Market Street/The Ellers roundabout.
- **Section 2b** – from the Markey Street/The Ellers roundabout to Hoad Lane.
- **Section 3** – from Hoad Lane to the start of the dual carriageway.
- **Section 4** – from the start of the dual carriageway to the north towards Greenodd.





### Summary of issues identified by the research

Discussions with local stakeholders and the site audits which were undertaken at this location identified that walkers and wheelers regularly navigate the paths alongside the busy A590 in Ulverston. While stakeholder discussions and site audits indicate that the footway around the Blue Light Hub area provides good connectivity for walkers and wheelers, there is a lack of safe crossing points and places where pedestrians have priority, which is a cause for concern.

Stakeholder feedback and site audits indicate that within the centre of Ulverston cyclists contend with fast traffic, narrow lanes, and difficult junctions. It is also noted that outside of Ulverston there are limited safe routes to use to cycle between the town and Greenodd. More positively, back roads between Alpine Road to the north of Ulverston and the town are available which offer an alternative to using the A590 to make this journey.

***“The A590 route through the town centre suffers from putting the motor vehicle capacity above all other design considerations making it difficult and unattractive for pedestrians and cyclists.”***

Walker and cyclist, Ulverston Centre

Walkers making journeys in and around Ulverston raised concerns about the lack of safe crossing points over the A590 within Ulverston, particularly on busy sections of the road between Booth’s roundabout at the local Marks and Spencer. Walkers noted that the crossings in this area are largely unsignalised and that this causes issues due to the speed of the traffic.

Feedback from cyclists making journeys in the area largely reflect the findings from conversations with stakeholders and the site audits. Cyclists particularly mention that the A590 has narrow sections north of Ulverston Centre with high-speed traffic using the road and no dedicated cycling provision apart from a one metre edge of carriageway marking which is used informally as a cycle lane by confident cyclists in daylight. Cyclists using this part of the carriageway note that potholes, debris and overgrown greenery are common, which causes safety challenges.

Cyclists mention that alternative roads to the north of Ulverston are steep and that they are also poorly maintained. They also say that the National Cycle Network diversion away from the A590 is steep and hard to ride. This means that alternatives are less usable than the A590 itself, despite safety challenges on the SRN.

Cyclists travelling from the east into Ulverston, often turn off at Swan Street to avoid cycling on the A590 through Ulverston Centre, opting instead for side streets, some of which are one-way. However, these road users note that crossing the A590 onto Swan Street is challenging, due to having to cross three lanes of SRN. Cyclists also report that the A590 out of Ulverston Centre to the west is very



*“The road is single road in places and the cars pass fast and close making it extremely dangerous and scary. The road is also of poor surface. There is no space to ride it, and the experience is terrifying. I have also seen random walkers on the road trying to link Ulverston to Greenodd”*

Walker and cyclist, Ulverston Centre

intimidating to cross, making it difficult to access to shops and the Beehive Business Park which are located there.

While walkers, wheelers and cyclists find crossing the A590 difficult in certain areas around Ulverston, the signalised crossing points which exist towards the centre of the town are viewed positively. Walkers also mention that good lighting on the A590 in the centre of Ulverston provides feelings of safety, particularly during the winter months. For wheelers using mobility scooters the footway along the A590 through central Ulverston is more accessible than alternative routes and wide pavements in some locations accommodate those with prams and those using mobility scooters when well-maintained.

*“When you get near town there’s a lot more of these signalised crossings, which I thought work fairly well.”*

Walker, Ulverston Centre

### Recommendations for improvements in Ulverston Centre

**Improve accessibility** for elderly and disabled users, as well as users travelling with prams and other wheeled aids, by:

- improving the surface of paths and roads
- standardising curb heights at key crossing points
- reducing crossing times at signalised crossings; and
- widening footpaths, where possible.

**Address safety and security concerns**, by:

- installing more signalised crossings at high-risk areas like Booths and near Marks and Spencer

- improving visibility at crossings by regularly maintaining overgrown vegetation
- reducing speed limits and adding speed cameras or other enforcement measures to slow down vehicles near crossings and junctions; and
- enhancing lighting where it is currently lacking.

**Introduce dedicated infrastructure**, in particular:

- adding a dedicated two-way cycle lane through Ulverston Centre
- off the A590, add ‘Except Cyclist’ signage to one-way side streets through Ulverston Centre, creating alternative routes for less experienced cyclists
- north of Ulverston, undertake a feasibility study to transform the Ulverston-Greenodd SRN section by introducing active travel provision via a cycle lane or shared-use path; and
- where new infrastructure is unable to meet standards, look for alternative options and mitigations to make it as good as possible, or ways to encourage use of existing infrastructure, where available.

**Improve user access** to and from Ulverston to encourage journeys along the A590 by sustainable transport modes, by:

- extending and maintaining the disused railway path from Greenodd crossing down to Ulverston, taking it the full length of the A590, where budget and land use allows.



## Location 2: Greenodd

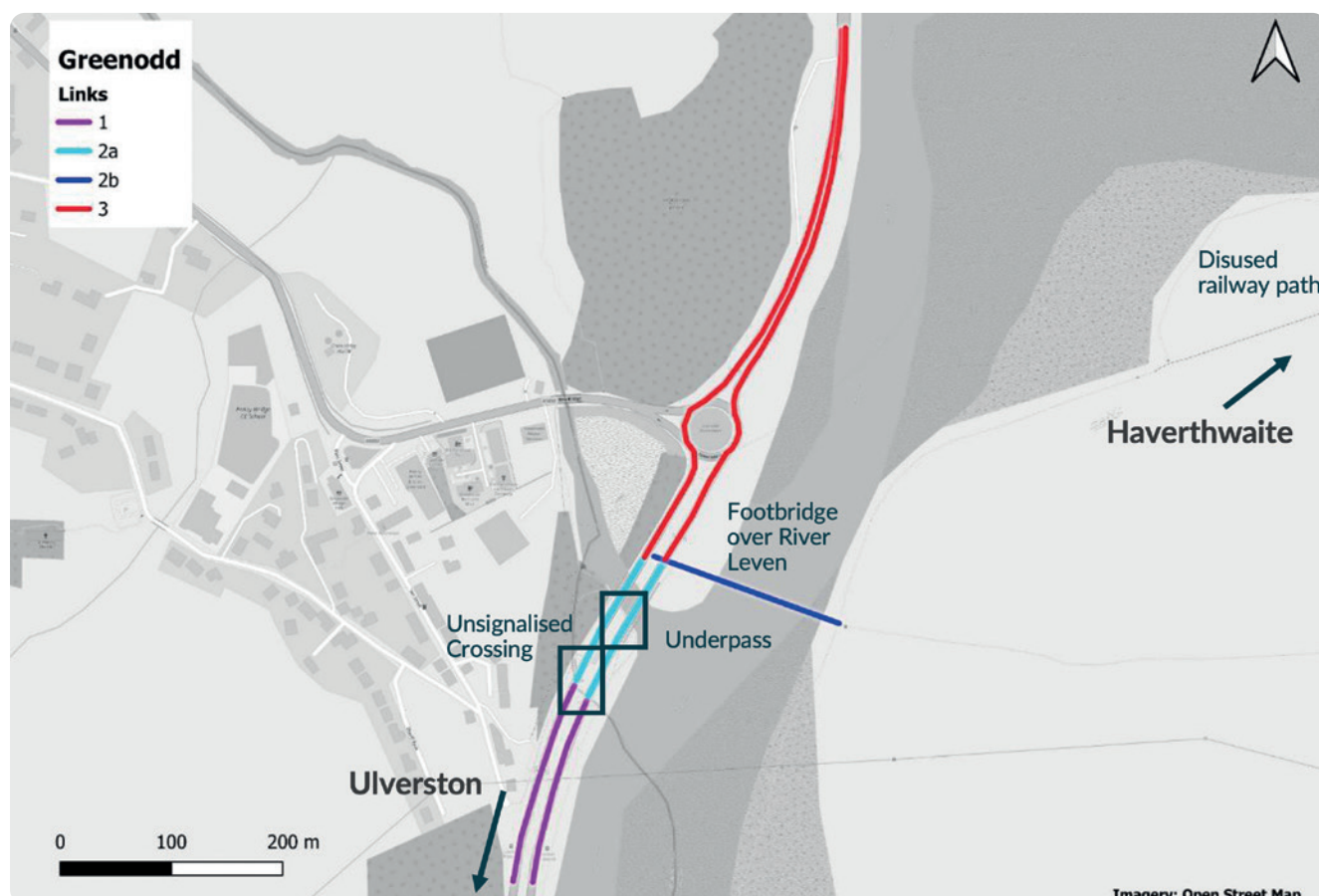
### Overview of the location

The Greenodd site incorporates Greenodd crossing - an unsignalised crossing point on the A590. This crossing provides access to the National Cycle Network (NCN) 70/700, the footbridge over the river Levens, a bus stop, Greenodd village, and local nature reserves. Road users here can also access an underpass beneath the SRN as an alternative to the surface-level crossing.

Walking, wheeling and cycling are common at this location, with cyclists travelling along the A590 towards Penny Bridge or using the NCN route.

For the purposes of the research this location was split into four separate sections:

- **Section 1** – the dual carriageway to the south of Greenodd towards Ulverston
- **Section 2a** – the unsignalised crossing point and underpass beneath the A590
- **Section 2b** – the footbridge over the River Levens
- **Section 3** – the dual carriageway north of the footbridge, the Greenodd roundabout, and the dual carriageway to the north towards Haverthwaite.





## Summary of issues identified by the research

Site audits at the Greenodd location identified a lack of provision for horse riders. The bridge over the River Levens, which could potentially join this location with local bridleways, has parapets which fall short of the required height for those riding horses.

While stakeholders note that the surface-level crossing at Greenodd offers good segregation from motor vehicles using the road, a useful refuge point in the middle of the carriageway, and good footway width, walkers still find it difficult to cross at this location due to the speed of the traffic. As an alternative to this crossing an underpass under the A590 exists at this location. While welcomed, and used by walkers in the area, stakeholders report that the path is steep, uneven, and poorly lit.

No segregated cycle lanes are present along the A590 at this location, and the speed of traffic at Greenodd present difficulties for cyclists who may want to ride on the carriageway itself. For reasons mentioned above, the crossing is difficult for cyclists to use, and the pathway through the underpass beneath the A590 is poorly maintained with an uneven surface.

Comments made by walkers, wheelers, and cyclists about making journeys at the location very much reflect the findings from conversations with stakeholders and from the site audits. Walkers mention issues with the surface-level crossing in particular finding it hard to judge the speed of the traffic when using the crossing.

Walkers also mention challenges in relation to using the path underneath the A590 due to the uneven surface and poor lighting. The surface of this path is also an issue mentioned by wheelers who note that it limits use for those with prams or using mobility scooters, and that it limits access to the nature reserve over the Bridge which crosses the River Levens.

*“My mum has a wheelchair or mobility scooter and the nature reserve I am trying to cross into, is actually an all-mobility trail. But people can’t access this mobility trail because there is no path that can get you there.”*

Walker, Greenodd

Cyclists making journeys at Greenodd note that the site would not be used by those who are less confident due to the speed of vehicles at the location, the lack

of dedicated infrastructure, and the poor behaviour exhibited by a small number of drivers. Cyclists described frequently being pressured by vehicles to use the one metre edge of carriageway road marking as a cycle lane, despite the insufficient space available to be used in that capacity. Cyclists also reported that the available width of the edge of carriageway road marking is further reduced by overgrowth and drains.

Cyclists mention that using the surface-level crossing at Greenodd is difficult on a bicycle due to the need to lift the bike over barriers and say that the NCN route after the bridge over the River Levens often floods making it challenging to use.

*“This bridge over the river takes you on to where the Cumbria cycleway goes... that track the other side of the bridge, is quite rough and it floods a lot, so it’s somewhat problematic for cyclists... you have to climb over the barrier... there’s no way through.”*

Cyclist, Greenodd

Despite the issues mentioned, cyclists and walkers do identify some successes at the Greenodd location. In relation to the surface-level crossing, the segregation between the pavement and the road contributes to feelings of safety and is appreciated. Accordingly, these road users are pleased that the underpass exists as an alternative crossing, despite the path surface here being poorly maintained.

Walkers making journeys at the location say that they are able to appreciate the scenery around the location when using the bridge over the River Levens, and that this provides good connections to other routes along the A590, such as the disused railway line to Haverthwaite. This route is also mentioned positively by cyclists in the area who note that routes around the Greenodd Estuary offer peaceful, visually rewarding rides, making them attractive for leisure cyclists.

*“The fact you can get over the footbridge, onto the old railway track... it gets you off the road, it’s scenic, pleasant, birds, really good views of the lakes... it’s a really good route.”*

Cyclist, Greenodd

## Recommendations for improvements at Greednodd

**Improve accessibility** for elderly and disabled users, as well as users travelling with prams and other wheeled aids, by:

- improving access to the alternative underpass crossing, enabling all users to avoid the surface-level crossing
- improving the surface of the underpass
- improving the surface of routes connecting to the surface-level crossing and underpass, including the disused railway path and pathways down to Greenodd village.

**Address safety and security concerns**, by:

- putting rumble strips and signage on the A590 either side of the surface-level crossing to warn traffic to reduce speed
- implementing a reduced speed limit around the surface-level crossing, to allow for safer and easier crossing
- improving signage for the underpass, to encourage users off the surface-level crossing
- widening the surface-level crossing, where feasible
- increasing lighting throughout the location.



**Introduce dedicated infrastructure**, in particular:

- add dedicated cycle lanes either side of the A590, making use of the existing edge of carriageway markings; and
- where new infrastructure is unable to meet standards, looking for alternative options and mitigations to make it as good as possible, or ways to encourage use of existing infrastructure, where available.

**Improve user access to and from the location** to encourage journeys along the A590 by sustainable transport modes, by:

- extending and maintaining the disused railway path from Greenodd crossing up to Haverthwaite, taking it the full length of the A590, where budget and land use allows.





## Location 3: Haverthwaite

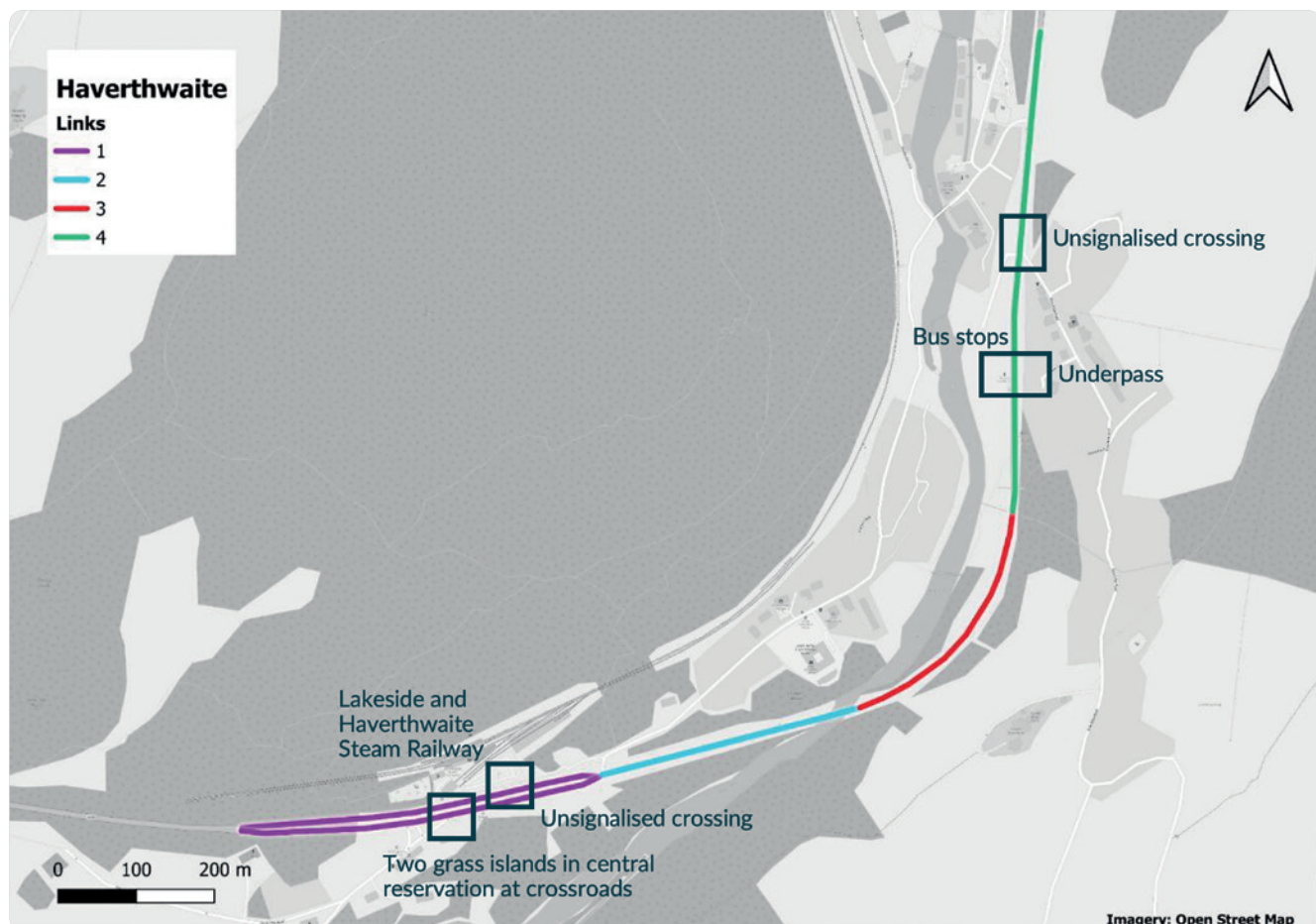
### Overview of the location

Haverthwaite is a village in the Furness area of Cumbria which sits within the boundaries of the Lake District National Park. At this location there is an unsignalised crossing on the dual carriageway outside Lakeside and Haverthwaite Steam Railway. With bus stop access on the south of the road, providing services to Greenodd, the dual carriageway at this location severs access to the railway and other leisure attractions on the north of the A590.

Past Haverthwaite Steam Railway to the north, the A590 becomes single carriageway with limited to no footways running on the A590. In this direction, at this location, there is an unsignalised crossing (Brow Edge crossing), underpass, and bus stops before the SRN runs through Backbarrow.

This location was split into four separate sections for this research:

- **Section 1** – the dual carriageway outside of Lakeside and Haverthwaite Steam Railway.
- **Section 2** – the single carriageway to the east of the steam railway to where the road crosses the River Levens.
- **Section 3** – from where the A590 crosses the River Levens round to the north towards Backbarrow.
- **Section 4** – further to the north through Backbarrow.



## Summary of issues identified by the research

Conversations with local stakeholders reveal that horse riders find crossing the A590 at this location challenging due to the high speed of the traffic, the lack of appropriate refuge spots and poor visibility. Site audits indicate that no provision for horse riders exists at this location.

Site audits also indicate that walkers making journeys at this location find that, where available, footway widths are inconsistent with poor surfaces and a lack of lighting. Crossing points for walkers are also found to be inadequate, lacking sufficient lighting and adequate separation from high-speed traffic. Conditions for cyclists are also found to be poor and inconsistent due to a lack of dedicated infrastructure.

While stakeholders mention the issues faced by walkers and cyclists at the location, they do note that National Highways have made improvements including the introduction of speed limit reductions and technology at crossings in Backbarrow to allow people to cross the A590 safely.

Cyclists making journeys through this location note that in general the surface of the road is poor, with large cracks and potholes which force them more towards the centre of the road. They also mention that the dual carriageway section of the A590 close to Haverthwaite Railway Station is short with narrow lanes meaning that drivers sometimes overtake cyclists dangerously.

Walkers making journeys in Haverthwaite express that the inconsistency of the paths adjacent to the A590 mean that they tend to use longer, alternative routes through Haverthwaite village to reach other locations such as Bouth. Despite the lack of consistent paths alongside the A590, where they do exist walkers find them to be adequate and contribute to making them feel safe when making journeys at the location.

Walkers also mention that the unsignalised crossing point which is available near to Haverthwaite Railway Station does not connect to the available footpaths and junctions, meaning that walkers tend to use alternative points to cross where there is no dedicated provision. This being the case, grass islands are available at the centre of the carriageway which walkers can use to help them to cross the road safely.

*“There isn’t much at all good for walkers in this section of the A590, there’s not much in the way of continuous paving... I think anywhere where there is a busy road, people would prefer to not be near the road because of traffic and fumes and noise and everything else. We just try to use it as an artery to get to the main location.”*

Walker, Haverthwaite

To the north at Backbarrow walkers express concerns regarding lack of lighting, the proximity of the narrow footpath to the A590, and the lack of segregation from high-speed traffic. The speed of the traffic is a particular issue for walkers attempting to cross the A590 using the unsignalised crossing points which are available along this part of the route.







## Recommendations for improvements at Haverthwaite

### Address safety and security concerns, by:

- converting dual carriageway section to single carriageway, using space for dedicated infrastructure, such as continuous footways, cycle lanes and wider central refuge areas at crossings
- adding traffic signals at the Lakeside and Haverthwaite Steam Railway crossing and implementing an additional controlled crossing where the B5278 meets the A590 near Lane Ends
- implementing a reduced speed limit around the surface-level crossings, to allow for safer and easier crossing
- taking lessons from the crossing technology trial at Backbarrow and consider retaining it and implement a wider roll out in the area; and
- increasing lighting throughout the location, especially at surface-level crossings.

### Introduce dedicated infrastructure, in particular:

- adding a continuous footway and cycle lane or shared-use path along the A590 at this location, making space by converting the dual carriageway to single carriageway, which would also improve road safety

- constructing a short section of off-road cycleway on the north side of the A590, from the Lakeside and Haverthwaite Steam Railway to Backbarrow Road; and
- where new infrastructure is unable to meet standards, looking for alternative options and mitigations to make it as good as possible, or ways to encourage use of existing infrastructure, where available.

### Improve user access to and from the location to encourage journeys along the A590 by sustainable transport modes, by:

- extending and maintaining the disused railway path from Greenodd crossing up to Haverthwaite, taking it the full length of the A590, where budget and land use allows.

## Location 4: Newby Bridge

### Overview of the location

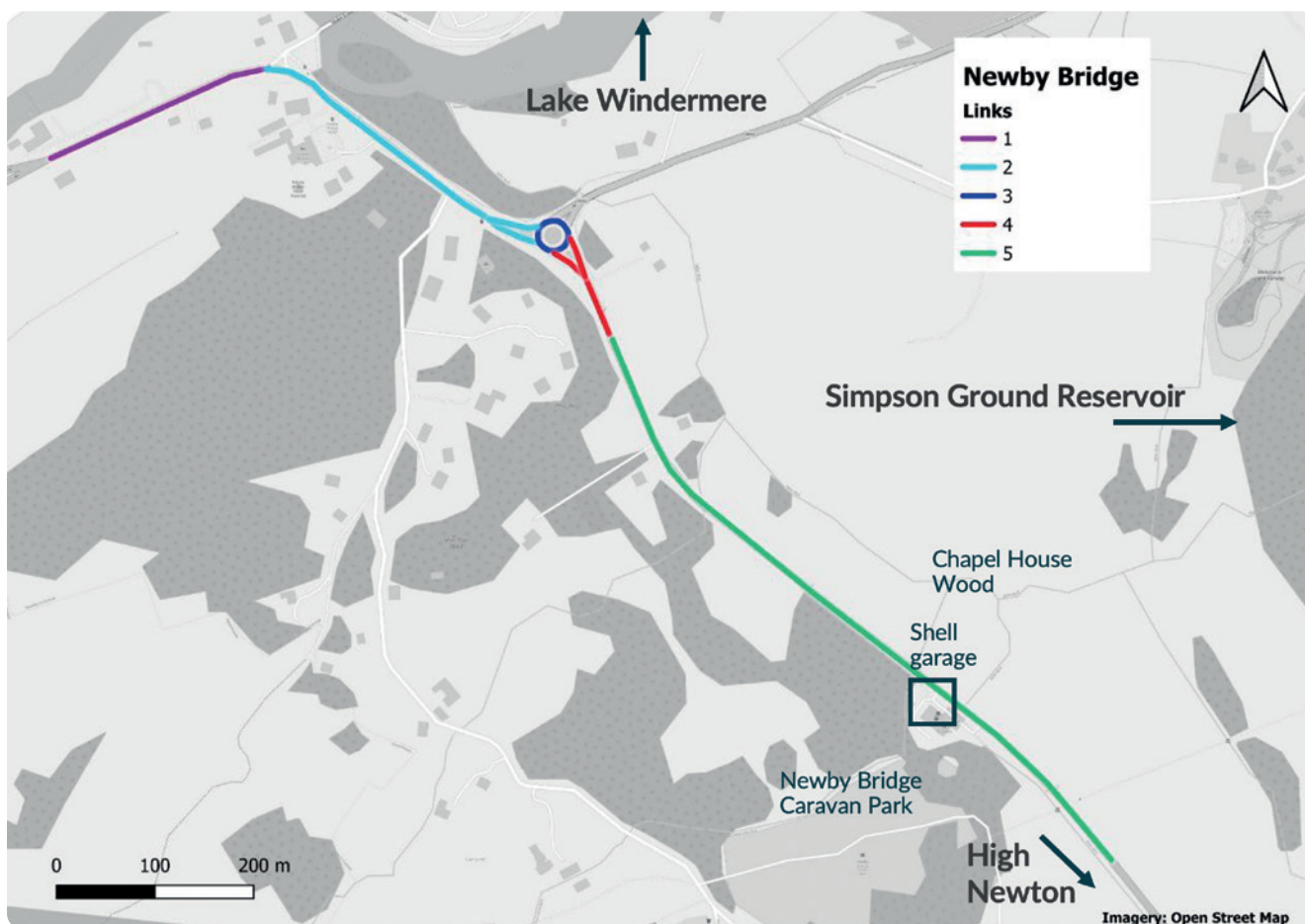
Newby Bridge village is at the southern end of Lake Windermere. The A590 runs through the village, connecting tourists to this key attraction.

Newby Bridge roundabout is a very busy junction and is frequently accessed by walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders to navigate between local amenities within the village. Horse riders also navigate this location to access bridleways on and around Simpson Ground Reservoir to the east.

The Shell garage to the south of the route includes a well-used local shop, but lacks access for walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders.

This location was split into five separate sections for the purpose of this research:

- **Section 1** – the single carriageway to the west, to Newby Bridge which crosses the River Levens.
- **Section 2** – from Newby Bridge towards the Newby Bridge roundabout.
- **Section 3** – Newby Bridge roundabout.
- **Section 4** – from Newby Bridge roundabout down the carriageway to the south-east.
- **Section 5** – further down to the south-east, past the Shell garage to High Newton.





## Summary of issues identified by the research

Conversations with stakeholders about this location reveal that there is a significant local demand for infrastructure for horse riders at this location due to the existence of bridleways connecting to the A590. Despite there being horse riders making journeys in the local area no dedicated paths or crossing points are available for these road users at Newby Bridge.

Similarly, stakeholders identify that there is strong local demand from cyclists to be able to access amenities. However, high-speed traffic, narrow roads, and lack of infrastructure creates challenges for cyclists at this location, particularly when travelling out from Newby Bridge village.

Site audits at the location identify some footways alongside the A590 for walkers which are of varying widths, and which offer varying levels of surface quality and segregation from traffic. However, where paths exist, these lack adequate lighting and they do not offer good crossing points. Particularly, there is a lack of footways and good crossing points near to key destinations such as the Shell garage, which is a key local amenity.

Findings from research with road users reflects what is found during conversations with local stakeholders and through site audits. Horse riders mention that the A590 severs bridleways, particularly at Chapel House Wood and at Newby Caravan Park. They also note that high-speed traffic intimidates horses, making journeys challenging, and that minimal signage, indicating use of the route by horse riders to other road users, further creates unsafe conditions.

Walkers making journeys at the location mention that there is a lack of paths alongside the A590 to the north-west of the location and to the south-east towards the Shell Garage. They note that this results in people avoiding walking at the location or leaves them having to walk on the carriageway of the A590 itself which is felt to be dangerous.

*“The Newby Bridge service station offers the only shop for local residents for 8 miles around, yet there is no pedestrian or dedicated cycle access to it from Newby Bridge [village].”*

Walker and cyclist, Newby Bridge

Wheelers say that fast-moving traffic and poor visibility near crossings, particularly at the Newby Bridge and Newby Bridge Hotel junctions pose a risk and that these road users often have to wait a long time to be able to cross the A590.

Despite the issues, horse riders, walkers and wheelers do note some successes at Newby Bridge. For horse riders there are bridleways that connect to the A590 here that provide traffic-free scenic paths which are suitable for riding.

Walkers note that there have been improvements in signage across the location and that reduced speed limits have, to some extent, improved how safe they feel walking in certain parts of the location. Walkers and wheelers also note that while existing footways are somewhat limited, they are functional for crossing roads and provide access to key locations like bus stops and local services.

*“When you’re coming out of The Swan, you’re going over the bridge... you cannot see the traffic coming round.”*

Wheeler, Newby Bridge



## Recommendations for improvements at Newby Bridge

### Address safety and security concerns, by:

- installing more crossings at high-risk areas like bus stops and the Shell garage
- adding a footway between Newby Bridge Roundabout and the Shell garage to provide safer access for walkers
- adding speed cameras or other traffic calming measures to slow down vehicles near crossings and junctions; and
- improving signage to indicate shared use of paths and horse-rider presence.

### Introduce dedicated infrastructure, in particular:

- designating horse-rider crossing points, with traffic calming measures, near bridleway entry areas, particularly around the Shell garage
- providing dedicated cycle lanes or wider shoulders, particularly near the Newby Bridge Roundabout and the Shell garage
- replacing the dual carriageway towards Backbarrow with a single carriageway to create a dedicated walking and cycling route
- adding segregation or barriers to any new riding, walking, wheeling or cycling infrastructure to enhance feelings of safety; and
- where new infrastructure is unable to meet standards, looking for alternative options and mitigations to make it as good as possible, or ways to encourage use of existing infrastructure, where available.



## Location 5: Gilpin Bridge Inn

### Overview of the location

The eastern end of the A590 provides connections to the M6 and A65; key routes on the SNR in North West England.

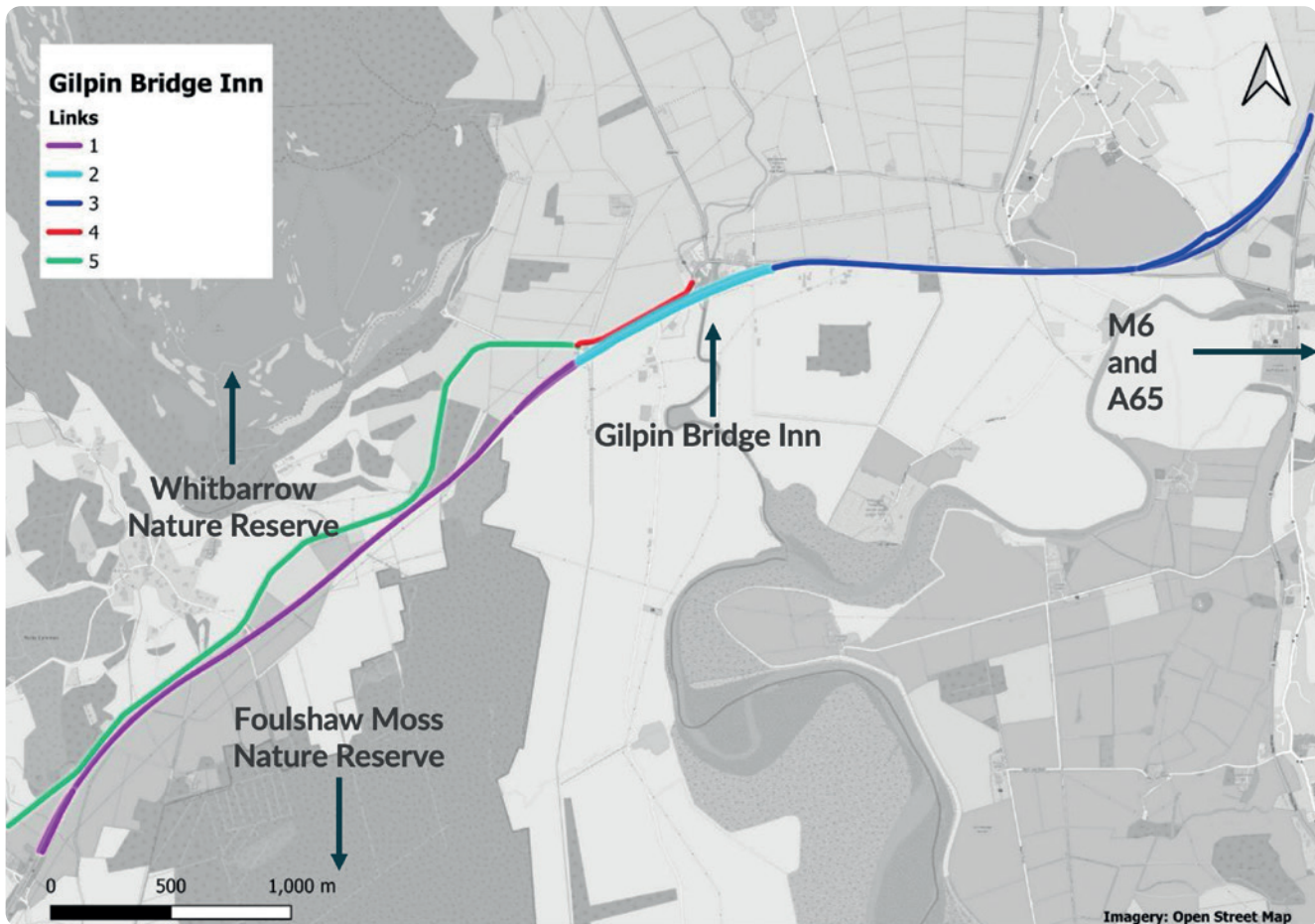
The A590 south-west of Gilpin Bridge Inn is single carriageway, with footways connecting to bus stops at junctions. The A590 then becomes dual carriageway at the junction with Heather's Lane (which provides an alternative to using the A590) with limited provisions for walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders.

As indicated, alternative routes are available around Gilpin Bridge, on the single-track road at Heather's Lane and on the off-road path to the west of Gilpin Bridge Inn towards the single-track road.

This location was split into five separate sections for the purposes of this research:

- **Section 1** – the single carriageway to the south-west of Gilpin Bridge Inn to the junction with Heather's Lane.
- **Section 2** – the dual carriageway section between the junction with Heather's Lane, past Gilpin Bridge Inn, to the eastern junction with the A5074.
- **Section 3** – between the eastern junction with the A5074 along the carriageway to the north towardsSizergh and the junction with the A591.
- **Section 4** – the off-road path between Gilpin Bridge Inn and Heather's Lane alongside the A590.
- **Section 5** – Heather's Lane, which runs as an alternative route alongside the A590.





### Summary of issues identified by the research

Interviews with local stakeholders and site audits of the location identify several challenges for horse riders, walkers, and cyclists. While Heather's Lane offers an alternative to riding a horse on the A590 here, the road lacks any dedicated infrastructure. Crossing the A590 to access Heather's Lane is also a challenge for these road users for this same reason.

Stakeholders also note that walkers and wheelers making journeys at this location find that footways along the alignment of the A590 are lacking or intermittent. They also mention that there are no safe crossing points, particularly at Gilpin Bridge Inn. These issues are also identified as presenting challenges for cyclists, where lack of infrastructure means that making cycling journeys here is difficult. For both walkers/wheelers and cyclists using Heather's Lane as an alternative route is more appealing.

Conversations with the road users themselves about this location largely reflects the findings from stakeholder interviews and site audits. Horse riders mention that fast-moving and noisy traffic above the Derby Arms underpass is intimidating for horses who are crossing the A590 between Whitbarrow

Nature Reserve and Foulshaw Nature Reserve. Horse riders recognise that the underpass provides a good opportunity to cross the A590 here but note that they need to dismount due to the height of the bridge.

Walkers note that they have some safety concerns when making journeys at this location. Specifically, they mention that the footway between Levens village and the bus stops on the A590 slip road is inconsistent forcing walkers (including school children) into the

*“Walking between Levens village and the bus stops on the A590 slip and at Levens Hall is unpleasant, especially in the dark winter evenings. Currently there is no footpath, so walkers, including schoolchildren catching a bus, need to walk in the narrow 60mph roadway.”*

Walker, Gilpin Bridge

60mph road, and that this is especially hazardous during dark winter evenings. Walkers also say that parked cars, narrow road widths and narrow to non-existent footpaths in routes through Gilpin Bridge make walking journeys challenging, as does high-speed traffic and poor visibility at crossing points over the A590 – for example, at Gilpin Bridge junction.

Similarly, cyclists mention safety concerns in relation to making journeys around Gilpin Bridge Inn. These concerns relate to the high speed of the traffic on the A590 and challenging crossing points and junctions, particularly around Levens and Witherslack, and at the Gilpin Bridge slip-road crossing.

Heather's Lane provides an alternative route to using the A590 for both walkers and cyclists, and both walkers and cyclists note that using the road to access Whitbarrow Nature Reserve is enjoyable. However, these road users also note that Heather's Lane is a single-track road, without a footway and with several blind corners, and that vehicles are known to travel at high-speed. These issues are sometimes exacerbated when the A590 is closed, due to "rat running". For cyclists particularly, while Heather's Lane is less challenging and more pleasant than using the A590, it is a longer route, with steeper gradients and less inconsistent maintenance.

*"[Heather's Lane is] a great example where the old road has been left in place and families, walkers, cyclist, electric wheelchair users can move from Grange-over-Sands to Levens with ease and enjoyment. It's often busy with cyclists at the weekend and during the week. Only negative is that some car users can get excited at the quiet road and drive too fast, or if there has been an accident of the A590 and people divert."*

Walker and cyclist, Gilpin Bridge Inn

### Recommendations for improvements at Gilpin Bridge Inn

**Address safety and security concerns** on the A590 alignment, by:

- adding speed cameras or other traffic calming measures to slow down vehicles near crossings and junctions
- improving visibility at A590 junctions

- introducing a dedicated, segregated cycleway through this location; and
- adding signage to encourage users onto alternative routes.

**Introduce dedicated crossing infrastructure,** in particular:

- installing safer crossings, with segregation and refuge points, at high-risk areas like Gilpin Bridge Inn and to cross between the Nature Reserves
- improving the Derby Arms underpass with sound proofing, extension of the footway, enhanced traffic signal enforcement, and improved height for horse riders, where possible; and
- improving the Levens Lane underpass with extension of the footway, working with Sustrans, the local authority and other partners.

**Introduce dedicated infrastructure and maintenance** on Heather's Lane, in particular:

- introducing a dedicated shared-use path for walkers, wheelers and cyclists
- adding signage to signify the shared-use paths, as well as signage to highlight use of the road by horse riders
- introducing formal quiet lane treatment, such as speed-reduction measures and signage; and
- ensuring consistent road maintenance, including gritting and lighting.

**Improve user access to and from the location** to encourage journeys along the A590 by sustainable transport modes, by:

- developing a safe, continuous footpaths between Levens village and nearby bus stops on the A590.





# How we did this research

Transport Focus has previously published similar research looking at the experiences of walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders. Walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders are defined in this research as follows:

- **Walkers/wheelers** – pedestrians, including those with a pram, pushchair, wheeled frame or similar mobility aid, mobility scooter/buggy or wheelchair.
- **Cyclists** – those making journeys using a bicycle, tricycle, tandem or scooter.
- **Horse riders** – equestrians.

In August 2024, Transport Focus asked the Social and Market Research team at the transport consultancy SYSTRA to help us to explore the views of walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders making journeys along routes that interact with roads managed by National Highways in the North West of England. In particular, Transport Focus asked SYSTRA to concentrate on journeys being made by these road users on, alongside, or across the A590 in South Cumbria.

SYSTRA initially completed a stage of site familiarisation, which included stakeholder engagement and site audits, and then undertook the user research.

The site familiarisation stage consisted of:

- A period of **stakeholder engagement** in which online interviews and focus groups were undertaken with a mixture of stakeholders representing National Highways, local authorities and other user groups at the locations to understand key issues.
- A stage of **systematic site audits** at which the infrastructure available for walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders was assessed using standard industry assessment criteria.

Following this, the user research was made up of:

- **Accompanied journeys and in-depth interviews** – researchers made journeys with walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders to understand user experience at the locations.
- **Digital ethnographic tasks** – walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders making journeys on, alongside, or across the A590 were invited to provide feedback about their experiences using an online interactive map.

In total 22 accompanied journeys were undertaken, while 16 responses were gathered from the online map – a breakdown of these interviews is provided below. Fieldwork was undertaken in September and October 2024.



Site	Accompanied Journeys	Online Interactive Map Responses
Ulverston Centre	two with walkers, one with a wheeler and one with a cyclist	one with a cyclist, one with a horse rider, two with cyclists/walkers and one with a stakeholder
Greenodd	three with walkers and 1 with a cyclist	one with a cyclist/walker and one with a stakeholder
Haverthwaite	three with walkers	two with walkers and one with a cyclist
Newby Bridge	two with horse riders, three with walkers and one with a cyclist	two with cyclists/walkers
Gilpin Bridge Inn	two with cyclists, two with horse riders and one with a walker	two with cyclists, one with a cyclist/walker and one with a stakeholder
TOTAL	22	16

### Contact Transport Focus

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Transport Focus is the operating  
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### Transport Focus

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