

Press release: £5 million B road opens as A556 bypass legacy

A £5 million upgrade of the old A556 between Knutsford and Bowdon in Cheshire has officially been handed to local communities as a new B road – complete with a dedicated route for the area’s cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders.

Left to right – Cheshire East councillors Olivia Hunter and Jamie Macrae, Tatton MP Esther McVey, Highways England’s Tim Gamon (delivery director for the North West) and A556 project manager Paul Hampson, and Richard Stuart from Costain.

Highways England has converted the old A556 Chester Road – which has been replaced by the £192 million Knutsford to Bowdon bypass – into the B5569, a new 5.4km B road which will now be operated by Cheshire East Council.

The road was formally ‘detrunked’ and handed over to the council at a special ribbon-cutting ceremony near Mere crossroads this morning, attended by key officials from Highways England, Cheshire East Council, parish councillors and Tatton MP Esther McVey.

Highways England project manager Paul Hampson said:

This is a significant milestone for the Knutsford to Bowdon project – a result of our determination to deliver a lasting legacy for local people following the completion of the new dual carriageway in March.

The conversion work includes new arrangements at Bucklow Hill (above) and Mere junctions

Su Russell, Chairlady of CycleKnutsford, said she was delighted the group had been invited to the opening of what she described as a ‘landmark’ designated cycleway – the first in Cheshire – and hoped it would lead the way to further cycling initiatives in the county.

She said:

Highways England and its main contractor Costain have kept CycleKnutsford informed throughout the process and taken into consideration cyclists and the environment generally at every possible opportunity.

Thumbs up for the new cyclist-friendly green route from CycleKnutsford (Su Russell, chair, centre)

CycleKnutsford members can't wait to get out on their bikes and explore the new safe segregated cycleway.

Since the new A556 opened to drivers in March, work to convert the old road has included:

- turning the old northbound 2 lane carriageway into a dedicated, segregated green route for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders – 4 metres wide and separated from the new B road by a wide border planted with a wild flower mix
- converting the old 2 lane southbound carriageway into a new B road with as single lane in each direction
- installing brand new drainage along the new route as well as totally resurfacing the re-arranged layout
- providing totally new junction layouts at Bucklow Hill/Chapel Lane and Mere junctions giving priority to the A5034 and A50 traffic
- installing a signalised Pegasus crossing – specifically designed to assist horse riders – at the junction between the green route and the A50 at Mere

The green route even has a Pegasus system to allow safer crossing over junctions for horseriders

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Mr Hampson said:

We would like to thank local people for their patience since March when the conversion work started in earnest. We hope they agree the new dedicated route for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders as well as the new single carriageway B road and new junction arrangements at Bucklow Hill and Mere have been well worth the wait.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.