

Press release: Thousands benefit from A14 community fund

Some 16 local projects have been funded by the A14 Community Fund since it launched in July 2016. The initiative was launched by Highways England to fund projects connecting local communities with the A14 upgrade, and it has already been making a difference within the communities living along the road in Cambridgeshire.

The £400,000 funding pot was launched in July 2016 and £110,000 of it has already been allocated to projects ranging from education and environment, to encouraging cycling and walking.

Gerard Smith, legacy lead for the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon project at Highways England, said:

This different approach to community engagement is a first for Highways England.

We care about the impact our road improvement projects have on people's lives and at the same time, we understand the critically important role that communities play in shaping our schemes as well as the economic, social and physical landscape around them.

An initiative like the A14 Community Fund makes it possible for us to support community-led projects that will leave a positive legacy for the local area long after we have finished our construction work and the new road is open to traffic. And I'm delighted to say it's been very successful in supporting great projects so far.

Grants of up to a maximum value of £10,000 are available to people living along the A14 in Cambridgeshire in a series of quarterly grant rounds until the end of the project in December 2020 or when all the money has been allocated – whichever comes soonest.

There have been five rounds so far, with more opportunities coming up to bid for grants to support projects across a wide range of areas including the environment, health and well-being, heritage, arts, skills, and culture.

As examples, projects could:

- focus on the new leisure opportunities opened up by the scheme
- chronicle changes to the local area over time
- complement the environmental measures being put in place
- revisit how public spaces are used

Gerard added:

We realise it can be daunting for small organisations to write a grant application for the first time. Initially, we noticed people found it hard to demonstrate how their project linked to the A14 road improvement project. We have now put in place a two-stage process which encourages applicants to talk to our team so we can help them frame their project to give it the best chances.

Most of the best projects we've seen are the ones where the bidders have worked closely with our team at design stage to understand the wider impacts.

We've had some great bids so far and I am sure there are more to come. What we'd really like to see are bids that build on the positive legacy we are leaving with the road improvement scheme: a much improved network of cycling and walking routes that communities can link into or capitalising on improved access to areas which didn't have it before for instance.

I look forward to seeing the bids we get for this and future rounds!

Case study 1: University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education A14 Writer in Residence

The University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education (ICE), successfully bid for funding last year for a post of A14 Writer in Residence based at Madingley Hall, a stone's throw from the A14 in Cambridgeshire.

The post was taken up by Daisy Johnson, a librarian, children's writer and blogger from York, from 6 September. Since then, Daisy has been encouraging people living and travelling along the A14 in Cambridgeshire to reflect on roads and the nature of travel via a series of free creative writing initiatives including face to face courses, pop up sessions, visits to schools and a Facebook page where she has been offering regular writing prompts to followers.

The hope is for local people from all walks of life to re-discover their love of stories, and the ultimate outcome will be for all involved to contribute to an anthology to be launched at a free event held at Madingley Hall this March.

Midge Gillies, Academic Director, Creative Writing, University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education, said:

Our A14 Writer in Residence, Daisy Johnson, has done a wonderful job of taking ideas about travel to many corners of the community. She has been particularly successful at engaging youngsters who see travel in a completely different way – you're stuck in a traffic jam? Luckily, you're wearing your edible outfit that will stop you from becoming peckish. Or wait till it's dark to see the dragon

races along the A14.

Daisy has also been active on Facebook where the A14 Stories site has persuaded people to think about their local community and to write something creative – often for the first time or after a very long gap.

And we've been thrilled by the response from the diverse group of students (and one lovely hearing dog) who have turned up to our three, free creative writing courses.

Roads take us to school, on holiday, to hospital, to a wedding or a funeral. We've all got a story about a special journey. I look forward to seeing which stories make it into the A14 writing anthology!

Case study 2: Cambridge Science Centre, On the Road school workshops

The Cambridge Science Centre successfully bid early last year for funding to create a new cross-disciplinary workshop for schools, aimed at years 6 to 10 (10 to 15 year olds), that ties in the environmental theme of their 'LifeWorks!' exhibition with engineering, using the A14 as a case study.

The team developed a workshop called 'On the Road', which investigates the materials used in road construction and looks at the environmental considerations to take into account in road building.

To date, the workshop has been delivered to more than 700 students living near the A14 (and some further afield), mainly in secondary schools (key stage 3) but also in a number of primary schools.

The workshops were tailored to the local environment and needs of the schools, with some interested in bridge construction while others looked at general construction skills, engineering or environmental science.

Helen Slaski, CEO of the Cambridge Science Centre, said:

"This funding has enabled Cambridge Science Centre to develop an exciting, hands-on workshop entitled 'On the Road' for the A14 project. Nearly 1,000 students throughout the East of England, particularly in areas impacted by the construction, have benefitted from this outreach programme which fulfils Cambridge Science Centre's objectives of enhancing education and inspiring young people to think about STEM that is all around them in their daily lives. Thank you for the funding, it has made a real difference and inspired youngsters to get involved with STEM related activities."

More than £110,000 out of the £400,000 fund has been allocated and 16 local projects have been granted funding under the A14 Community Fund.

More funding rounds are planned between now and when the project completes, with applications accepted until the fund runs out.

More than 2,000 people are estimated to benefit at some point from the approved projects Other examples of funded projects include:

- The Countryside Restoration Trust: received £9,005 to support water voles in the area of the A14 improvements
- Great Paxton Community Village Shop Ltd: received £9,965 to provide a convenience shop for the local community including volunteering and work experience opportunities
- The Offords Recreation Hut (Offord Village Hall): received £2,160 to provide a secure bicycle parking facility for village hall users
- Histon & Impington Community Orchard Project: received £1,752 to complete and help maintain the orchard by providing a motorised brush cutter & hedge trimmer and an information sign
- Groundwork East: received £10,000 to improve confidence and employability of people furthest from employment by growing wildflower plugs for use on the borrow pit nature reserves created by the A14
- Alconbury C of E Primary School: received £5,000 for an artist to work with the whole community to update 5 murals in the school hall
- Great Paxton Parish Council: received £3,000 to conduct a feasibility study into options to provide a safe alternative to the hazardous B1043 for cyclists

For more information about the A14 Community Fund, which is administered by the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, and to apply, visit the [Cambridgeshire Community Foundation website](#).

Highways England is upgrading a 21-mile stretch of the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon to three lanes in each direction including a brand new 17-mile bypass south of Huntingdon, with four lanes in each direction between Bar Hill and Girton. The project will add additional capacity, boost the local and national economy and cut up to 20 minutes off journeys.

The 2,200 strong construction team is keeping to the project's challenging timetable, with the improvements on track to open to traffic by the end of 2020.

You can see a new fly-through simulation of the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme below.

[A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme fly-through](#)

For the latest information about the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme, including job and training opportunities, visit www.highways.gov.uk/A14C2H follow @A14C2H on Twitter and [like our Facebook page](#)

To book the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon mobile visitor centre to attend a public event for free, call 0800 270 0114 or email A14CambridgeHuntingdon@highwaysengland.co.uk.

Tell the A14 communications team what you think, [complete the annual communications survey](#).

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.