

New cycle trail network could link Plymouth with Cornwall via Cremyll Ferry - and provide huge tourism boost

Impact study suggests it would be used by half-a-million people per year



Composite Image of the Folly at Mount Edcumbe, overlooking Plymouth Sound, and a cyclist

A new network of cycle trails could link Plymouth with Cornwall, via the Cremyll Ferry and Mount Edcumbe.

The Looe Valley Trails project, led by Looe Development Trust, has been researching the cost of creating new cycle links to Lanhydrock, Liskeard, Looe and Plymouth via the Cremyll Ferry.

The trust has been seeking support for the creation of 70km of new trails at an estimated construction cost of £8.3 million, [reports Cornwall Live](#).

An economic impact study based on data from Visit Cornwall and evidence from other similar projects around the country suggests that the trails could be visited by as many as 500,000 people per year - and boost the local tourist economy to the tune of £3 million per year.

Research has also found that the scheme could generate £10 million per year of spending in local accommodation, cafes and other tourist activities.



Edge Cycles offer bike hire at Mount Edgumbe

It is believed that the scheme would create a growth of 4% in the annual market for tourism, bringing £2-3 million of added income that would otherwise not have been spent in the area.

As well as extra spending from new visitors, there could be several new businesses created including cycle hire and cafes at key locations along the route.

As well as extra spending from new visitors, there could be several new businesses created including cycle hire and cafes at key locations along the route.

The preferred route uses mainly existing off-road tracks with the rest using quiet lanes, along the Glynn Valley and West Looe Valley, with a new section up the east Looe connecting Looe and Liskeard following the route of the Looe Valley Branch Line.

The route favoured for the Looe to Plymouth portion uses quiet lanes along the coast, including the spectacular Military Road, and approaches the Cremyll Ferry through Mount Edgcumbe Country Park.

Bike hire has been made available at **Mount Edgcumbe House and Country Park**, thanks to a tandem enterprise by a Torpoint couple. **Edge Cycles, run by Adam Bowden and Anna Leach, is situated at The Barrow Centre, offering cycle hire, sales and servicing.**



Edge Cycles offer bike hire at Mount Edgcumbe

Reaching agreements with private landowners along the route will be an important next step for the project along with detailed engineering design work to get greater certainty about the project costs.

Justin Spreckley, chairman of Looe Development Trust, said: "Almost half of local businesses are in the agriculture, retail or hotel and catering sectors.

"Anything we can do to boost their business, particularly out of season, would make a big difference to local prosperity.

"As a local development trust, we have been delighted to lead this study and will now be championing the trails for further funding to make sure we get to see the benefits.

"We hope to set up a new friends of the trail organisation so that local people can get involved in helping to support the project and make the most of the opportunities it offers."

The feasibility study included extensive consultation with the tourist industry, who were strongly supportive of the project.

Malcolm Bell, chief executive of Visit Cornwall, said: "South east Cornwall currently attracts fewer staying or overnight visitors than most other parts of Cornwall, so the potential for growth through the right investments is clear.



Cornwall cycle

"Cornwall is perceived as one of the top three destinations in the UK for cycle tourism and there's a big market available if these trails can be delivered."

The feasibility study was funded by Cornwall Council, the LEADER EU funding programme, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP, Liskeard and Looe Town Councils, Liskeard Town Forum and the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site.

Deborah Boden from the World Heritage Site said: "The Liskeard and Caradon Railway in the East Looe Valley was constructed as the essential transport link between the Caradon Hill World Heritage Site area and the port of Looe, from where thousands of tons of copper ore were shipped to South Wales for smelting.



Family cycling on the Camel Trail

"The presence of the railway, and the canal to which it was linked at Moorswater, also facilitated the growth of a major trade in Bodmin Moor granite, which was exported across the world.

"The Looe Valley Trail provides a great opportunity to tell the story of how these places and their people were shaped by industrialisation, and will engage local communities in celebrating their history and identity as industrial pioneers."

Sustrans, the national charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle, were involved in the study as part of the engineering and design investigations funded by Cornwall Council.

Simon Pratt, head of network development at Sustrans, said: "These trails fill a missing link in the national cycle network, connecting with Plymouth and Dartmoor to the east and Bodmin and the Camel Trail to the west.

"The Looe to Plymouth section in particular has been on our radar for many years and I hope that the time has come when it can now be delivered.

"As well as the tourism benefits, these trail routes are well connected to the railway network at Bodmin Parkway and Liskeard and offer more sustainable travel options for commuters and local people."

The report has been welcomed by Cornwall Council and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP.

Sandra Rothwell, chief executive of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP, which co-funded the feasibility study, said: "This study shows the potential for the Looe Valley Trail to make a significant contribution to rural businesses in south east Cornwall and could complement recent LEP investment in Bodmin to strengthen the local cycle network and the visitor economy.

"We look forward to seeing further plans as they are brought forward."

Edwina Hannaford, Cornwall Council cabinet member for neighbourhoods and a member of the trail steering group said: "These proposed cycle networks are a fantastic opportunity for south-east Cornwall and support our work to build strong local communities, each with their own identity and offer for visitors.

" Improved cycle networks would provide significant benefits for Cornwall's people, environment and economy by helping to connect communities, improve access to services, reduce traffic congestion and pollution and encourage people to lead healthier

Source: *The Plymouth Herald*, 9 January 2018, reported by Shannon Hards and Max Channon

URL: <http://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/news/plymouth-news/new-cycle-trail-network-could-1031978>