

A417

Missing Link

Re-connecting people to place:
Legacy workshop feedback
report and next steps





Purpose of this booklet

Thank you for taking an interest in this project. Your feedback is important, and it's helped shape our plans so far. This booklet summarises the feedback received during our first Legacy Workshop held in July 2024 and outlines next steps.

Introduction

In July 2024 we held our first Legacy Workshop for the A417 Missing Link, to give our stakeholders the opportunity to have an input into what legacy we leave behind following the completion of the project.

It's important to us to involve all key stakeholders including members of the local community, local businesses, local Parish Councils, District and County Councils, walking, cycling and horse riding groups and organisations such as the National Trust. This was to ensure we were taking as many perspectives into consideration as possible, whilst continuing to nurture our relationships with those closest to the project.

The workshop was broken down into areas focusing on; what you enjoy about this part of the Cotswolds, what do you know about the history of the area, and what are the key places of interest? The importance of gathering this information is to allow us to leave a positive legacy behind, to allow you to get the most out of visiting the local area and enjoy the beautiful Gloucestershire countryside.

While focusing on completing the project to improve the overall safety on the network and reduce congestion, this is a landscape led scheme, and we want people visiting the local area to learn about its rich history and appreciate the ecology and the landscape.

The scheme's vision: re-connecting the landscape

As part of this improvement, National Highways want to create a landscape-led highways scheme that will deliver a safe and resilient free-flowing road while conserving and enhancing the special character of the Cotswold's National Landscape; reconnecting landscape and ecology; bringing about landscape, wildlife and heritage benefits, including enhanced residents' and visitors' enjoyment of the area; improving quality of life for local communities; and contributing to the health of the economy and local businesses.



Workshop objectives

At the beginning of the workshop, we asked a series of questions, to gain a better understanding of what's important to you regarding the local area.

- What do you know about the area?
- What are the places of interest?
- Where do you go and visit?



Enjoying this part of the cotswolds

This section of the report highlights key areas of interest outlined by those who attended. These may be places that are visited often or are passed regularly when driving through the local area.

Capturing this information is very important because we've long discussed the possibility of creating a walking trail and it's helpful to know which points of interest people would want to highlight as part of this.

Favourite spots

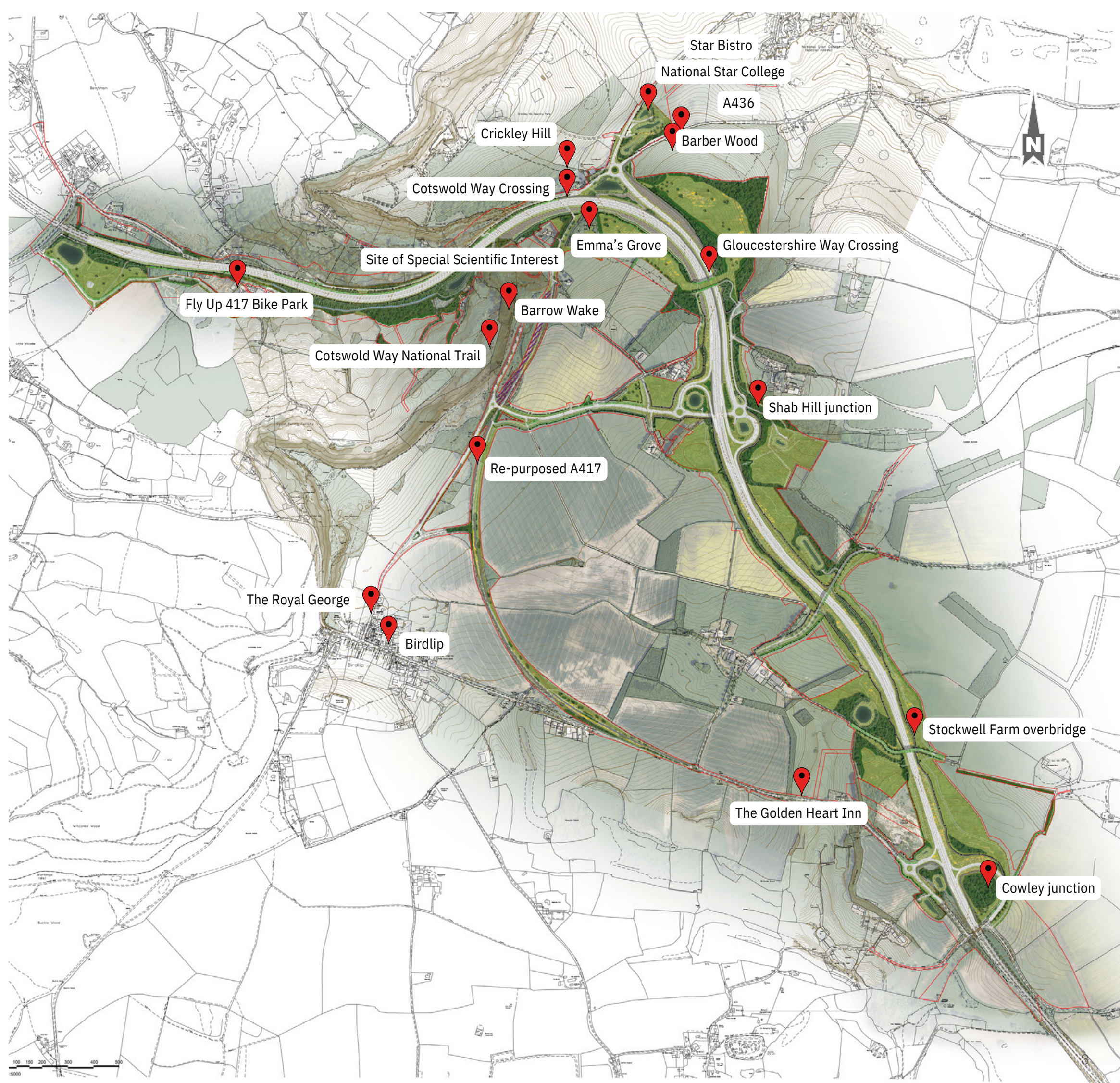
Signposted on the map are the key locations that were highlighted during the workshop as places that are important to you, places that you visit often, or places you feel should be incorporated into potential walking routes moving forward.

Some of the areas highlighted are elements of the scheme that are being built or transformed for the benefit of the environment or to improve accessibility for the local community.

Signage

The workshop highlighted that one of the most important things to you, is that we include information about the history, ecology and archaeology of the local area on the signage. This information would tell a story of the area depending on where you are on the map. This could be used to highlight what is considered to be important to local communities, while being a useful source of information for visitors to the area.

There were many suggestions about the materials that could be used for signage, what information should be included, who should write it, how it can be made accessible for wheelchair users and how it could be tailored to suit children. This is something we will develop further during the next workshop..



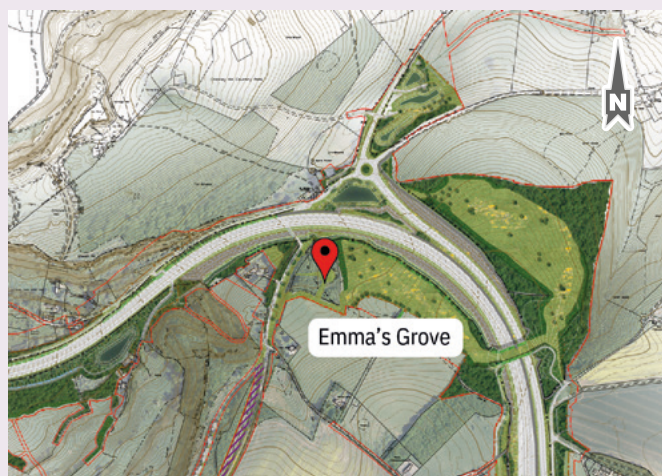
History through the ages

Prehistoric times

Crickley Hill and The Peak both date from 3600-3700 BC, and survive as a nationally important pair of causewayed enclosures for the gathering of early farming communities.

Both causewayed enclosures form part of a grouping of monuments marking the early stages of the Neolithic period, and stand in clear visual relationship to each other and a route (now the A417) of earlier origins which offered the most natural means of access between the contrasting territories of the vale and the Cotswolds.

The Bronze Age barrows at Emma's Grove are also highly significant in this context, occupying a prominent position in relationship to the route from the vale into the Cotswolds and joined, in the Bronze Age, by additional barrows at The Crippets. At the end of the Iron Age these were joined by the high-status burials at Barrow Wake, which no longer survive but yielded the famous Birdlip mirror.



In 1879 workmen discovered three skeletons in a quarry between Crickley and Birdlip overlooking the Vale of Gloucester. With the bones, were some amazing Iron Age artefacts. The most important object is a handheld mirror of bronze. The front of this was originally highly polished for reflections, but the rear is decorated with flowing patterns worked into the metal. It is one of the finest items of Celtic art to survive in Britain.



The Romans

By the late 40s AD the Ermin Way connected the first phase of Roman occupation of Britain to the legionary fortress in Gloucester, and villas built later survive along the escarpment at Witcombe and Dryhill.

During the first 18 months of construction we have had archaeologists out on site, investigating the Roman remains and settlements to provide us with more information about how people lived in the area.

Over 3.5km of features were excavated including former enclosures, boundaries and defensive ditches, postholes, walls and structures. Archaeologists also discovered four Roman crop processing ovens, one Roman well and four anti-aircraft gun positions.

The presence of Roman's in the area is very prominent and it's important we acknowledge and highlight this as part of the schemes legacy.

Aviation

We are conscious that the demolition of the Air Balloon pub saw the removal of a local landmark, therefore it's important to us that we retain the history of the area. As well as proposing to rename the repurposed section of the A417 the 'Air Balloon Way', it was highlighted during the workshop that there should be something additional to commemorate Jenner's air balloon flight, such as a plaque or signage, storyboarding the events of the balloon's creation.

Edward Jenner, also known as The Father of Immunology, was born in Berkeley in Gloucestershire, and is famous for developing the first smallpox vaccine in 1796.

As well as immunology, Jenner had a fascination with helping people fly. On 2nd September 1784 at 2pm, he released a hydrogen air balloon from the courtyard of Berkeley Castle, which is thought to have travelled 24 miles in total. Jenner's balloon is thought to have landed first at Kingscote Park near Tetbury, and then again east of Gloucester on the escarpment at Birdlip.



The Royal George

The Royal George Hotel was built in the 19th century and is located on the route of the ancient Roman Ermin Way. Birdlip was once a popular destination for day trippers and the gardens at the Royal George were popular with many.



The Golden Heart Inn

The Golden Heart, which dates back to c.1540, was originally situated in the middle of a row of three cottages. Over the years the pub has expanded and now occupies the neighbouring properties.

As both of these pubs will be situated on or near to local walking routes and the re-purposed section of the A417, it was discussed during the workshop that we should also acknowledge their history and significance within the local area.



Ecology, the landscape and what we know



What’s important to you

When discussing the landscape and ecology around the scheme, one of the most important things to you was educating the public on the ecology of the local area. For example, understanding the importance of the North to South species migration across the scheme and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Many people who attended the workshop felt it would be important to include educational information on any signage used in and around the repurposed A417 walking route.

As this is a landscape led scheme, we value the importance of understanding the impact of access on wildlife. The most valuable areas are often the most vulnerable to disturbance and trampling. That’s why we have incorporated suitable crossings and underpasses for a variety of species, to help minimise the impact of the scheme on the wildlife in the local area.



Educational information to be included in signage

As part of the scheme we are making sure we make a conscious effort to be considerate of the landscape. To help support the local environment we are planting 25 hectares of new native woodland, 7.6 hectares of native grassland and 75 hectares of limestone grassland, equivalent to 185 football pitches.

A key focus has been on the ecology of the local area, so we have had the support of ecologists every step of the way to help us relocate common lizards, roman snails, grass snakes, adders and slow worms. It was discussed in the workshop how important it is to educate the local community and those visiting the local area, on the type of wildlife that can be found here, and what measures were put in place throughout the project to protect them.

We are also building several new bat boxes a bat house and an underpass for them to travel through safely. Again, it was highlighted that it’s important to educate people of why this is important and potentially incorporate bat watching into suggested walking routes and view points.

A key part of the discussion was how we could make signage informative and engaging for all. For example, it was suggested there could be interactive activities for children incorporated into the signage. It was also highlighted how important it is to ensure signage is positioned at an appropriate height to be accessible for wheelchair users.

Having a project situated in an area rich with historical, archaeological and ecological information, provides the perfect opportunity to include educational elements to signage. Not only will this keep the history of the area alive, it will give people an incentive to come and explore the area.

Below is an image of the proposed Gloucestershire Way Crossing, designed with the landscape in mind, to help wildlife cross the new A417 safely.



Myths and legends

Folklore, tales and stories

It was established how important it is to those who attended, that we capture the different elements of history of the local area and surrounding communities. We are hoping to incorporate as much of this information as possible into the project legacy by working with different groups to capture topics that are most important to the local communities.

The history of the region is rich and varied, spanning from the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, when early humans, including Neanderthals, first inhabited the area, to significant events such as the Viking invasions and the tumultuous eras of the Civil War, Cold War, and World War II. Notably, the Dobunni Tribe played a crucial role in shaping local culture during the Iron Age. The landscape has been heavily influenced by quarrying activities, which have transformed the environment over the centuries. The 1906 Leckhampton Riots marked a significant moment in local history, while RAF Kinley contributed to the region's wartime legacy. The local area's rich history will enhance the project's legacy by fostering community pride, preserving cultural traditions, and promoting sustainable practices that honor its heritage.

Archaeology

Featured on BBC's Digging for Britain, archaeologists discovered a banjo settlement located near the Air Balloon roundabout. This type of settlement is known for it's shape and was centered around a crouch burial.

Archaeologists have also found things such as spoons, jewelry and a Roman crop drying oven. Over 100kg of artefactual material has been recovered with some of the oldest artefacts dating back to 10,000 BC (Mesolithic) right the way through to WWII.

Around 12,000 years of human history in the Cotswolds revealed information from the Mesolithic era through to the Second World War. More than 135,000 m cubed of topsoil was removed to allow archaeologists to begin their excavations. There have been over 80,000 OCA hours spent working on the scheme with 70,000 of those being on site.



What you told us

One of the exercises in the workshop encouraged people to think deeper into the history of the area, and share with us any myths and legends that you know of. This conversation highlighted things from archaeological findings to famous monuments and local traditions such as the famous Cooper's Hill Cheese Rolling. All of which we believe to be important information that should be considered when ensuring the project leaves a positive legacy behind.

A place to visit and enjoy





We want to leave a positive legacy for local communities and visitors to the area. Working with our stakeholders will enable us to create a legacy that benefits those local to the area and frequent users of the A417, but also those travelling from afar, who want to specifically enjoy the Gloucestershire countryside.

The legacy aspect explores the ways we can enhance what is being put in place as part of the scheme and make this an area for people to feel safe and enjoy.

Next Steps to review in the next workshop:

1. How can we link walking routes?
2. What should the walks be called?
3. Who would lead on developing these?
4. How would we develop the commentary to be included on signage?
5. Can we use technology?
6. Or are we better using environmental products such as boulders for waymarks?
7. What signage should be used for walking routes and roads to pubs and landmarks?
8. Can we identify places to park?
9. Can we call the repurposed route 'Air Balloon Way'?
10. What else?

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