

## First phase of cycling route around town officially open



Councillor Heather Smith and cycling officer Neil Holland at the launch of the first phase of the new Norbital cycle path around Northampton

CE pictures by KELLY COOPER mnce-20-04-11-kc-2/4

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# Bikers getting back in saddle

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**THE first phase of a new orbital cycle route around Northampton was officially opened to cyclists yesterday in a bid to try to get more people to use the greener form of transport.**

Plans for the Norbital, an 18-mile, hard-surfaced cycle path looping around the town have been under way since 2008 after Northamptonshire County Council secured funding from the Government's Community Infrastructure Fund.

Kevin Rixon, major projects and programme manager for the local authority, said: "It has been going on for three years now and today marks the opening of what really is the first phase.

"If you think of it like a wheel we have some of the cycle spokes in place but in future stages we will be adding more spokes to make the path more accessible from different places in the town.



"We really hope this will encourage people to think more about trying out cycling as a sustainable means of transport. We cannot keep putting more and more cars and traffic on our roads."

Philip Gray, aged 49, from Northampton Cyclists' Touring Club, who commutes using his bicycle from Kingsthorpe to Northampton town centre daily, said he would give the route "a cautious welcome".

He said: "I am concerned that due to British laws on turning into side roads cyclists can

sometimes be put at risk by cycle paths. It is a step forward but a lot more needs to be done to bring Northampton up to the national average for the amount of cyclists and make it as good as places like Cambridge.

"Cycling participation in Northampton is, I think, one per cent and the British average is two per cent, I think we need to get to four per cent."

For information on the route visit: [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Transport/walking/Pages/Norbital.aspx](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Transport/walking/Pages/Norbital.aspx)