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THE announcement of the Great North Trail's 800-mile cycle route linking Scotland with the Peak District (Derby

Telegraph September 4) is most welcome, but one wonders where the actual starting and finishing point for the route in Derbyshire will be.

I was cycling up Derby Road north of Little Eaton through Denby, when I noticed a cyclist who appeared a little distressed, with his bike lying on the side of the road. I wondered if he had suffered an accident, or been blown off his bike by a heavy goods vehicle passing too close. I stopped to ask if he needed assistance. No, he had only suffered a puncture from the grit in the gutter that often accumulates on the side of a busy road.

The difficulty was he had two large panier bags on the front and two more on the rear. "My bicycle is very heavy with these bags, but they are very hard fixed and they are hard to take off," he said.

But he was an experienced cyclist so this was not the main reason for his distress. In his French accent, he explained he had cycled from Dover with the intention of cycling The Pennine Cycleway to Scotland. He



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understood this and naturally heading north, came across National Cycleway Route 54 which actually leads up through Little Eaton toward Ripley. I helped him repair his puncture and guided him through back roads over the hills to join the Monsal Trail to Buxton.

The Great North Trail starts on the High Peak Trail. The southern end of the High Peak Trail is at Cromford Wharf, near Lea and Holloway, with a small car park and no facilities. How much better would this be if the starting point was by the station in Derby, where the current Pennine Bridleway begins, but with a more obvious route northwards, alongside the Derwent through the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, with all the tourism interest it offers.

The Derwent Valley Trust has been campaigning for such a route for several years. The city council have responded by constructing a new cycleway through Darley Park, linking The Silk Mill with Darley Abbey Mills. The Derwent Valley Trust has now won grant funding from Highways England's national dedicated community fund to construct the next section from Darley Abbey to Little Eaton.

Currently route 54 to Little Eaton directs cyclists along the main Alfreton Road over the narrow, very busy, rail bridge to the Pektron Island. Not a route any parent would safely take their children! From there it continues on the pavement beside the A61 to the A38.

Though the pavement has recently been widened, this is still

not safe for families and is heavily choked with traffic fumes from the regularly queuing traffic.

So the trust's route instead will be away from the roads, across the fields northwards from the Rugby Club, pass under the A38 and north alongside the railway line towards Duffield, with a branch under the railway line around a field into Little Eaton.

We hope to implement most of this in time for the summer season next year.

Unfortunately, our current funding does not take the route a the way to Duffield. But we will be applying for further funding, not only to extend the cycleway to Duffield, enabling pupils in Little Eaton to cycle safely to Ecclesbourne School, but also to relocate route 54 off the main road to Ripley onto the former railway line leading up to Marehay, thereby safely linking this route with the proposed Derwent Valley Cycleway.

Highways England's grant fund will not apply north of Duffield but we have a route planned that leads to the High Peak Junction and we will seek funding from wherever we can to complete the connection.

Meanwhile, we intend to publish the exact line of the route from Darley Abbey to Little Eaton when we submit our planning application later this autumn.

Those interested in supporting the creation of the Derwent Valley Cycleway, an off-highway safe route for cyclists, walkers, the disabled, and, in some parts, horse riders from Derby to Chatsworth, please visit <https://derwentvalleycycleway.org.uk/>