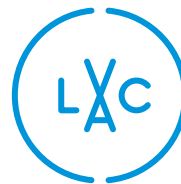


The thin/thick/thin blue line

5K Health Route Scheme implementation:
A resident's perspective



Langford Village
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



Start/finish points

- Visually inconsistent
- Also inconsistent with design of distance markers (see page 4)
- 'FINISH' uneven and poorly rendered
- Conflict with Parkrun course (runners confusing the start of the Health Route for the Parkrun start)



Line thickness

- Varies between 150mm and 100mm wide
- Should be a consistent width, and preferably the narrower 100mm (if a painted blue line is the only option)
- Line at its thickest through residential areas and parkland, where it should be inconspicuous and a more sensitive to the surroundings





Position of line

- Position of the line is inconsistent, hugging the curb in some areas, adjacent to existing shared-use markings in others; sometimes on the left, sometimes on the right.
- Problems encountered on the day of painting appear to have been given 'on-the-spot' solutions.
- The closer to the centre of the pathway, the quicker it'll wear away (central areas having higher foot traffic)
- Overall, these inconsistencies give the route a messy appearance



Colour

- Ugly and obtrusive; tasteless
- Not inkeeping with surroundings
- Potential conflict with existing National Cycle Network waymarkers (also blue)
- Blue = Int'l marathon standard



Proximity to houses

- In some places the blue line runs alarmingly close to housing
- Were those residents adequately informed of the intention to paint the blue line so close to their properties?
- Were they given a fair chance to have their say?
- Where the route passes so closely to people's homes, a more sensitive solution for marking the route is needed





Distance markers

- These are unnecessarily huge (120cm wide), taking up almost half the entire width of the footpath
- If the type really needs to remain this big, the blue box that it sits on could still be half this size
- The design is rudimentary at best, and the application casual
- Could be more attractive and much, much smaller
- Was there any on-site design direction given on the day of painting?



Safety

- As a council-approved scheme, the Health Route will need regular checks to ensure it is safe and accessible to all, and clear of obstruction

Conclusion

I was initially pleased to have been involved (at least to a small degree) in such a worthwhile and humanitarian scheme right here on my doorstep, but I'm extremely disappointed about the overall execution of Langford's new Health Route.

Anything meant for public use needs to be afforded a good level of design planning. The design process not only accounts for the aesthetic values of something, but also research and analysis, suitability, and usability. Although a great idea in principle, purely judging by the general application of the Health Route, it seems likely that the scheme did not receive adequate design planning.

In my experience, people value quality. They will notice when something has been done 'on the cheap'. I would much rather Bicester received, say, four Health Routes, all finished to a high standard, than eight budget versions so cheaply conceived that they are detrimental to their surroundings.

Overleaf, I have sketched some alternative solutions for marking out the Health Route. Inevitably, they will also have their drawbacks, and I'm sure CDC have already explored similar ideas, but in my opinion any one of them (or a combination) would be preferable to a painted blue line that divides our estate (not just in a visual sense) and crashes through our parkland – even if they would be more costly to implement.

If being a 'Healthy Town' means Bicester's population will live longer and feel happier, I am all in favour – but our environment should be just as carefully considered as our physical well-being.

Richard Ponsford
LVCA
19 June 2017

Alternative waymarking solutions

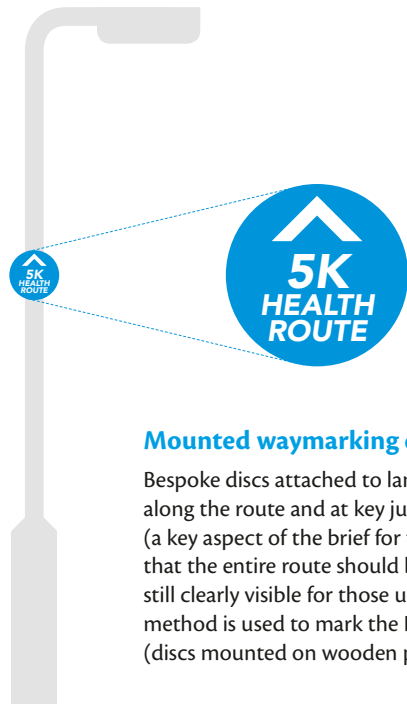
Painted symbols

Distinctive arrow symbols painted intermittently on the footpath and at key junctions/decision points.



Waymarking posts

Already being used in Langford Village, these wooden posts would mark the route at regular intervals, blending in with the surroundings, especially where the route passes through Langford Park. A similar method is used in Stoke Wood and to mark the Butterfly Trail in Bernwood Forest.



Mounted waymarking discs

Bespoke discs attached to lampposts at regular intervals along the route and at key junction/decision points (a key aspect of the brief for the Health Route was that the entire route should be lit). Lower impact but still clearly visible for those using the route. A similar method is used to mark the Piddington Circular Walk (discs mounted on wooden posts).

Health Route app

Designed to be used in conjunction with physical waymarking and help record walking/running times, distance remaining, calories burned, etc.

