

Thousands to see the Tour on their doorstep

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Scores of the county's communities are to get a grandstand view of some of the world's top cyclists after route details of the UK's largest and most prestigious cycle race were revealed.

The Ovo Energy Tour of Britain will travel through the heart of Northumberland on Monday 4 September, passing through 26 communities and covering 117 miles.

The race will start in Kielder Water & Forest Park at 10.15am and head out through Bellingham and Otterburn before heading towards the coast via Elsdon, Rothbury, Alnwick, Eglingham, Chatton, Belford and Bamburgh.

It will then head down the stunning Northumberland coastline passing through the communities of Seahouses, Beadnell, Embleton, Longhoughton, Lesbury, Hipsburn Warkworth and Amble.

The race will then travel through Widdrington, Widdrington Station, Longhirst, Ulgham, Morpeth, Guide Post Choppington and Bedlington before passing through the finish line in Blyth to take in Seaton Sluice and Seaton Delaval before culminating in an exciting finish in Blyth, scheduled for around 3.30pm. This will give spectators at the finish line in Blyth the chance to see the riders pass twice.

The Northumberland stage of the race will also incorporate three intermediate Eisberg Sprint sections and three SKODA King of the Mountain hill climbs which are expected to prove particularly popular with spectators.

The Eisberg Sprints will take place at Seahouses, Warkworth and Seaton Sluice and offer fans the chance to see riders sprinting for points and bonus seconds. Riders will also tackle three categorised SKODA King of the Mountains climbs at Elsdon, Rothbury and Alnwick, gathering points for the best climber's jersey.

Northumberland County Council has worked with race organisers Sweetspot, finish sponsors Blyth Town Council and start sponsors Northumbrian Water to bring the Tour back to the county. It was last here in 2015.

Councillor Peter Jackson, Leader of Northumberland County Council said: "It's going to be a really exciting day for spectators as the cyclists race through the county's towns, villages and hamlets and we will be keeping local residents fully informed of the race details as plans progress.

"The race will travel through some fantastic scenery and pass iconic landmarks including Bamburgh Castle and Alnwick Castle along its route. The Tour is to be broadcast in over 120 countries and we look forward to providing a warm welcome to the competitors and supporters and showcasing our beautiful county and communities to an huge global audience."

In 2015, The Tour of Britain swept through the county creating a wave of excitement as some of the world's top cyclists including Sir Bradley Wiggins cycled through our communities.

Residents and businesses dressed the route in the distinctive red and gold colours of the Northumberland flag and thousands of spectators lined the route to cheer on the cyclists and give them a fantastic welcome.

This year, the eight stage race will begin in Edinburgh on Sunday 3 September and finish in Cardiff in Wales on Sunday 10 September. Northumberland is hosting stage two on Monday September 4, after which the pro-cyclists will re-start in North Lincolnshire on Tuesday 5 September. Subsequent stages will take the race to the Cotswolds, the Malvern Hills and The Wye Valley.

The route through the county was announced at the Northumberland School Games Festivals at Cramlington Learning Village where over 1,000 young people were competing to become county champions in a range of sports.

Northumberland County Councillor, Cath Homer, Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Leisure said: "It is fantastic that we were able to announce the detailed route of the Tour of Britain at the Northumberland School Games. It would be great if the race inspires more people to get on their bikes and explore our beautiful county."

"Cycling is a sport that is relatively cheap and accessible and we have some excellent cycling routes here in the county, including Sustrans Route 68 and the Coast and Castles."

Mayor of Blyth Town Council, John Potts said: "In 2015 when the cycle race came to Blyth the town was buzzing with excitement. The Town Council supported the event and the velodrome in the market place was very popular with children and adults alike. We will be supporting the event again this year and hope the whole Town gets involved in decorating the streets to show Blyth at its best. This international event generates a huge amount of publicity which can only be of benefit to all of us."

David Hall, Head of Leisure, Strategy and Transformation at Northumbrian Water said: "Northumbrian Water works hard to support events that benefit the economy of the North East and as the Tour of Britain passes through what we consider one of the best cycling counties in the UK, it will help to boost regional tourism and showcase Northumberland to the rest of the world."

"As a business, we have a long association with cycling, both in terms of supporting races and providing opportunities for leisure cycling at our sites and we're delighted to be able to help bring this elite sporting event right here to our region."

Mick Bennett, Race Director of the Ovo Energy Tour of Britain said: "We are delighted to be returning to Northumberland this September. Two years ago the reception that the county gave the race was outstanding, so we are looking forward to more of the same this September. To see the routes decorated in the county's colours of red and yellow was fantastic, and with this year's Stage Two route reaching new parts of northumberland, we are sure to see even more of this fantastic support."

Full Northumberland route details can be found at www.nlandtob.com, or for further information about the National Tour, please visit: www.tourofbritain.co.uk/home.php

