



ACCESS SUCCESS!

1. Manchester Cycleway link. Thanks to all members of the Friends who objected to a planning proposal to close the vital footpaths on the Manchester Cycleway where it crosses the Ashton Canal and follows the canal towpath under the Alan Turing Way in east Manchester. This proposal, by a developer building a block of flats on the north side of the canal, would have been very damaging to the continuity of the route. Action by FotFL members and pedestrian groups brought the issue to the attention of the City Council, which, rather embarrassingly, had failed to spot the conflict of interest before the proposal went to planning.

2. Kingsway access to the Loop. Since the Loop was constructed there has been an informal access from the 'pocket park' at Acorn Close on the south west corner of the Kingsway crossing in Levenshulme. However, a proposal by Manchester City Council in 2004 to build some allotments on part of the site would have blocked this access. FotFL objected to the initial plan, and a revised scheme included a properly surfaced path round the allotment site perimeter fence and steps down from Kingsway to allow continued access. The allotment site was finally constructed this year, but there was no path round the allotments, because the budget had supposedly run out! After representations by our Treasurer Dick Venes to the City Council Chief Exec and Sir Gerald Kaufman MP, the building of the access has now been promised.

3. Princess Road access to the Loop. Exec member Steve Keeney has been persistent in pursuing the question of access to the Loop from Princess Road at the point where the new flats have been built at the junction with Mauldeth Road West. An access point was included in the original planning consent so as to link the Loop with Cycle Route 85, but again seems to have been quietly forgotten. We will continue to pursue this one.

These examples show that FotFL members can make a significant contribution to access issues. Please keep an eye on developments in your area if you live close to the Loop, so that we can try to ensure as many access points as possible, and enhance convenience and security for all users.

AUTUMN RIDES

The Friends have led three rural/urban rides since our last members' meeting in September:

24 September, to Lymm and back. We started from Debdale, but by the time we reached Chorlton Park to pick up reinforcements the heavens had opened and we were thoroughly soaked. Les and Liz Jones rescued us with hot drinks in their Chorlton kitchen until the rain eased. A fresh start was made in sunshine, and we followed the Trans-Pennine Trail from Stretford via Carrington Moss to the Railway Inn at Heatley near Lymm, where we lunched in the garden (a welcoming pub for cyclists with a good range of beers). For the way back we followed the Bridgewater Canal through Altrincham and Sale, which was much less muddy than the route out. Our thanks to Liz and Les for their hospitality.

22 October, to Reddish Vale, Stockport and the Mersey valley. This ride formed part of the Levenshulme Festival, so we started from the Highfield Country Park entrance to the Loop and went via Longford Road West to a stop-off point at Reddish Vale Visitor Centre. From there we followed the TPT into Stockport, and viewed the start of the Mersey, which we joined again the other side of the town centre and followed all the way to Didsbury, where we lunched at the Didsbury Pub. From there a short cut by minor roads took us back to the Loop at Sainsbury's. (NB There are currently bridge works at the Stockport end of the Mersey valley which require a detour, but these should be finished by January to allow a continuous, if sometimes rough, route along the whole of the Mersey valley).

12 November, to Werneth Low and back. This ride formed part of the Chorlton Wanderers programme, and started from Chorlton Water Park with more than 20 riders. Besides taking in the whole of the Loop to Fairfield the ride included two other off-road routes – the Tameside Way and the Apethorn to Godley trail – as well as an ascent of Werneth Low itself. Darkness had already set in when we got back to Chorlton.

For those who like planning their own rides, there is now an extensive collection of new cycle maps for free covering the whole of the Greater Manchester area, available from www.cyclegm.org.uk And for those who would like to be reminded of the days of heatwave in July now that we are into the autumn rains, here is a poem by Roger Barnes which was inspired by our July ride along the Ashton Canal.

*Only ragwort remains in nibbled pasture
only few folk brave the park to parch
scorched I scrunch draped in dusty vesture
dust bath blackbird disturbed by my mulching march
nodding nettles nip and narrow the path
bird weed and goose grass climb precarious scaffold
willow herb wantonly wearing its scarlet laugh
invading knotweed army hots up its hold
bright mills restored on towpath tower and tremble
in warm olive waters mote drenched mirrored calm
insects skim low in frantic flirting assembly
willows welcoming shadows drape dappling charm
all we do when wished for warmth appears
is hide inside until it disappears!*

R.H.Barnes 17 July 2006

STOP PRESS

Monday 20 November, next Members' Meeting, Union Chapel, Wellington Road Fallowfield, 7.30 pm. Programme for the New Year to be planned. All welcome.