



Olympic Cycling Success

The unprecedented success of the GB Olympic cycling team, based at Manchester's Velodrome, should give a real boost to cycling in the city, especially among young people. As the Friends of the Fallowfield Loop we can contribute to this by helping make the Loop as user-friendly as possible, through improved access, especially from schools, better signing and an enhanced environment along the green corridor. These continue to be among the main priorities in our development plan.

New Access Point from the junction at Princess/Mauldeth West Roads

Members may have noticed the work to finish off the access beside the new flats at this junction. We have been agitating for this ever since the flats were built, but it was always held up by a dispute over who was responsible, and whether the developers should finance it, as they have done for the section alongside the property itself. It now transpires that the developers had given a substantial sum for enhancements on the Loop, which was used to build the ramp at the Chorlton end into Sidbury Road; so it was unrealistic to expect anything more from them. Now at last approval for the entrance to be finished by Sustrans has been agreed, using the remains of a grant to the Friends and a subvention from the MCC cycling development budget. Despite the extensive delay, this is a substantial success for our members' refusal to give up on the project, and shows that persistent lobbying pays off. We hope to mark its completion with a publicity event some time in the autumn, which will also showcase the other improvements paid for by the Chorlton Park Ward cash grant.

Blackberry-picking along the Loop

Many more blackberry-pickers than usual have been sighted along the Loop this year, no doubt attracted by the rain-swelled crop. Ripening seems to get earlier and earlier, so that what used to be a September activity now starts early in August. When stewed up with apple blackberries freeze well, and can then be enjoyed throughout the year. The recipe is very simple. Use equal amounts of blackberry and apple, preferably Bramleys; stew the sliced apple first with a little water until it starts to go soft, then add the blackberries and stew gently for a short while further. Sugar to taste can then be added, and the product frozen once it has cooled. Members may have their own recipes for the fruit to share with others. The great thing is that blackberry-picking is free, apart from the labour and a few scratches, especially if you climb up the steep bank.

Consultation over Transport in Greater Manchester

Everyone should have received the consultation document issued by the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority about the plans for improving transport in the city region, including a congestion charge. We would urge members to take up the invitation to comment individually on the schemes, and particularly to demand that many more resources are put into improving the facilities for cycling and walking, to which much lip-service is paid but not much evidence of resources being provided. At the next Members' Meeting on 15 September we will be drafting a collective response from the Friends to the document. An elected councillor on the PTA has been invited to the meeting to answer our questions, so that our response can be as informed as possible; but no reply had yet been received when we went to press.

Summer Social Ride

On Sunday 17 August we held our usual summer ride from the Loop along the Ashton Canal going east, and down the Peak Forest Canal into Reddish Vale. Although the day was mainly dry, the previous rain had made the towpaths very wet and muddy, so that it proved quite a test of cycling ability – and stability. At one point through Hyde the path was almost impassable, which should be a matter of wider concern since this supposedly forms part of the official Cheshire Ring Canal Walk. We still managed a picnic, and hope next year to coordinate the date of this ride with the canal boat festival that takes place at the junction of the two canals at the Portland Basin.

Invasive species on the Loop

Readers of the South Manchester Reporter may have seen the correspondence about the treatment of invasive species on the Loop. The two in question are the Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, of which the latter is the most difficult to deal with. Paul Thomas of Sustrans, who own and manage the Loop, has asked that we leave the treatment to their employees, since it requires specialist expertise and equipment. For anyone interested in more information about these plants Julian Fox has suggested looking at two environment agency websites:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/103599/himalyan_balsam_899789.doc
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/japknott_1_b_1463050.pdf

Members' Meeting

The next members' meeting will be held on Monday 15 September at 7.30 pm, at the Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield. As mentioned above, one of the items will be a discussion of the consultation document issued by the GMPTA on transport and travel in Greater Manchester. All members are welcome.