



A Happy New Year to all our members, and safe and pleasurable cycling and walking in 2009. We rely on your support in so many ways – in helping with clean-ups and tree planting/clearing, in monitoring the Loop, in joining our rides, in contributing ideas, in paying the subs which keep us solvent and active, and many other ways. So please continue your membership in 2009, and if possible recruit one other friend, colleague or neighbour to our ranks. The annual sub of £5 (£8 family, £1 under 16) is not excessive, even in these straightened times, but is important to us. Financial ‘leveraging’ may be deeply suspect at present, but the basis of a few hundred pounds in subs (plus our voluntary work of course) has enabled us to win many thousands in grants for improvements to the Loop (see below).

Road signing on bridges

We have received another grant from the Transport Thematic Partnership fund, of some £1800, to fix permanent road signs on all the bridges along the Loop. Unfortunately the original estimate on which the grant application was made turned out to have been too low, and we still have to find a way to cover the cost of fixing the standard street signs supplied by the City Council’s contracting department. One way or another, however, we will be going ahead with the project, which should help users of the Loop know where they are more easily, and give confidence to new users.

Sculptures on the Loop

Another grant we have applied for is on behalf of Rachel Ramchurn, a local sculptor, who specialises in wood cutting, and plans to create three permanent sculptures to be located in the Levenshulme section of the Loop. Rachel prefers to use recycled materials in her work, and to involve the local community in the creative process. The grant application includes funding for Rachel to hold two workshops for the local community in Highfield Country Park, and to involve local schools in the project. One outcome of the workshops will be to create temporary sculptures for installation within the park.

Many Sustrans routes throughout the country have various pieces of artwork installed along them which add interest to journeys. Unfortunately the commissioning of the Loop came after the funding for art on routes was more freely available, and as a result the Loop has very little artwork at present (apart from the stone sculptures west of Princess Road). So this will be a welcome addition if the application is successful. It has been made to the ‘Awards for All’ Lottery scheme, for projects that promote education, the environment and health in local communities.

Celebration of improvements in Chorlton Park Ward

You may have seen an item in last week's edition of the *South Manchester Reporter*, under the headline 'Bike Route's £4300 Clean up'. This reported a clean-up and photo-op we organised before Christmas at the new Mauldeth Road West entrance, attended by ward councillors and the MP, John Leech. We were celebrating the installation of lecterns and benches, completion of the new access path, and tree and flower planting, paid for from the MCC ward cash grant scheme. In the coming year we hope to put in an application to the scheme for improvements at the Gorton end of the Loop.

Annual workday 2009

As in the last three years, we are planning to hold a workday on the Loop, on Sunday March 1st 2009. However, in line with discussions about habitats along the Loop in the last year, this year's event will not involve any further tree or shrub planting. Thanks to suggestions from Dave Bishop (see last newsletter) and Friends member Charlotte Abbas, we are aiming to manage some of the micro habitats, initially along the section from the Sidbury Road entrance to the Withington Road bridge. The work will include removing some of the self seeded willow shrubs and brambles, and we have once again booked the Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers to help us. Final details of the work are still to be arranged, but please book the date in your diary if you would like to help. Full information on time, location and tool requirements will be sent out by email a couple of weeks prior to the date. If you are not on our email list, please phone Dick Venes on 0161 224 3843 before the event to confirm arrangements.

Referendum on GMPTA transport plans

The results of the referendum have been a huge disappointment to public transport users in the region, and the terms of the Government's innovation fund do not allow the money to be directed to Manchester regardless ('supporting innovative solutions to congestion problems, involving demand management measures'). I have just received a copy of the report on the consultation process which preceded the referendum, and which is claimed by Ipsos Mori to have been the most extensive ever conducted, with an unprecedented number of responses. It led to significant changes to the scheme put to voters. I was struck by three features mentioned in the report:

1. The opinion survey conducted across the region in July/August showed a slender majority in favour of the proposals. We must conclude from this that the lobbying from the No campaign and the differential turnout of No voters were crucial.
2. Many respondents distrusted the government, national and local, and GMPTA to deliver the proposals effectively and in accordance with the plan.
3. The report hardly mentions cycling at all, even though we know that many comments about cycling were forwarded in the consultation process. We will just have to keep campaigning for the improvements we all want for cycling locally.

Stop Press: next members' meeting on Monday next, 19th January, 7.30 pm, at Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield. All welcome.