



This month's Newsletter starts with future events, as the first two are so close that you might easily miss them:

Sunday 14 March: Chorlton Wanderers cycle ride to Knutsford, 30 miles round trip by road and trail, with pub stop for drinks (no lunch because everywhere's booked for Mother's Day outings, so bring your own). Start 10 am at Chorlton Water Park. Many of our members are involved with the Wanderers, and we take responsibility for leading two of their rides each year (see below). This one offers a good opportunity to shake off the long winter blues and pretend spring is really on the way!

Monday 15 March: Members' meeting, Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield. Besides planning our spring activities, we shall be welcoming Peter Green, the Sustrans route maintenance manager for Greater Manchester, for a dialogue about priorities and concerns relating to the Loop, in the light of our recent survey of users. Among other business will be framing our response to two current MCC consultations: on Fallowfield district centre plans (www.manchester.gov.uk/southmanchesterregeneration) and on its ten year transport strategy (www.manchester.gov.uk/transportstrategy). All members are welcome.

Saturday 27 March: Chorlton Big Green Festival, St. Clement's Church, Edge Lane, Chorlton, 11 am to 11 pm. Now in its second year, the Festival offers people the chance to sample sustainability in fun and friendly surroundings, with a varied programme of live entertainment, activities and workshops, accompanied by responsibly sourced food and drink. The Friends will be running a stall during the daytime, as last year. Volunteers to help with the stall are very welcome, tel. David on 445 1524.

Reports on activities during February

***Age of Stupid* screening, 9 Feb.** This was the first film screening that we have organised, and it attracted 25 viewers, not all members, and it provoked a useful discussion. Many thanks to Pam Flynn and Frances McCann for arranging this showing and the accompanying supper.

Workday, 14 Feb. This annual event was organised by Julian Fox for members together with the Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers (SACV). Work was done on both sides of the Withington Road entrance to thin out some of the saplings and brambles from the bottom of the bank on the south side, in order to increase the light to the grassy area and hence the wild flowers and biodiversity. The cut material

was used to create 'habitat piles' at the top of the bank. A good amount of litter clearing was done too. Along the bank were discovered a few possible badger setts and fox holes, and these were left undisturbed. Many thanks to those who came along to help, and thanks are also due to Charlotte Abbas and Dave Bishop for their advice and help in planning the day.

Chorlton Wanderers ride, 14 Feb. On the same day Dick Venes led over twenty riders on a round route from Chorlton Water Park via the Trans-Pennine Trail (TPT) to Reddish Vale and back via the Loop. He writes that they had to use the TPT diversion from Didsbury village to East Didsbury, and that the rejoining point on Burnage Lane was a bit hazardous because of having to cross an oncoming lane of traffic right by the Didsbury Road junction. They regrouped at Reddish Vale visitor centre and lunched at the 'Bandstand' pub by the entrance to Debdale Park, as the Gorton Vale could not accommodate the number. Food there was reported to be OK, but there was no real ale! The absence of rain and punctures made it an enjoyable ride out.

Other news

Metrolink works in Chorlton. Work on laying the track bed and installing the necessary infrastructure between Trafford Bar and St Werburgh's Road in Chorlton continues apace. Now that the further extension of the tram route to Didsbury has been approved, with clearing work in progress on this additional section, the area around St Werburgh's Road is well and truly a building site. However, the contractors are maintaining access to and from the Sidbury Road access ramp, with the Fallowfield Loop now diverted under the previously disused bridge arch along a narrow hard-core temporary surface to pick up the original tarmac path again near the Chelsfield Grove area. Due to the amount of heavy plant being used some care is needed when crossing this short section. We'll keep members informed of any further changes as and when they occur.

Sustrans anniversary. This year the cycle charity Sustrans is celebrating fifteen years since the initiation of the National Cycle Network, of which the Fallowfield Loop forms a part. Grants from the Lottery Fund and the Millenium Commission enabled Sustrans to leverage matched funding from every local authority in the UK, and to deliver over 5000 miles by the year 2000. There are still many gaps left before the network is completed, and councils are often reluctant to spend money on maintaining the existing routes running through their area. At a time of forthcoming cuts to public budgets, it may seem an uphill struggle to convince governments to invest more in cycling and walking routes, but Sustrans is organising its case around five key challenges facing the country: obesity and related health conditions; climate change; energy security; congestion; and liveability, or quality of the environment and community. Further information can be found at www.sustrans.org.uk/rmu