

## **Future Jobs Programme**

The May Newsletter mentioned the team of 15 young people who would be working on the Loop over the summer and autumn and learning relevant skills under the former government's Future Jobs Programme for the young unemployed. Besides the clearing of saplings and pruning of larger trees, the team has been involved in two projects:

### *The Lattice Bridge at Highfield Park*

The bridge is a distinctive feature of this section of the Loop, and has long been in need of refurbishment. The team has made a start by re-pointing some of the brickwork and scaling and repainting the inside of the iron lattice structure on the bridge. Unfortunately the outside of this structure can only be safely worked on with the use of scaffolding, and to date this has proved difficult to arrange. We hope that the problem can be overcome before the end of the programme in November, and the refurbishment completed.

### *Rearrangement of stone sculptures*

The stone sculptures situated between Princess Road and Athol Road were originally funded from a grant for the improvement of the A6 corridor, and had simply been 'parked' in their original site. The team has now moved them to where they belong, apart from the heaviest one which has had to be left where it is. A site has been arranged for the four animal sculptures between Slade Lane and Errwood Road, and brick and stone plinths have been constructed to give them high visibility to passers-by. The three stone benches have been sited at the Errwood Road entrance. So the original purpose of the grant has now at last been realised.

Members of the team will be attending our members' meeting on November 15<sup>th</sup> to give a report on their work and their experience of the programme. It is a matter of considerable regret that the Future Jobs Programme was one of the earliest casualties of the present government's public expenditure cuts, and is unlikely to be repeated. We are lucky to have benefited from the first and only phase of the scheme, and look forward to meeting members of the team in November.

## **Metro developments**

Users of the Chorlton end of the Loop will know that the station at St. Werburgh's Road is almost complete, together with the new graded entrance from the road itself. Work on extending the line to Didsbury is also well under way. More controversial is the planned route of the extension out to Wythenshawe and the airport, for which funding has now been secured. Where all the routes in South Manchester to date have

used existing or former railway tracks, this one requires the construction of a completely new route, and has raised substantial environmental worries as far as the Chorlton section is concerned. According to the plans mature trees down the centre of Mauldeth Road West will be cut down, the environment of Chorlton Meadows at Hardy Farm will be damaged, and the crossing of the Mersey by Jackson's Bridge will spoil a peaceful section of the valley much loved by cyclists and walkers. Although the plans were made many years ago, no one took them very seriously at the time as it seemed highly improbable that any funding would be forthcoming.

### **Trans-Pennine trail west**

Fifteen cyclists joined the ride we organised on Sunday 22 August out to the Green Dragon pub at Heatley/Lymm and back. A survey ride the day before revealed the section of the TPT beyond the M60 crossing to be quite unsuitable after a wet few weeks – more like a ploughed field than a cycleway, not helped by the fact that it is heavily used by horses. Potential users are well advised to do what we did, and take the well-surfaced Bridgewater canal towpath out beyond Altrincham to the Seamons Road bridge (the last before open country), from where the old railway section of the TPT out to Lymm and beyond can be quickly reached. This is also a much more direct route. Although supposedly the towpath should not be used by cyclists beyond Sale, it is up to the TPT and Trafford Council to provide a better surface for this whole section, including across Carrington Moss where it also still remains muddy.

### **News from the AGM**

At the July AGM a new member of the Friends' committee was appointed to replace retiring former Councillor Alec Cowan (see last Newsletter). He is Colin Bennett, who works as Assistant Volunteer Coordinator with the charity Action for Sustainable Living, who got interested in green issues through his interest in food and cooking. He writes: 'I love the way planting, tending and harvesting can bring people together, along with the enjoyment of eating food made from tasty local ingredients afterwards. I help run a "guerrilla gardening" group called Eat Your Streets in Whalley Range as part of this interest. I have a particular interest in forest gardening, and am really keen to learn about how habitats can be planned to promote biodiversity and keep humans enjoying and harvesting from them at the same time. I hope to get involved in developing a biodiversity action plan for the Loop, which would include replacing invasive trees like ash and sycamore with fruit and nut trees that will benefit wildlife and help draw people onto it, in the same way that so many are at the moment by a splendid year for blackberries.' Sustrans does have its own biodiversity plan, but we welcome Colin's ideas for enriching it together with our existing biodiversity experts.

### **Future activities**

**Monday 20 September:** Members' meeting, Union Chapel, Wellington Road Fallowfield, 7.30 pm. All members welcome.

**Sunday 24 October:** As our contribution to this year's Levenshulme Festival, we will be organising a family ride for all ages starting at 11 am from the Crayfield Road entrance to the Loop and riding to Debdale and back. Details of this and other events we may be taking part in will be circulated by email nearer the time.

