

In this newsletter your editor is happy to hand over to others. Below, Peter Green, the Sustrans regional maintenance manager, writes about the maintenance regime that he and Tom, the full-time warden for Greater Manchester, are engaged in on the Loop. On page 2 our archivist, Cos Harnasz, writes about the Blues and Gospel Train that came to Wilbraham Road station in 1964. Pages 3 and 4 reproduce Dick Venes' list of volunteer rangers who help keep the Loop tidy, with suggested duties. Anyone interested in becoming a ranger – we always need extra support – please contact Dick.

### **Environmental work day**

Last Sunday a dozen or so from the Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers and our own members cleared the bank this side of the Sandfold Lane bridge and planted broom and gorse bushes, before thinning out some of the saplings and brambles on the other side, so as to improve a much neglected stretch of the Loop. Many thanks to committee member Julian Fox and SACV for organising this annual event, and to the sun which came out from the rain clouds just as we were starting work.

**Monday 21 March:** members' meeting, 7.30 pm, Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield. All welcome to help plan our spring programme of activities.

**Saturday 16 April:** Chorlton Big Green Festival, St. Clements Church, High Lane. As in previous years we are running a stall from 10.30 am, and this year organising a bike ride from the church as this year's theme is cycling. Help would be welcome with stall or ride – contact Dick on 224 3843 or David on 445 1524.

**Peter Green writes:** 'With springtime upon us the main season for tree work is over, and we can look forward to the usual maintenance work of the summer months. Key among these tasks is the cutting of the grass verges of all the paths under our control. I know this is a contentious matter in some quarters, so I thought a few words of explanation might be in order.

By the time you read this the first cut should have been completed in the large open space at Abbey Hey, where we have a prescribed cutting regime at "municipal standards" built into the planning consent. On the main lengths of the Loop path we are aiming to cut three times a year. The first, a shallow cut of 1 metre to each side of the path is due to be carried out in early April. We regard this metre as an integral part of the path, and cut it to avoid, long term, encroachment on to the tarmac itself. The last cut of the year in autumn is always deeper than the first two, and our ecologist assures me that this cut is the key to encouraging wild flower growth the following spring, which I believe has proved successful over the years. Given that our own time and funds are limited, I would welcome proposals for specific workdays to improve the habitat further, and can support this with tools and equipment as needed.'