



Newsletter May 2016

What Next for the Barrier Opening?

As announced in the March newsletter, the internal barriers along the Loop have been opened from Debdale to St. Werburgh's metro station on successive Sundays and Mondays since April 10. We have taken responsibility for opening them by 10 am on Sundays and closing them again on Monday evenings (thanks to Lorenza, Giselle, Dick and David), though Tom the Sustrans warden has now taken over the closing on his Tuesday morning round. We have experienced some technical difficulties at a few of the barriers, and expect that these will have been ironed out in time for the three-month full trial due to start later this month, shortly after the last weekend on 15-16 May. The barriers at Erwood and Athol roads which pivot from the centre of the path will then be removed entirely, and the remainder locked securely at the side of the path. At our forthcoming members' meeting (see below) we will be planning some special rides and walks to celebrate the new accessibility of the route. Sustrans have just put out a press release about the opening, and we would encourage members to inform others about it. Any comments you may have about your experience with the opening are most welcome, and should be forwarded to David Beetham.

Bloom Time at the Community Orchards

As you will know, we have planted and maintained three community orchards on previous waste ground at Fallowfield, Levenshulme and Debdale respectively. The blossom has been particularly striking this spring, starting with plum and damson, then pear and later cherry. The apple trees are just coming into full bloom and should be quite a sight. The orchard at the Levenshulme Quadrants is the largest, with 28 mixed fruit trees, and the other two with fourteen each. The cold snap we had may have limited pollination of the plums and pears, but we expect the apples to fruit well this season. Unfortunately there has been some vandalism at the Fallowfield orchard of a kind we have not experienced before, perhaps because it is not overlooked as the other two are. Three of the trees have been damaged and

one removed entirely. We have now replaced the tree that was stolen, and would welcome offers of a tree from any member who has one surplus to requirements (to David at the above email address).

Volunteers at Work

Besides work with the barriers and maintaining the orchards members have been involved in a number of activities over the spring. On 7 April we joined with other Sustrans volunteers to move wood chippings from the Sherwood Street entrance (where the new hedge is growing fast) to the Levy Quadrants for a new path being installed by Incredible Edible Levenshulme alongside their raised beds. This quadrant is now looking much more cared for. On 29 April we ran a stall with other community groups at the Friday evening Levenshulme market, to publicise the Loop and inform people of the opportunities it provides. On the bank holiday weekend of 1-2 May we organised a rolling clean-up of most of the area between the Levy Quadrants and St Werburgh's. On the same weekend Cos and Ray ran a bird walk with the experienced ornithologist Tony Mahoney to identify the range of species present on the Loop. In addition Sustrans now run regular work days on the Loop for volunteers, on the first Thursday of each month between 10.30 and 1.30. Anyone wanting to join one of these, or to find out about them, can get details from Abigail, the Sustrans volunteer co-ordinator, at volunteers-nw@sustrans.org.uk, or phone 0161 923 6050. We will circulate members through the usual channels about any work sessions or other activities which we are organising ourselves.

Links with Secondary Schools

We already have connections with some of the primary schools along the Loop, thanks to Linda, Lorenza and others, and the opportunity has recently occurred to make contact with some of the secondary schools also. Chorlton High School is a cooperative academy and runs regular meetings with their registered community groups, of whom we are one. They have recently been awarded a grant from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to develop cycling at the school, and are running a workshop with TfGM on 25 May to establish a project action plan, which we will be attending. Right at the other end of the Loop we are in touch with organisers of an ecological group at Wright Robinson sports academy, and hope to join up with them shortly in a litter pick along their section of the route, ending with a fruit tree recognition session at our Debdale orchard.

Usage of the Loop

Members who use the Loop regularly will no doubt be aware of the increased usage of the Loop by both cyclists and walkers/joggers. Your editor often walks the section from Sherwood Street to St. Werburgh's, and makes a point of counting the passers-by whenever he does so. Although this may be a bit impressionistic, he can report a doubling of the numbers in the afternoon/evening return from work time compared with a couple of years ago, from around 80 an hour to over 160, with proportionately three cyclists to every one pedestrian. Such figures should give us reassurance that our efforts to improve the look and environment of the Loop are worthwhile, and can make a difference.

Members' Meeting, next Monday

We hold regular bi-monthly meetings of members on the third Monday of alternate months. The next one falls next Monday, 16 May, at 7.30 pm at the Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield. We will be discussing a programme of activities to take advantage of the extended opening of the barriers mentioned earlier. All members are invited to take part, and new members and those who have not previously attended can be assured of a warm welcome.