



Newsletter May 2017

Task Days on the FLOOP

For some time now the first and third Thursdays of each month from 10 am have seen Sustrans volunteers, including many of our members, at work to improve aspects and sections of the Loop. They are organised by Ian Barker, who identifies the projects, circulates information, arranges the necessary tools and provides refreshments. Tasks this spring have included sapling cutting, undergrowth clearing, wild flower planting and litter picking. This year's spring clean-up of the Loop, arranged in conjunction with the Friends, attracted 20 adults and 4 children on the first day, and 18 adults and 3 children on the second, enabling us to clear most of the route from Sainsbury's eastwards. Such unprecedented numbers for what is the least attractive type of environmental work made the days an effective as well as sociable event, and we needed the expertise of the indefatigable Charles Kinniburgh to organise us into suitable work teams on each occasion. Because of the changing Loop environment, work for each task day is only decided relatively close to the day, and those wishing to take part and get the information should send their email address to Ian if you are not already on the list. Anyone with free time on these Thursday mornings is recommended to do so; you can be guaranteed to enjoy it as well as learn new skills and stay healthy.

Pride of Manchester Awards

Some years ago the Friends were awarded first place in the environment category of these awards. The process of nomination and short-listing gave us much welcome publicity, as well as money from the award itself which helped us start our community orchard programme. This year the Friends have joined with Sustrans to nominate Ian Barker for the 'volunteer of the year' award. This is not only for his organisation of the task days (see above), but for his contribution to making special events on the Loop a success, such as the Handlebards performance of Romeo and Juliet and the solar planetary installation and ride in the Manchester science festival. We wish Ian well, not only on his own account, but because it will serve to recognise and publicise the efforts of all our volunteers over the years. Results of the short-listing process will be known in the summer and will be circulated accordingly.

Spring in the Community Orchards

Blossom this year in our three orchards has been wonderful (Debdale and the Levy Quadrants visible beside the track, Fallowfield across the brook just after the Wellington Road bridge). Fruit setting, however, has been mixed, according to the type, location and spring weather. John and Wendy Eaden's bees have been doing their job at the Fallowfield orchard, and Linda Moulding has discovered a nest of wild bees next to the Broom Lane bridge. The best fruiterers are likely to be the eating apples, Conference pears and some of the cherries. The longest established trees are at the Quadrants, and here a Victoria plum and Reine Claude greengage may also be prolific fruiterers this year. We are hoping that we will not lose so much fruit as previously to August gales, premature pickers and the cherry-loving birds. Brenda Smith of the Bud Garden Centre has donated us a medlar to replace an apple tree that was vandalised at the Fallowfield orchard. It has lovely blossom but the fruit is not to everyone's taste. The Bud Garden Centre supplied us with most of our fruit trees and our yearly compost, and for those who do not already know it can be found on Grangethorpe Drive just off Kingsway. Brenda also runs the annual Burnage and Levenshulme open gardens event. We are not taking part officially this year as we do not get enough visitors to justify staffing a stall at the Quadrants, but the orchard will be listed in the event brochure.

Wildlife Walks

Walks this spring have included 'Signs of Spring' (26 March) and 'Spring Flowers' (23 April). They take place on the fourth Sunday of each month from 10.30 am, and anyone wanting details of the next walk should send their email address to Sarah.Bradbury@sustrans.org.uk if you are not already on the circulation list.

Barrier Opening

Our work on the opening of the internal barriers has featured in the latest edition of the national Sustrans publication, The Hub. Now Karen Brenchley of their Manchester office has produced a plan for the reconfiguration of the entrance barriers to allow access for non-standard bikes, etc. The document will be used to attract external grant money, and will be discussed at our forthcoming members' meeting (see below). When finalised we'll put it on our website.

New Map and Guide to the Loop

The timing of the General Election has further postponed our start to distributing the new Guide to houses backing onto the Loop, but we will produce a plan for this at our forthcoming meeting. In the meantime if any member has contacts with outlets which might take copies for potential users (health centres, schools, bike shops, libraries, etc.), please get in touch with David as he is currently storing the bulk of the copies.

STOP PRESS

Our next members' meeting is scheduled for next Monday 15 May, 7.30 pm at the Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield. We shall be discussing issues of current concern as well as our plans for the summer. All are welcome and new attendees will be given a warm reception.