

FALLOWFIELD LOOP

Results and the next step

Results

The recent consultation and engagement around the Fallowfield Loop and Yellow Brick Road allowed users to have their say on what they liked and disliked about the route and provide suggestions of how to improve the route in the future. There was an overwhelming response to the engagement exercise with over 5200 residents and users having their say. This was in part due to the support provided by Friends of Fallowfield Loop, who helped promote the consultation and placeposters along the route.

People who took part told us that the existing urban greenway along the Fallowfield Loop and Stockport Branch Canal is cherished for its rural feel within an urban environment. Users feel like they can escape the hustle and bustle of the city into this secluded setting in the heart of Manchester. It does however have issues such as crime, anti-social behaviour, and fly tipping, which detract from its good points and make some users feel so vulnerable that they avoid using it.

Respondents told us that their priorities were:

Addressing personal safety and anti-social behaviour

Complimenting the existing habitat and biodiversity

Providing a more open route

Connecting to surrounding neighbourhoods

Revitalising the existing landscape to create more open and less intimidating environment for users.

Upgrading access points to make the entrances prominent and the route accessible, creating a more inviting route to travel along.

Transforming and enhancing open areas to provide places for people to enjoy.

They also raised a number of repeat issues such as poor access, signage and visibility of the route, along with the need to eliminate the public perception of the route being unsafe to travel along because of issues relating to crime and anti-social behaviour.

The poor access points, connectivity, and signage to and from the Fallowfield Loop and Stockport Branch Canal were all raised during the engagement exercise. Users felt that by improving existing access points and creating more would make the route more attractive and potentially reduce crime and anti-social behaviour by providing a “safety in numbers” approach.

Next step

A review of all the existing access points needs to be undertaken to identify ways to improve accessibility, visibility, awareness of the route, and connectivity to other infrastructure is very important.

Between the east and west of the Fallowfield Loop there is an on-road section at the junction of Wilmslow Road which 'breaks' the route. People said that this section was difficult to navigate, and signage was unclear, with many users not willing to continue along the route. We will look at this junction to see if we can allow users to access the full potential of both the Fallowfield Loop and the Stockport Branch Canal.

Proposed Street lighting along the entire route divided the respondents with 65% in favour of street lighting provisions and 35% feeling that street lighting would have a negative effect on the local habitat, look and feel of the rural route as well as making crime and anti-social behaviour issues worse by providing a secluded area to meet away from the residential road network. A sensitive approach to any street lighting provisions need to be taken to reach a compromise that goes some way to protect the local wildlife and attract more users to the Fallowfield Loop and Stockport Branch Canal. This could include lighting specific sections of the route, during specific hours or even motion sensed lighting while leaving dark corridors for wildlife to continue to thrive. Lighting provisions under many of the structures will be particularly challenging as these areas have been noted in Ecological appraisals to be primary locations for bats to commute, forage and in some instances roost. Locations that will be a priority for street lighting include Withington Road to St Werburghs, the eastern extent of the Fallowfield Loop from the A6 Stockport Road to Debdale Park and the entire length of the Stockport Branch Canal.

The introduction of CCTV along the route was also high on users list of priorities feeling that provision of both street lighting and CCTV had a better chance of success than just street lighting.

Widening and maintenance of the route also featured heavily throughout the engagement process with users wanting either segregation or a "share with care" branding throughout. To achieve this widening of both the Fallowfield Loop and Stockport Branch Canal would be required to achieve a minimum width of 4.00m throughout. The maintenance of the route by resolving surface defects (particularly from tree routes) and providing more litter bins were important, along with the need to remove fallen leaves in autumn and provide some level of gritting in winter months.

A number of advanced works could be implemented ahead of the main project. This includes removing any poor access controls that inhibit some users from accessing the route and replacing them with more suitable access control measures. The consultation/engagement also identified some short sections of paths that are currently narrow and in poor condition such as the link between the Fallowfield Loop and Carrington Road. An exercise to identify these measures should be undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity. Preliminary findings of the Ecology surveys have identified invasive species that are included within schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act

1981. Where these species are near to access points or potential future works they should be removed and controlled as hazardous waste.

Advanced works are starting in late December / early January in the Tannery Way area, digging trenches for surveys and cutting back overgrown vegetation. An ecology report has now been completed which will influence the scope of the scheme.