

Fallowfield Loop and Yellow Brick Road Upgrades

Manchester Cycleway Overview

29 January 2021

Author: [REDACTED]

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In March 2018, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) approved an allocation of £160 million from the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) to the Mayor's Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund (MCF), with the Fund receiving an allocation of £10 million in 2018/19 and £50 million per annum thereafter for three years (2019/20-2021/22). The Fund is to support the delivery of infrastructure in line with the proposals in the Cycling and Walking Commissioner's Made to Move report and the emerging 'Streets for All' Strategy.

Manchester Cycleway has MCF programme entry approval. Land ownership is split between MCC and Sustrans along the route of the Fallowfield Loop, with the Yellow Brick Road being in MCC's ownership.

Consultation

Last year, the 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. Many thanks to partners who supported the consultation, including Friends of Fallowfield Loop, who helped to put posters along the route to promote it. 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 tranquil 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 recurring 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.

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Challenges/Risks

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Historically the desire has been to light the Fallowfield loop and Yellow Brick Road so that cyclists can use the route in the dark and secondly so that it would improve anti-social behaviour prevalent on the routes.

However, during consultation there were mixed views for lighting the loop in its entirety. The consultees were very torn between lighting the route to improve anti-social behaviour and making the route feel like an urban street instead of the feel of green space within an urban environment. Last year, running alongside the consultation, an ecology study was progressed which required both the loop lines to be observed from May through to October for the study of the resident wildlife. The report has been issued in draft form on 15th January 21. It is draft because the final bat analysis needs to be completed in April 21 - the study was instructed in May and missed the month of April observations in 2020 which will be undertaken this year for completeness.

The ecology report does recognise the presence of a whole host of wildlife, in fact the ecologist was amazed that such an urban space was so rich in wildlife, with both loops having great positives but the Yellow Brick Road having the most unusual activity.

- Multiple bats nests and runs – including a number of endangered species (one bat group that particularly dislikes light)
- 5 badger Sets
- Multiple fox dens
- Great crested newts
- A host of birds on the red endangered species list and
- A healthy hedgehog population

This will no doubt present a challenge to the design interventions both in terms of how the construction and shrubbery clearance is physically done and also as a consequence will, in some cases, limit the amount of lighting that can be incorporated into both routes.

There was an overwhelming response in the consultation to the junction in Ladybarn at Sainsbury's which has historically been an open difficult issue for the loop lines in the area. The Oxford Road route being the busiest in the City, closely followed by the Fallowfield loop and at the junction the two meet but the junction is very difficult to navigate.

Advanced Works – Why?

With the Hyde Road project scheduled to complete in January 21, there is a desire due to safety and access to show a demonstrable link for cyclists and pedestrians between the Hyde Road scheme and the Fallowfield Loop element of the Cycleway scheme so we have brought this element of the project forward.

Options to deliver the advanced works have been assessed and a defined scheme of accelerated work in Gorton is being designed and costed with planning permission and some land adoption issues being resolved. TfGM have assessed the design provided and support the proposal which is to:-

- Improve the ramp from the Fallowfield loop down onto the Yellow Brick Road at Debdale, it is currently very steep and not very accessible for all users.
- Widen the path from the Yellow Brick Road down Tannery Brow for both cyclists and pedestrians, retaining the access controls to prevent trail bikes.
- Improve the entrance at Alston Road to remove the steps and provide a ramp to encourage cycling and assist access for prams, wheelchairs etc.

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The Manchester Cycleway MCF scheme will provide upgraded segregated cycle facilities along the Fallowfield Loop and Stockport Branch Canal loops. It will make improvements to the routes from a safety, access, lighting and ecological perspective.

The early works for the Manchester Cycleway and full scheme support the achievement of a number of the tenets of the Our Manchester Strategy including Collectively improve our health and wellbeing and be more active as adults and children, Be on a path to being a zero-carbon city by 2050 (now 2038), Be known for high life-quality, better green spaces and world-class sport, leisure and culture as well as Have a strong sense of citizenship and pride in the city

Journey and progress to date

Unfortunately, there have been a number of Project Manager changes for this scheme, however, a new PM was appointed in December, who is now driving the project forwards in the right direction.

So far, the following activities have been completed since 4th December: -

1. Outline design for accelerated work
2. Planning application submitted
3. Establishment of ownership for Tannery Way and Tan Yard Brow
4. Slit trenches for accelerated work
5. Topographical survey for accelerated work
6. Appointment of the design team – weekly meetings
7. Negotiations with Sustrans and a memorandum of understanding discussion commenced
8. Ecological survey
9. Badger Survey
10. Great crested new survey
11. Review of consultation and design team visit for proposals to be worked up (Stockport Branch Canal)
12. Junction at Ladybarn Sainsbury's reviewed and permission to investigate the possibilities around changing the junction granted
13. Programme for accelerated works created
14. Programme reviewed and updated for main programme of work
15. Permits applied for accelerated work.

Prior:-

- 1) Public Consultation
- 2) Outline advanced works design
- 3) Commissioning of the Ecology Report
- 4) Ecology visits May-Oct

Next steps –

The initial piece of work likely to be on site in Spring this year, will have a focus in Gorton, however, following the consultation and a review by the design and engineering teams a number of improvements are planned along the whole route covering the following wards:

- Burnage
- Chorlton

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- Chorlton Park
- Clayton and Openshaw
- Fallowfield
- Gorton and Abbey Hey
- Levenshulme
- Longsight
- Old Moat
- Whalley Range
- Withington
- Rusholme

The design team has now been appointed (a new PM joined Highways in December 20) and will be working its way through the consultation document and what potential actions are available for the scheme – this will no doubt take a few months to create a potential specification and scope that we can again consult upon.

The design areas include some of the following things that the public and members have commented and we are investigating:

- **Better signage** – highlighting the wealth of wildlife and directional signage
- **Improved lighting** – along both routes and how this can be sympathetic to the wildlife – but under bridges where possible and in the floor
- **Improved and standardised access points** – utilising the approved Sustrans chicane design
- **Removing litter and fly tipping** – actively encouraging the creation of a friends of the Yellow Brick Road for litter picking, engaging the local schools.
- **Resurfacing and improving the paved areas** – removing tree routes
- **Enhancing open areas for people to enjoy** – engaging local schools and highlighting the wildlife on offer, annual bird watch events to co-inside with the seasons.
- **Maintaining the heritage of the site** – signage and unearthing covered landmarks – boards to tell the story of the yellow brick road
- **Sainsbury's junction** – how can be updated and improved – statistical evidence produced
- **Improving the conservation** – the potential of incorporating areas of forest floor and wild flowers.

The funding from the Mayor's Cycle Fund has strict TfGM parameters that need to be met in order to obtain funding and the design team has to be cognisant of them when looking at the project scope.

We will be on site in Gorton in Spring this year and will be issuing further information in early Summer. If in the meantime you have any queries or concerns about this work, please email:-

fallowfieldloop@manchester.gov.uk

Major Projects Team Highways Service Manchester City Council

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