



The Fallowfield Loop

Part of the Manchester Cycleway



3rd edition

What is the Fallowfield Loop?

The Fallowfield Loop is an old railway track built and maintained by the national charity Sustrans (www.sustrans.org.uk), which helps more people cycle and walk. The route is tarmacked to provide an off-road cycling and walking route from Chorlton in the west to Fairfield in the east. At 10km it is claimed to be the longest urban cycleway in the country, passing through the districts of Fallowfield, Levenshulme and Gorton. The path runs by several parks and open spaces, and is linked to many other cycle and public transport routes. Look inside to find out more, and open right out for a map of the route.



The route also has a supporting membership organisation, Friends of the Fallowfield Loop, which has its own website (www.fallowfieldloop.org), Facebook and Twitter accounts. You are welcome to join and participate in its discussions and activities.

THEN ...

The old railway line



Photo: R. E. Gee

The Loop gets its name from the old railway line which enabled trains from Sheffield to access Manchester Central railway station via a loop through Chorlton and Trafford. It was opened in 1892, and had passenger stations at Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Wilbraham Road (shown above), Fallowfield, Levenshulme South and Hyde Road before joining the main line at Fairfield. Some express trains including the Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Harwich boat train also used the line. Local passenger services were ended in 1958 and the stations closed, though express trains used the line until 1969 and freight traffic until 1988.

After that the line became derelict, though the stretch from St. Werburgh's Road (where there is cycle parking and lock-up) into Manchester Central now forms the Metrolink tram line. You can still see the remains of the old Wilbraham Road station platform opposite the Athol Road entrance to the Loop. The old Fallowfield station building is now used as a café for Sainsbury's supermarket, and the former Levenshulme station still stands proud at the corner of Crayfield and Stockport Roads.

NOW ...

Greenway and wildlife corridor

The Fallowfield Loop constitutes a valuable Greenway running the whole length through south and east Manchester. A number of rare species have colonised the route, which forms a natural corridor along which they can travel and spread.

There are regular organised walks to identify birds, bats, butterflies and plants along the Greenway. Ecologists monitor the site, and a Wildlife Champions group encourages local people to get involved (www.sustrans.org.uk/volunteer/our-volunteers/wildlife-volunteers).



Photo: RSPB

Volunteering

Volunteers do much of the maintenance and improvement work on the Loop. Sustrans runs regular workdays on the first Thursday of each month between 10 am and 1 pm. There are different tasks to suit different abilities, and you can meet new people and learn new skills as well as getting outdoor exercise (email volunteers-north@sustrans.org.uk).



The Friends of the Fallowfield Loop run other events, such as family-friendly rides and clean-ups of the whole route, while Rangers look after a specific short section of the path (see the Friends' website). There are three community orchards on spare railway land which require regular maintenance, and Incredible Edible Levenshulme tend a wild flower and vegetable patch at the Levenshulme quadrants.



Cycling in Greater Manchester

There are four cycling routes to Manchester city centre from the Fallowfield Loop: at the west end via the Bridgewater canal into Castlefield; from the Athol Road entrance via Alexandra Park; from Wilmslow Road on a dedicated cycleway; and from the Debdale entrance via the Ashton Canal and Sport City into Piccadilly. There are also links to the Trans-Pennine Trail going both west and east, to the airport and to Media City in Salford. These links can best be followed from the district cycling maps available free from Transport for Greater Manchester (www.tfgm.com/cycling), who also run free adult cycle training and maintenance training. Their website includes GM cycling clubs, shops, rides and other events. Other cycling organisations in the area include:

- For cycling advocacy, the Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign (www.gmcc.org.uk)
- For cycle training, Bike Right (www.bikeright.co.uk)
- For cycling information, Love Your Bike (www.manchesterfoe.org.uk/lyb/)
- For regular rides, Chorlton Wanderers (www.chorltonwanderers.wordpress.com/).



Walking on the Fallowfield Loop

The Loop forms part of Manchester's Green Corridor Walking Route which connects many of the city's parks, woodlands and open spaces. By walking you will often see things that are

missed by cyclists. The route is also a favourite for dog walkers and joggers. For details of the Green Corridor and for organised walks in Greater Manchester see the Manchester and Salford Ramblers (www.manchesterandsalfordramblers.org.uk).



Wheelchair access

Because of its uniformly level route the west end of the Loop provides the best opportunity for wheelchair users, who can join and leave via the entrances at St. Werburgh's Road (Metrolink station), Chelsfield Grove, Athol Road or Avian Drive. Information



about other wheelchair routes can be obtained from the Manchester Disabled People's Access Group (www.mdpag.org.uk/), or try the classes offered by the Wythenshawe Wheelers Inclusive Cycling Club (www.simply-cycling.org).

Guidance for Loop Users

SHARE WITH CARE

- Please respect other users of the route,
- Cyclists please slow down and ring your bell when overtaking walkers from behind,
- Dog walkers please ensure your dog is under control,
- Walkers and joggers please be alert to the presence of other users,
- All users please take your litter home with you,
- Above all, enjoy your time on this wonderful route!



Photo: Dave Stevens/Sustrans



Photo: J. Bewley

Funded by TfGM cycling and Friends of the Fallowfield Loop.

Designed by Nick Scarle of the Cartographic Unit at the University of Manchester.

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