

CASE STUDY: RIVER LUNE MILLENNIUM PARK AND CYCLE ROUTE BETWEEN LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE



Partners: Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council, The Millennium Commission.

Region: North-west.

Type of scheme: Off-road cycle route, utilising the disused track-bed of the former Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe Railway. From its western end in Morecambe it proceeds east, crossing the flat coastal plain towards Lancaster, via a new purpose-built Millennium Bridge over the River Lune into the City, then heads north-east up the river valley to Caton village, a total of some 13km in length.

Who benefits?

- Local residents making utility journeys – particularly between Morecambe and Lancaster – for work, shopping, etc;
- Locals and visitors making recreational trips;
- Pupils and HE/FE students travelling to school, college and university.

Noteworthy features

- New purpose-built Millennium Bridge for cyclists and pedestrians across the River Lune.
- A continuous, uninterrupted route through the heart of a city.
- Very good access onto and off the route from neighbouring residential areas, retail outlets, places of employment, etc.
- Absence of chicanes at access points and the very occasional side-road crossings.
- Lighting along almost the entire length to facilitate year-round use.
- Reintroduction along the eastern Millennium Park section of the route of the concept of “Stations”, or places from which with a superb view could be gained. These stations also contain information points.



Description

In the 1980s a number of off-road cycle routes into Lancaster were developed, utilising disused railways and other relatively flat corridors. However they did not have a sealed surface and were subsequently not popular for utility journeys. In the mid 1990s the Morecambe to Lancaster arm of this basic off-road cycle route network was surfaced, but it terminated on the north-western bank of the River Lune, where cyclists had to defer to busy road bridges to access the city centre and destinations further east. However, around the turn of the last century, a successful application to the Millennium Commission saw the implementation of a purpose-built river crossing for pedestrians and cyclists, providing a 5km link between Morecambe and Lancaster city centre. This most recent stage of development also included an extension of a surfaced route 8km further east to Caton village.

The cycle track between Morecambe and Lancaster is the county's busiest cycle route, and provides a very attractive alternative to sitting in a queue of traffic on the Morecambe Road. There are links to surrounding areas such as the White Lund Industrial Estate, and new links into the surrounding residential and employment areas are being provided as part of the “Cycling Demonstration Town” works. Commuters, in particular, have found the cycle path to be the quickest way of getting between Lancaster and Morecambe: at peak times it is twice as quick to

cycle between the two settlements than drive. There is also a direct link to Lancaster station, where the route emerges onto one of the platforms; and into Lancaster city centre, where the route terminates with some cycle parking at the edge of the pedestrianised area. At the Morecambe end a new link is being provided along Central Drive between the railway station and the new Promenade Cycle Route, to further extend the route. Again, this is being provided as part of the Cycling Demonstration Town works.

The entire path is also popular for recreational cycling, as it follows a relatively flat route across coastal plain, then up the valley of the River Lune. The Millennium Park celebrates the city's maritime history and the river, which purports to be one of the country's most attractive. In the eighteenth century Lancaster used to be one of England's leading ports, trading with America and the West Indies.



Anecdotal evidence suggests that the route has been successful in encouraging people to take up cycling as a gentle form of recreation, who then discovered it is also useful for making quick and enjoyable regular local utility trips by bike. The initiative has been of particular benefit to those with limited car access, as it passes within close proximity of the two Lancaster wards with the lowest car ownership levels in the city. Skerton East and Skerton West have, respectively, 37% and 40% of households without a car, compared to 10% non-car ownership among the most affluent wards of the city.

There is, however, one short section of the route that has come in for some criticism: the shared-use underpass which is utilised to cross the busy A683 east of the Millennium Bridge. This is relatively narrow, quite dark and has chicanes that are awkward to negotiate on a bicycle.

Outcomes

The Morecambe to Lancaster section of the route is the most well used of all the shared use off-road routes that exist in Lancashire. Twice as many cyclists use it as any other route in the County, and twice as many pedestrians use it as cyclists. The most recent survey, carried out on a weekday in Summer 2005 on a stretch of the route between Morecambe and Lancaster, revealed two-way cycle flows of 1143 for a 24-hour period. Use has been growing since scheme completion, illustrated by a 16% increase in flows between two surveys, in 2002 and 2005, on the same stretch of route at similar times of year.

Contact for further information

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www.llmr.co.uk/walks_millennium_park_route.cfm

This case study has been prepared by the Cycling England Local Authority Professional Support Team