

Waverley Viaduct

Thoughts of a Supporter of the Campaign

World Health Organisation Healthy City: Carlisle achieved this status in about 2010. Both Belle Vue and Castle wards are among the most deprived in the city. Cumbria's Director of Public Health and County Medical Officer Dr John Ashton's view is that one means of improving people's health is to get more of them walking. The recreational walking facilities in both of these wards are very limited, especially for families with small children. One questions how many families have ever been walking in the countryside, how many children have enjoyed the experience of throwing stones or paddling in a river. If we are to get more people walking, then it must be in attractive surroundings where children can play safely. And yet the area north of the Eden and the countryside would be only a short distance away if only the viaduct were opened.

Hadrians National Trail runs along the south (Carlisle) side of the Eden; however it is not alongside the riverbank but for some distance is higher up with quite a steep drop down to the river. Furthermore, most of the river on this side is quite deep. The viaduct must be opened and the walks on the north side promoted. The opening of the viaduct would be a great asset for the city.

There is a linear walk (Cumbria Coastal Way) mostly alongside the river to Rockcliffe and several circular walks leading from the viaduct. There are also opportunities to picnic by the river and places where the water is shallow enough for children to play.

The river should be seen as a lung, not just for Belle Vue and Castle ward residents, but for the whole of Carlisle. It is undoubtedly an asset most other councils would look upon as a jewel in their crown. Instead it seems to be taken for granted and ways are not devised of using it that would benefit not just the citizens of Carlisle but also as an attraction for visitors, some being from abroad.

Some years ago a working group was set up by the local authority to look at opportunities to increase recreational walking routes for the benefit of visitors and local people. It considered that it was a priority to open up the viaduct to create a circular walk using Eden Bridge and the Memorial Footbridge in Rickerby Park. At that time the conditions that would have been imposed by British Rail were unacceptable.

Currently the Memorial Bridge in Rickerby Park is the only traffic-free crossing of the Eden in the city. This contrasts with the Wear in Durham City which has seven such crossings.

The campaigners' website details how much of the city's history is hidden away.

Looking to the longer term, there should be plans to provide more recreational facilities that the elderly, people with mobility problems as well as wheelchair-users could use. A tarmac path down and from Engine Lonning to the viaduct and on to Etterby would be an asset for a group of people all too often forgotten. Parents with prams and pushchairs would also benefit from it.

The section of the Hadrians National Trail through the Sheepmount is in a terrible, unkempt, condition: very few of the above are able to use it. But it has to be accepted that there is not the funding now to provide tarmac paths but surely there is no good reason why the council cannot plan for the future, perhaps even a riverside path in Rickerby Park? .

People who live in Stainton Hamlet oppose the opening of the viaduct because 30 years or so ago youths on motorbikes created mayhem until the viaduct was closed. But they ought to acknowledge that the Police throughout the UK are now more experienced in clamping-down on the misuse of Rights of Way. The Caldew Cycleway is a good example where they have stopped youths on motorbikes using it by blocking-off the exits and impounding the machines.

The issue with the viaduct is : is it to be opened-up for the greater good especially the most deprived in our community or do we give in to a miniscule minority because of a few incidents which happened almost 30 years ago ?

Anon.

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