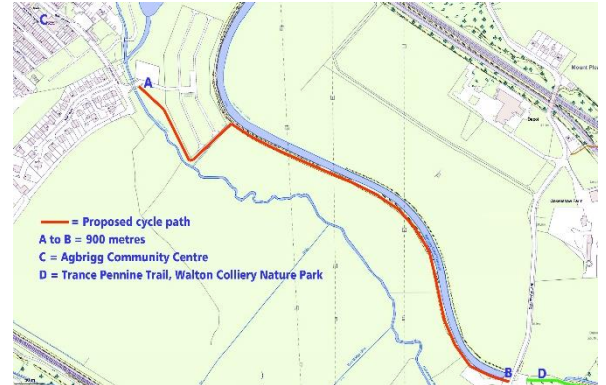


Agbrigg to Walton Park Foot/Cycle Path

Wakefield District Cycle Forum (WDCF) have joined with Agbrigg and Belle Vue Community Association (ABVCA) to develop a project to construct a path between Agbrigg and Walton Colliery Nature Park (WCNP). The aim of the project is:

1. *To upgrade an existing unofficial path (see map) between Montague St in Agbrigg and Oakenshaw Lane at WCNP with a hard, all-weather surface and to designate the path to ensure it is open for future public access. The path would connect Agbrigg with the extensive network of traffic-free paths from WCNP to the Trans Pennine Trail, through Crofton to Nostell and in the countryside between Nostell and Anglers Country Park.*
2. *In the longer term WDCF/ABVCA would seek to develop a Cycle Hub at the Community Centre from which guided rides and cycle events would be organised on an ongoing basis.*



The project initially had the support the Countryside section of Wakefield Council, who own and administer the land on which the path would run, and the Highways Department. However, Highways withdrew their support for the project on the basis that the path could not accommodate a width of 3 metres and was therefore not safe as a cycle path. WDCF and ABVCA organised a workday to survey the path and clear a section of the path from overgrowth which illustrated that, with some maintenance, 3 metres was available for most of the route as illustrated below in the before and after photos.



At the site of a mature tree where the path narrows work can be undertaken to widen and stabilise the path and a second narrow point where the path is bordered by a wall or fence on each side, 15 metres before the path ends at Oakenshaw Lane has the advantage of slowing cyclists as they approach this busy road.



We can report that after a site visit with two of our colleagues, council officials from Highways agree they would no longer manage the project but that WDCF could go ahead, in conjunction with Countryside, to project manage the work. Unfortunately, Countryside raised further objections, the presence of water voles. Despite research into this claim there has been no confirmation that water voles are or have been sighted on the site of the Old Barnsley Canal and we await conformation from Countryside as to whether an environmental survey is necessary.

A project that seemed straightforward at its inception has proved extremely frustrating due to the attitude of the Council officials, who, rather than find ways to overcome potential obstacles, seem to look for obstacles to put in our way. We, however, continue to pursue the project and hope that we can work in conjunction with the council to install this new community facility, which will be of great benefit to the people of Agbrigg and beyond.