



Bristol and Bath Railway Path proposals

One Path: BS5. Trinity Street to Clay Bottom.

Response from Bristol Parks Forum.

To:

Alex Bottrill, Principle Urban Designer (England South).

Sustrans, 17 Great George Street, Bristol BS1 5QT

I am writing in response to the consultation on the proposed changes to the Railway Path; and on Sustrans' ongoing work.

The Bristol Parks Forum has a vision for all publicly owned parks and green spaces.

This is presented in its Vision document – A positive future for Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces.

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/vision

We have encouraged local parks groups to get involved in the Railway Path consultation.

Representatives from the Forum have attended exhibitions and steering groups when they can.

Those representatives have walked the whole route, and have also sat and observed people at a number of locations for an hour to look at how people behave.

We would like to comment on the proposals as follows.

We recognise that the route, even though heavily used by people to move through the area and access locations alongside, is a Park not a Highway.

We appreciate the way that your organisation has been trying to:

- understand the different functions of the path;
- bring together users of the path
- seek resolutions of conflicts
- make the best of opportunities; and
- present the proposals to multiple stakeholders.

It is good to see that the Railway Path is seen as more than just a transport corridor.

We have a few design related points to raise:

1. We understand that work to influence the behaviour of path users, is being left to another organisation to take forward in the future.

However, we would very strongly argue for simple measures to be installed now, as soon as possible, at locations where people are able to enter or leave the Railway Path from outside, and join other roads, paths etc.

This is because from our observations and conversations with others we believe that one of the biggest risk to users, is from those entering the path without checking both ways to see if they can safely do so without disrupting those travelling along the path. This effect is exaggerated where there are numerous junctions with the path over short distances.

We appreciate that you may not have any data on how frequent or dangerous this issue is, but our observations are that along with people changing direction while on the Railway Path, that this could be a big factor in people's frustration with the Railway Path.

We therefore ask that where there are hard surfaces (tarmac, stone etc) related to a junction; a message is painted such as "Please look both ways" to encourage people to do that.

2. The most critical location from our perspective is the Owen Square Park/Easton Community Centre junction.

Not only is Owen Square Park the park with the most side entrances onto the Railway Path, but one of the entrances looks like a maintenance access for the Bristol City Council Parks Department. The junction itself is an important route between Easton and Whitehall Road, across the Railway Path.

There is also a well-used informal path down to Whitehall Road that needs to be considered in the design.

We believe that this area should be given the same prominence in the design as the Whitehall School crossing.

3. When widening the paths, we ask that the designs avoid stripping the Railway Path of all of its green characteristics.

It is possible that mature/maturing trees will be affected by the proposals. Where this is to happen, please ensure that replacements are within the design or very close by. With the climate and ecological emergencies we are facing, trees and wildlife corridors that include grass and hedges etc need to be maintained.

We have not commented on the designs in relation to the general widening, or at other locations, as I am sure that other parties will have views about these.

This letter has been copied to the following people and organisations:

- Cllr Asher Craig – Cabinet member for Parks and Green Spaces, Bristol City Council
- Richard Fletcher – Parks Services Manager, Bristol City Council
- Paula Spiers – Avon Frome Partnership Co-ordinator, Bristol City Council.
- Bristol Cycling Forum
- Bristol Cycling Campaign
- Bristol Walking Alliance
- Bristol Parks Forum members

Obviously if you have queries/questions – please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours

Len Wyatt

On behalf of Bristol Parks Forum

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