



UPDATE ON SKELTON GRANGE ROAD BRIDGE CAMPAIGN May 2022



We thought it would be timely to provide an update on the Skelton Grange Road Bridge (SGRB) campaign given the building work now underway on the bridge.

Some background

The steep and often dangerous steps at the bridge are inaccessible to large sections of the population - particularly wheelchair users, people with long-term health conditions, people with disabilities, parents with pushchairs, mobility scooter users and many e-bike users.

In 2019 Leeds Cycling Campaign launched a campaign to make the Trans-Pennine Trail and Sustrans NCN Route 67 at Skelton Grange Road Bridge safe and accessible to all.

We have conducted a user survey, produced a campaign film, lobbied local councillors, the West Yorkshire Mayor and MPs and organised an on-line petition attracting over 3,300 signatures. The campaign has successfully highlighted this long-standing issue and spurred Leeds City Council to take action. Sustrans, the walking, wheeling and cycling charity subsequently secured Department for Transport (DfT) funding for a feasibility study to find a solution to the problem of the Skelton Grange steps.

A key stakeholder group comprising Leeds City Council, Leeds Cycling Campaign, the Canal and Rivers Trust, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Trans Pennine Trail and Sustrans was established, chaired by Sustrans, to carry out the feasibility study.

Two preferred options emerged from the key stakeholders - the continuation of the route through the site of Thwaite Mill Museum (the Direct Option) or a new cycling and pedestrian bridge avoiding the existing bridge and steps (the New Bridge Option).

At a second meeting of the group Sustrans tabled two further options that had been ranked very low preferences in the initial evaluation. These were a short and longer route beside the River Aire via Harworth Estates' new industrial, warehousing and storage development on the old Power Station site north of the bridge. Leeds Cycling Campaign objected to these riverside routes on the following grounds:

- (1) they would still involve crossing the existing bridge which will carry a vastly increased number of large lorries laden

- with domestic waste for the new Enfinium heat recovery plant;
- (2) they were indirect routes through a busy commercial site away from the recently upgraded towpath and involved crossing and re-crossing the Aire Navigation; and
 - (3) there was no indication of timescales and completion would be dependent on the developers' goodwill.

The key stakeholder group has not met since November 2021 and Leeds Cycling Campaign has been pressing for another meeting to continue a dialogue. This has resulted in an indication that a meeting will be called after mid-June 2022 when initial work on the four options should be completed.

At the same time, a longstanding planning approval (dating from 2013) to upgrade the bridge to serve Enfinium's new plant means that work is now being carried out on the bridge.

The developer will create a segregated route for cyclists and pedestrians across the bridge, new ramped access onto the bridge at the southern end (replacing the crumbling railway sleeper steps) and replace the existing steps with new steps! While these will have a more gradual drop, be wider (2m) and include a wheel trough to each side, making it easier and safer for cyclists to use - they will still be steps and continue to exclude large sections of the community.

Leeds Cycling Campaign believes that the key stakeholder group's preference for the Direct Option through Thwaite Mill Museum site or the New Bridge Option represent the best solution to overcoming the exclusion of large sections of the community from this amazing greenspace. This is despite the fierce opposition of Leeds Museum service to the Direct Option.

Leeds Cycling Campaign is now calling for:

- (1) Regular meetings of the key stakeholder group to receive and consider updates on emerging options;
- (2) A wider public consultation on the preferred options; and
- (3) A full equality impact assessment of the current upgrading of Skelton Grange Road Bridge and the emerging options.

ENDS

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Leeds Cycling Campaign film about the steps at Skelton Grange Road Bridge can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pLVQBRPFFo&feature=youtu.be>
2. Leeds Cycling Campaign's petition can be found here: <https://www.change.org/p/leeds-city-council-secure-a-safe-and-accessible-crossing-for-ncn-route-67-and-the-tpt-at-skelton-grange-road>
3. An aerial view of the Skelton Grange Road location can be found here (courtesy of Google maps): <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@53.7753465,-1.4999464,168m/data=!3m1!1e3?hl=en>
4. Planning application **21/ 09982 / FU**
Hybrid Application general industrial, storage and /or distribution floorspace land at the Former Skelton Grange power station, South Road, Leeds.
<https://publicaccess.leeds.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=R41KV5JBHF700>
5. 2013 planning permission Ref: **11/03705/FU**. Subsequently amended by planning permission granted on 3/3/2020 Ref: **19/03535/FU**

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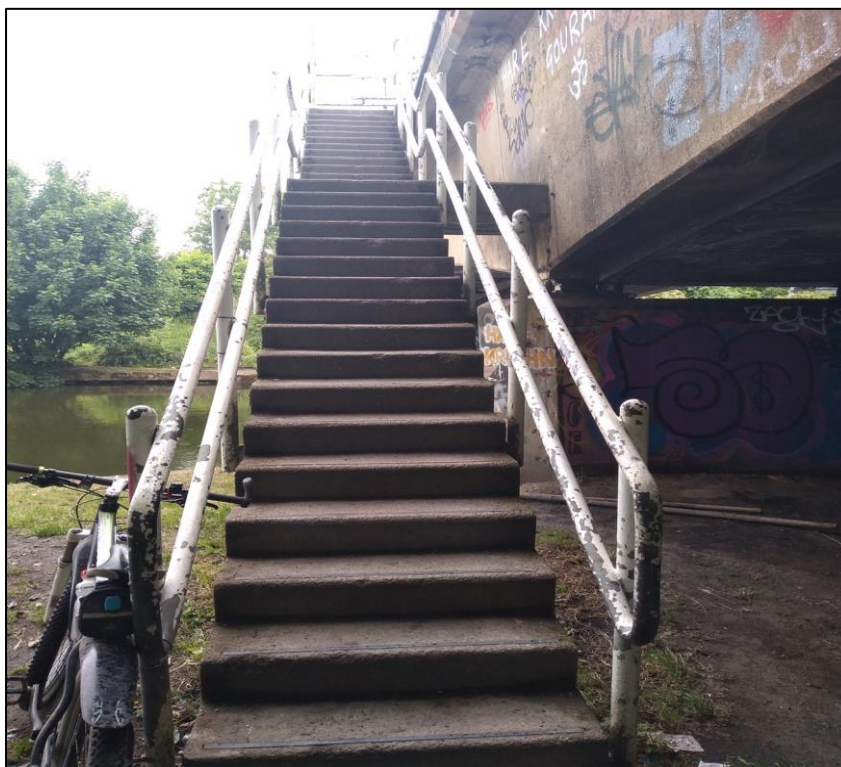
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PHOTOGRAPHS

Use may be made of the following photographs:



Credit: Leeds Cycling Campaign



Credit: Leeds Cycling Campaign



Building work underway North bank Skelton Grange road bridge.
Credit: Leeds Cycling Campaign.