

Project Number : C1 Carbon Trail



Project Overview: A programme of physical access improvements to the Carbon Landscape improving gateways sites and developing a ‘Carbon Trail’ linking key sites between the three landscape character areas. A series three shorter Carbon Trails or ‘Loops’ will be established that will provide interpretative features and tell the Carbon Landscape story in different ways in each area.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Carbon Landscape project team

Project Location: Various

Project dates: June 2017 ongoing

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
3 gateway sites improved	3	3	Three Sisters (reported separately) New Moss Wood (reported separately) Risley Moss (reported separately)
1 Trail developed and established Carbon Landscape Two Day Nature Reserve Trail.	1	32km	Waymarked trail with beautiful oak monoliths. Starts at Wigan Train station and ends at Warrington Train Station (Bank Quay is on the same mainline). Getting onto the canal The Carbon Trail visits Wigan Flashes, Lightshaw, Pennington, Hope Carr, (overnight stay) Bents Garden Centre, Windy Bank Wood, Little Woolden Moss, New Moss Wood (spur) Pestfurlong Moss, Risley Moss, Woolston Park, Paddington Meadows (spur) and finishes at Woolston Eyes.
3 Trail loops created created as “outdoor museums”.	3 km	3 Totalling 26km	1. Timewalk Three Sisters to Wigan Flashes and return via the canal 13.2km 2. Salford Heritage Loop 6.5km 3. Mersey Corridor Heritage Loop 6.5km These have accompanying podcasts and video walk with Adam Berry.
Interpretation features provided	10	100+	10 Heritage AO Boards Nine Oak Monoliths (see British Cycling) 100+ Augmented Reality Signs to double as waymarkers

3 planning trail development groups established	3	3	Each character area gained its own development group which operated ad hoc and informally.
Number of people engaged through trail groups?	??	30 volunteers Over 1000 visiting interactive map	Project officers observation linked to reccies, podcasts, interpretation installation, heritage write ups, requests for feedback
Additional outputs delivered			
Family friendly cycle trails based on criteria of funder British Cycling and because there are a lot of dangerous roads between sites.		Nine trails with bold involving surface upgrades 30.8km	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Little ducklings cycle trail at Turners Flash 1km 2. Amberswood Lake and Woodland Adventure Trail 2.2km 3. Bickershaw Bumble Bees Cycling at Bickershaw 5.5km 4. Three Sisters Bridle Path 2km 5. Wigan Flashes and Pennington Flash on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal 11.3km 6. New Moss Wood to Little Woolden Moss on the Bridleway 1.8km 7. Birchwood Forest Park Loop 1km 8. Woolston Park Cycling 2km 9. New Cut to Black Bear Canal 4km
There are more walking trails on the interactive map			These have often been championed by the "Outdoor Champions" or Friends groups and can be found at www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/explore

Reflecting on the last 5 years, what's the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of the Carbon Landscape?

The trails are the backbone of everything in the Carbon Landscape – the events, digital, the arts and culture, the Outdoor Champions, volunteering and skills training. The hard thing is to know where one begins and the other end as there is so much intersection. However, when the whole package comes together then people really start to understand their place and their relationship with the landscape; its past, its wildlife and how they may personally move forward with that space. The "Outdoors Champion" programme from Be Well (Wigan Council), Salford Leisure Trust and Livewire Warrington have been particularly instrumental in bringing these trails to the new audiences.

Volunteers, partners, the programme team and paid consultants know literally every nook and cranny of the Carbon Landscape. Thousands of hours of on foot reccies have looked for the suitability of amazing wetland eco-tourism experiences and telling the Carbon Landscape story. From those reccies, recommendations have come forward for the most uplifting wetland experiences linked to podcasts and youtube videos. This is formerly linked at the one-stop-shop interactive map www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/explore

There is something for everyone for the rambler who wants to capture breath taking vistas, a cyclist looking for a pit stop to the first-time experiences of school children in walking distance from their school. Interactive trails have also occurred on some walks included the Augmented reality trail reported in Carbon Digital. The next stage has been getting Dr Andrew Read of “Walking Projects Plus CIC” to get other organisations to adopt the trails and to address inclusion e.g. proximity of brew, toilets and public transport.

What difference has this project made to the cultural and natural heritage of Carbon Landscape?

Vision for the Gateways

The unifying themes for the interpretation with its Timewalk and the character gateways is the RoundView story of “Restoration, Exploitation and Restoration”. Each gateway offers an insight into the Three Character Areas namely the “Flashes of Wigan and Leigh” with its Carbon Story of coal mining, the “Mosslands story” with its Carbon Story of peat extraction and the “Mersey Wetlands Corridor” with its Carbon Story of the industrial revolution around the River Mersey.

- Three Sisters gained its wheelchair accessible trails including Enchanted Woodland trail, wildlife rubbings trail and Heritage and Wildlife Trail ending with the wetlands.
- New Moss Wood gained its new interpretation and Nature Adventure Trail.
- Risley Moss gained its boardwalk.

Legacy Interpretation and Trails

As the sites are often close or within areas of Index of Multiple Deprivation the cultural heritage had to be interpreted in relatively “vandal-proof” methods. In particular, this includes the large AO Interpretation boards funded through a mixture of Heritage Fund, Wigan Council Section 106 and British Cycling. The latter also funded A5 Waymarker each of which incorporate an Augmented Reality Experience of wildlife www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/soundbites Essentially a 3D animal “pops” up in the landscape and it is possible to take a selfie with it. Behind the animal is an audio with educational scripts co-produced by local community members. The physical interpretation furniture, waymakers, interactive map www.carbonlandscape.org/explore and the Carbon Landscape Augmented Reality App will be available beyond the Heritage Funded period. This work is also nationally ground breaking and AR has never been co-produced with local communities before.

The Co-production of the Loops

Logistically complex, but critical in generating community pride, the loops have been the most significant achievement with a very clear brief from the steering group around “outdoor museums” and linking the wetlands. Friends groups got really behind each of the interpretation and all scripts were a group effort. Stand out volunteers for this include Pat Rigg, Maggie Robinson, Joy Winstanley, Ian Winstanley, Dave Steel, Anna Keighley, David Nowell, Liz Taylor, Mike Kenwright, Kevin Price, Lynda and Terry Eagan. Each character area has a Timewalk with the Flashes having two and then a video with Adam Berry walking the landscape with commentary. The videos involved Adam meeting staff and community members along his travels and getting their stories. This is very much in the style of youtubers and has good viewing just via youtube generation of traffic.

The Co-production of Digital Trails

Reported within Mosslands Gateway, Wanderland, Carbon Creative and Carbon Digital there are a whole series of podcasts and geolocated trails that can be accessed on the mobile phone especially using the IZI-Travel app.

What difference has this project made to people?

Carbon Trail Launch Walk

Saturday 24th March 2018 was the Carbon Landscape Trail Walk launch which saw 24 determined ramblers taking part. The Warrington section (12 miles) took in the key wetland sites of Paddington Meadows, Risley Moss and Pestfurlong Moss and ended at Irlam Train Station for lunch. The Salford section (10 miles) took in the key wetland sites of Little Woollen Moss, Cadishead Moss and Whitehead Hall Green ending up at Lancashire Mining Museum. Finally, the Wigan section (10 miles) was along the Canal and took in Pennington Flash and ended at Wigan Flashes with the finale of the "Week in the Wild" event where the walkers were rewarded with freshly made Thai Green curry and warm cordials made from foraged botanicals. Feedback from the day was positive but a request for more detours from the Canal.

Recommended favour walks of Outdoor Champions and Friends Groups

It is worth mentioning that there are other trails on the maps. These are the most commonly used trails recommended by the Friends groups, the various Outdoor Champions (Be Well, Salford Leisure Trust, Warrington Leisure) and the ones that are well known within the community. This gives local communities lots of options for exploring.

British Cycling Family Friendly Trails

The British Cycling Project match funded by Wigan Council 106 funding has been particularly exciting at working with schools. However, the beauty of it is that is a standalone, you can bump into it with no prior knowledge of the Carbon Landscape. The interactive map gives increased opportunities for outdoor fitness and wellbeing whilst meeting the latent demand in Wigan, Salford and Warrington for traffic-free cycling trails. This leads to wider appreciation of the wild spaces on our doorsteps and the wildlife that resides there or 3D augmented reality heritage images bringing the past to life.

The Cycling Trails have been devised through a co-production so local people feel ownership for them and has been especially reinforced by the Cycling Hub at Leigh Spinners Mill which is at a central location in the Carbon Landscape. In turn this supports the Carbon Landscape becoming a region rich in wildlife that allows as many people as possible to connect with its wetland nature reserves with their internationally important wildlife.

Useful Links

Interactive trail www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/explore

Augmented reality app and soundbites www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/soundbites

Future Plans and Legacy

The interpretation furniture, augmented reality app and the interactive map are available into relative perpetuity. British Cycling insisted on having ways of calculating visitor attendance and this will be useful for ongoing site management. British Cycling also involved path upgrades which has improved access in the Carbon Landscape.

Dr Andrew Read of “Walking Projects Plus CIC” has taken the trails within his own practice and therefore there is an influential advocate post Heritage Lottery Funding.

At the request of steering there will also be graphic designed maps and this will especially link to the two Proposed National Nature Reserves and the 2022 70th Anniversary of NNRs. A lead advisor post is being created within Natural England to champion the walks. The walks are also used by the Be Well team of Wigan Council and their impact is reported separately under Outdoor Champions.

Finally, the Declared National Nature Reserve Flashes of Wigan and Leigh and proposed National Nature Reserve Mosslands of Wigan, Salford and Warrington will ensure that the Carbon Trails are enjoyed for years to come.

Lessons learned?





It is virtually impossible apart from Heritage Lottery to get funding for multiple sites in multiple local authorities. Landfill tax funding, the stalwart for this type of work, would only fund one site. When British Cycling Fund was eventually identified this in turn also caused issues for partners some of whom did not want on nature reserve cycling encouraged but it not feeling safe enough to use cycle racks so that cyclists could park up and walk around.

At the development stage there was not a clear understanding of public rights of way or criteria for cycling on paths e.g. because a path is regularly cycled it does not mean that there is a statutory right to cycle. This in turn highlighted issues for Local Authorities and they themselves recommending routes where they had not got landowner permission. In the end landowner permission became key and councils realised that it was not possible to put in proper cycle ways for a full Carbon Landscape cycle trail. There are many dangerous roads, too narrow to ever put in a cycle way and many of the wetlands border housing estates with high Index of Multiple Deprivation or industrial estates where cyclists nor walkers feel safe. The nature of the Carbon Landscape partnership certainly had “clout” and influence however, sometimes those issues were insurmountable.

In spite of these challenges what has been achieved is desirable walking trails between sites and then on-site family friendly cycling linked to interpretation and an Augmented Reality Trail of wildlife from the landscape.

Photographic Evidence

Walking images are captured in Outdoor Champions

 <p>Interactive Map</p>	 <p>AO Lecterns</p>
 <p>Carbon Landscape Oak Monolith</p>	 <p>Carbon Landscape Augmented Reality Trail doubling as Waymarkers</p>

Funding Partners

