

Medlock Valley Nature Partnership Active Travel Route

Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Background
3. Objectives
4. Sites
 - 4.1 Bishops Park Monument to Lower Slack Farm
 - 4.2 Turf Pit Lane to north of Strinesdale Reservoir
 - 4.3 Rocher Valley Public Footpath
 - 4.4 Lees Road PROW to Hartshead Pike
 - 4.5 Park Bridge Road to Bardsley Canal
 - 4.6 Daisy Nook Country Park
 - 4.7 Hollinwood Branch Canal
 - 4.8 Hiking Trail South of Brookdale Golf Club
5. Technical Documents
6. Environmental and Social Impact
7. Recommendations and Next Steps
8. Conclusion

1. Executive Summary

Project Overview:

The Medlock Valley Nature Partnership aims to develop a ten-mile Nature-rich Active Travel Route from Mayfield Park to Bishop Park Monument on Saddleworth Moor. This initiative integrates a core wheeling route and scenic hiking trails to foster nature connectedness and improve access to green spaces for disadvantaged communities in East Manchester, Failsworth, Lees, Watershead, and surrounding areas.

Purpose of the Feasibility Study:

This study evaluates the technical, environmental, and socio-economic viability of the proposed scenic hiking trail improvements and associated active travel routes. The focus is on ensuring accessibility, preserving biodiversity, and leveraging sustainable design to enhance the natural environment and community well-being.

2. Background

Goals:

The proposed enhancements aim to

- Improve the resilience of natural and urban environments to climate change.
- Provide safe, accessible, and enjoyable green spaces for recreation and education.
- Connect communities with nature to improve health, well-being, and social inclusion.
- Address physical barriers and enhance access to scenic hiking trails.

3. Objectives

Enhance Scenic Hiking Trails:

- Ensure accessibility for foot traffic.
- Develop technical specifications to guide contractors on necessary improvements.

Address Specific Issues:

- Repair and enhance hiking trails south of Brookdale Golf Course, including solutions for broken bridges and dangerous stiles.
- Improve road crossing safety between Hollinwood Branch Canal and Daisy Nook Park.
- Repurpose and enhance Rocher Vale footpaths with support from private landowners.
- Enhance the spur toward Hartshead Pike with livestock-friendly infrastructure.

Identify Funding Sources:

- Develop a fundraising strategy based on the technical evidence base.
- Engage stakeholders to support funding and implementation efforts.

4.1 Bishop Park Monument to Lower Slack Farm (1km)

Location: SD 96766 08080 to SD 96100 07390

Landowner: Liam Kennedy and Nik Anderson (Oldham Council)

Aim: Become a potential nature reserve, tree planting with significant slow the flow characteristics.



Fig 1: Section 1 of The Medlock Way

Issue:

- No clear bridlepath/rotten fingerpost
- No interpretation board/information
- Ground is very wet/boggy
- River bank fencing completely collapsed into water



Fig 2a: Rotten fingerposts along route

Fig 2b: Collapsing riverbank fencing along boundary

Proposed Solution:

- Fingerposts installed (///patio.echo.veal, ///unity.hook.stump, ///pillow.march.cycle, ///globe.pool.spends, ///cross.items.seated, ///golf.fully.scores)
- Interpretation board at the source of the Medlock (///economies.blaze.young)
- Tree planting in floodplain
- Removal of riverbank fencing



Fig 3: Proposed fingerpost locations (white) and interpretation board (blue)



EWCO - Opportunity for
Wider Catchment Woodland
EWCO - Opportunity for
Floodplain Woodland

Fig 4: Areas for focused 'slow the flow' techniques and woodland planting

Proposed Costs:

- Supply and install timber finger posts, 6 x £450 = £2,700.00
- Supply and install interpretation/information board, 1 x £1,000 = £1,000.00

Considerations:

- Public consultation with residents at Badger Edge Hamlet, Hilltop and Arncliffe Rise

Next steps:

- Engage with City of Trees to discuss planting opportunities
- Fund contractor to remove riverbank fencing, install sign posts and interpretation/information board
- Identify funding streams

Associated documents

- Section 1 – Detailed Design Fingerposts

4.2 Turf Pit Lane to north of Strinesdale Reservoir (550m)

Location: SD 96100 07390 to SD 95840 07096

Landowner: Liam Kennedy and Nik Anderson (Oldham Council) and private landowner

Aim: Land purchase from local farmer to put in active travel route and slow the flow improvements.



Fig 5: Section 2 of The Medlock Way

Issue:

- Damaged stile
- Fast flowing river
- High rising river during heavy rainfall



Fig 6a: Damaged stile



Fig 6b: Opportunity areas for slow the flow



Proposed Solution:

- Replace stile
- Install leaky dams along river

Proposed Costs:

- Supply and install timber stile, 1 x £750 = £750.00
- Supply and install leaky dam – no costing available

Considerations:

- Land north of Strinesdale to Turf Pit Lane, and Lower Slack Farm (both private ownership) needs to be prioritised in terms of 'slow the flow' techniques

Next steps:

- Identify specific landowner boundaries
- Engage with private landowners
- Identify funding streams

Associated documents

- Section 2 – Detailed Design Stile

4.3 Rocher Valley Public Footpath (1.4km)

Location: SD 94858 03235 to SD 94124 02328

Landowner: Liam Kennedy and Nik Anderson (Oldham Council), Michael Hughes and Nicola Marshall (Tameside Council) and private land owners in both districts.

Aim: Improve condition and accessibility of footpaths

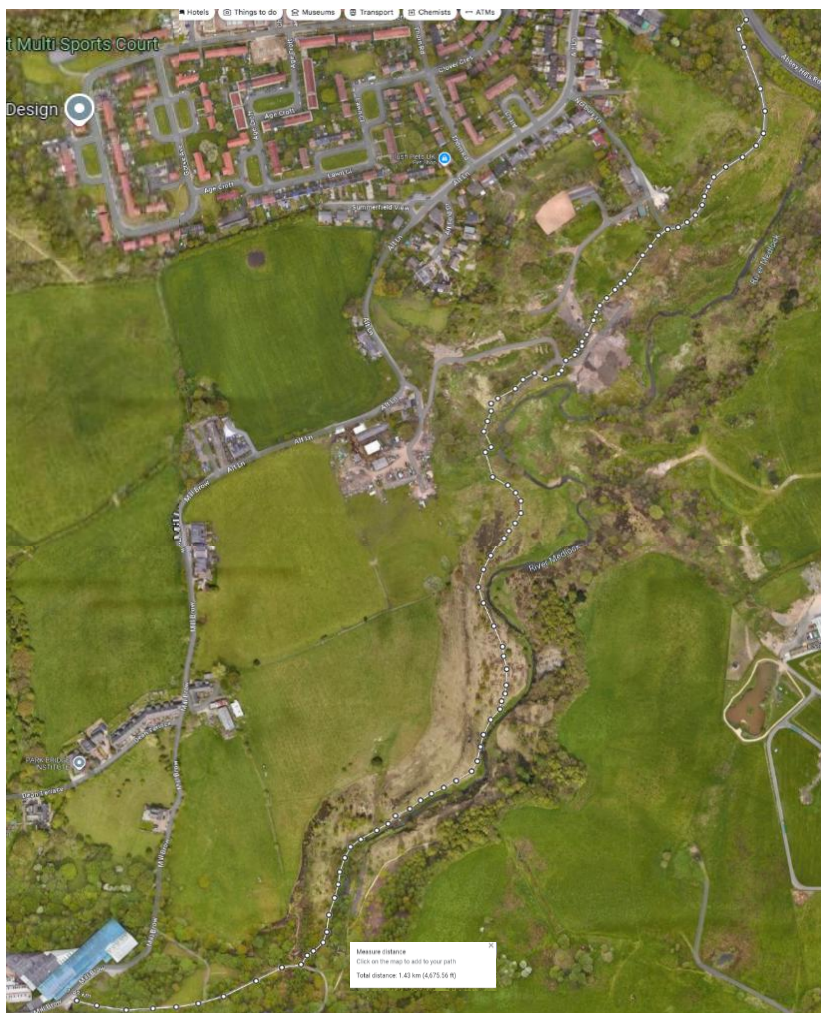


Fig 7: Section 3 of The Medlock Way

Issue:

- Poor accessibility and condition of footpath

Proposed Solution:

- Handrails installed along uneven areas
- Boardwalk installed over uneven footpaths

Proposed Costs:

- Not considered a priority section currently

Considerations:

- Private landowner consultations.
- Compliance with accessibility guidance (e.g., Paths for All).
- Very hard to access with machinery and likely to be very expensive

Next steps:

- Technical specification to inform tender
- Formal PROW consultation of private landowners that have previously been supportive of improvements in the area

Related information:

- PROW consultation [ITEM NO: 3 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/ITEM-NO-3)

- Example boardwalk spec www.pathsforall.org.uk/mediaLibrary/other/english/outdoor-accessibility-guidance-2023.pdf

4.4 Lees Road PROW to Hartshead Pike (1.3km)

Location: SD 94972 02400 to SD 94124 02328

Landowner: Michael Hughes, Hannah Hernon and Nicola Marshall (Tameside Council)

Aim: Improve condition and accessibility of footpaths



Fig 8: Section 4 of The Medlock Way

Issue:

- Poor condition of footpath
- Insufficient signage for route
- Waterlogged and impassable sections of footpath



Fig 9: Areas that are almost impassable due to poor path condition

Proposed Solution:

- Install fingerposts (///achieving.sweep.offers, ///plays.stale.showed, ///urgent.trunk.backup, ///theme.name.vibrates, ///panic.apron.tall)

- Remove redundant stile or replace gate (///move.liner.flesh)
- Install kissing gate in gap onto main road (///limbs.speak.races)
- Install bridge over brook (///they.nasal.round)
- Extend boardwalk (///plant.trendy.strict)
- Install boardwalk (///silver.expose.those)



Fig 10: Proposed fingerpost locations (white), location for kissing gate installation and stile removal/replacement

Proposed Costs:

- Supply and install timber finger posts, 5 x £450 = £2,250.00
- Supply and install kissing gate, 1 x £750 = £750.00

Considerations:

- Coordination with Tameside Trail stakeholders.
- Livestock management and accessibility.

Next steps:

- Formal PROW consultation with private landowners
- Research land use on terms of farming
- Identify funding stream

Associated documents

- Section 4 – Detailed Design Boardwalk
- Section 4 – Detailed Design Fingerposts
- Section 4 – Detailed Design Kissing Gate
- Section 4 – Detailed Design Stile

4.5 Park Bridge Road to Bardsley Canal (680m)

Location: SD 93501 01769 to SD 92990 01357, SD 93232 01465

Landowner: Liam Kennedy and Nik Anderson (Oldham Council), Baugh Bros (red eclipse on map - approx. SD 93073 01388)

Aim: Improve accessibility along footpath and bridlepath, reduce flooding and path damage, create DLL GCN

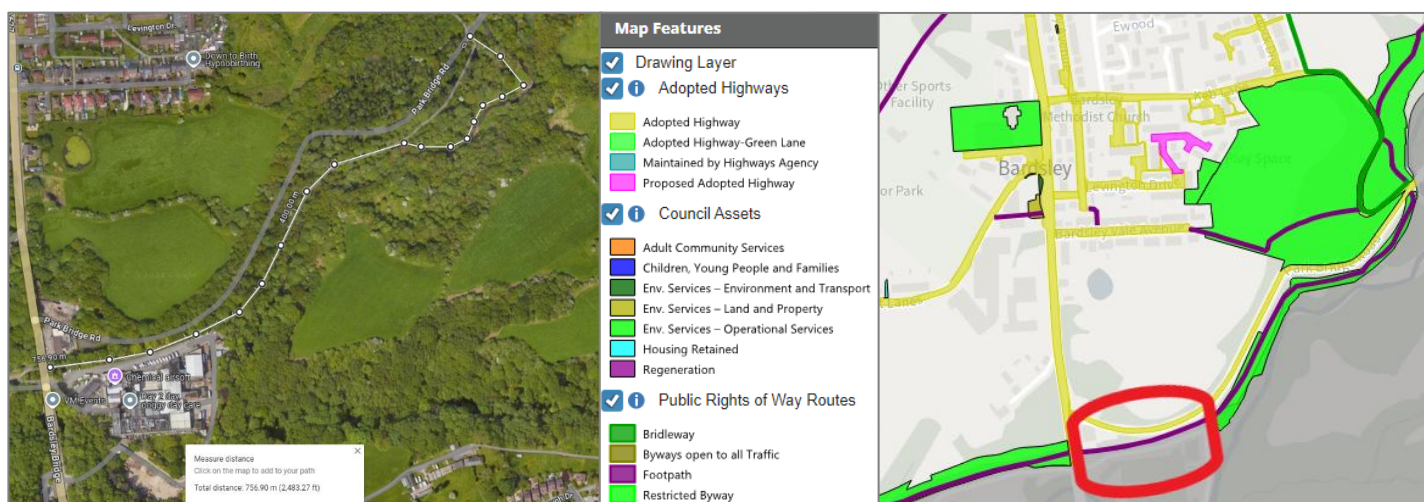


Fig 11 Section 5 of The Medlock Way

Issue:

- Wet footpath
- Inaccessible areas of path due to flooding
- Damaged fencing



Fig 12: Areas that are almost impassable due to poor path condition, damaged fencing

Proposed Solution:

- Repair drainage rut
- Allow for drainage works to address surface water from road crossing path
- Remove redundant timber gate posts
- Repair/infill rail fencing
- Resurface bridlepath and footpath
- Excavate 170sqm for District Level Licensing Pond (Great Crested Newt) SD 93232 01465, The area is in the SOA for DLL ponds. The recommendations for pond creation are 150m₂ with a depth of at least 1.5m.

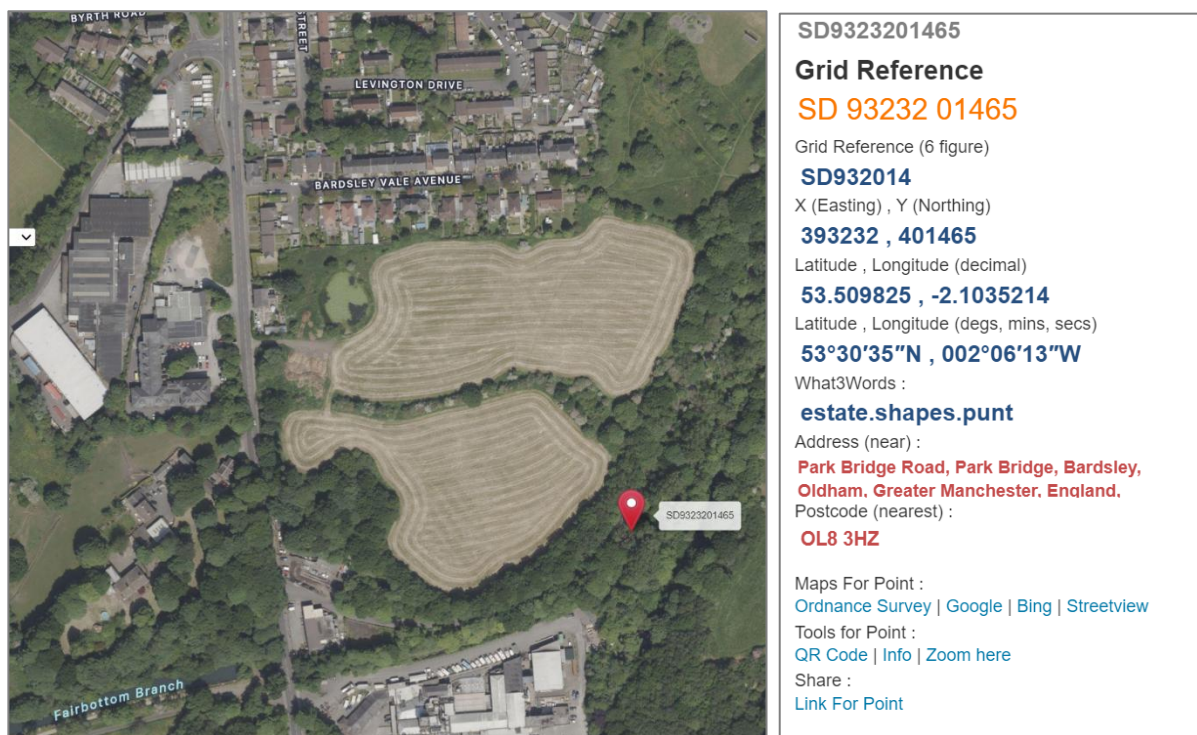


Fig 13: Location of proposed GCN pond

Proposed Costs:

- Contractor Preliminaries £5,750.00
- Clearance Work £4245.00
- Path works £78,545.25
- Pond works £7,500.00

Considerations:

- Site users want to 'see' a physical difference/improvement which will be best achieved using cost-effective drainage solutions, and visible resurfacing of pathways.
- Private landowner: in the past Oldham Council have written to landowners advising of intent to carry out works including details of what the scheme entails, timescales and proposed outcome, and advise landowners to get in touch by a given date if they have any objections to the proposal - in most cases they don't hear anything back so proceed. As Highway Authority (for the Definitive Footpath at least) Oldham have a duty to maintain the surface.

Next steps:

- Oldham Council apply for Suez Grantscape Communities Fund closing dates: 14 May 2025
- £57,500 (£7,500 third party contribution funding to release £50,000 [Suez Grantscape Community fund](#), initial fund could be covered by DLL funding – Focus 2)
- Apply for up to £75,000 from Veolia Environmental Trust [Habitat and Biodiversity Grant Funding](#) closing dates: open 27 February – 3 April 2025 (Landowner/Local Authority eligible)
- Potential to apply for Biffa Partnership Award [Home Page - Biffa Award](#) under rebuilding Biodiversity (10% initial match to release £10,000-£75,000) but not applied for by local authority
- Mandy Elford (GMEU) happy to attend site visit and ensure the site was suitable for DLL pond
- £20,000 housing developer money for GCN mitigation, £7,500 of which would be third party contributor funding for path works [How to join the great crested newt district level licensing scheme - GOV.UK](#)

Associated documents:

- Section 5 – Cost Estimate
- Section 5 – Detailed Design Fingerposts

- Section 5 – Detailed Design Footpath
- Section 5 – Detailed Design GCN DLL Pond
- Section 5 – Proposal Drawing
- Section 5 – Suez Communities Fund Application Form (half completed)

4.6 Daisy Nook Country Park (10m)

Location: SD 92006 00475

Landowner: Alister Storey and Robin Durkin (Oldham Council)

Aim: Improve pedestrian safety with road crossing along the Medlock Way



Fig 14: Section 6 of The Medlock Way

Issue:

- No suitable road crossing signage or safe location to cross
- Not viable to get a formal crossing on site due to restricted nature on the site and the approaches

Proposed Solution:

- Install informal crossing with drop kerbs and tactiles
- Highlight crossing with red textureflex with advance warning signs of pedestrians in road

Proposed Costs:

- Installation of informal pedestrian crossing £6,000.00

Considerations:

- Stakeholder engagement for approvals and funding.

Next Steps:

- Identify funding stream

Associated documents:

- Section 6 – Cost Estimate

4.7 Hollinwood Branch Canal (1.7km, SD 92004 00474 to SJ 90990 99266)

Location: SD 92004 00474 to SJ 90990 99266

Landowner: Michael Hughes and Nicola Marshall (Tameside Council)

Aim: Improve accessibility along canal towpath, restore damaged structures, improve overall condition of path

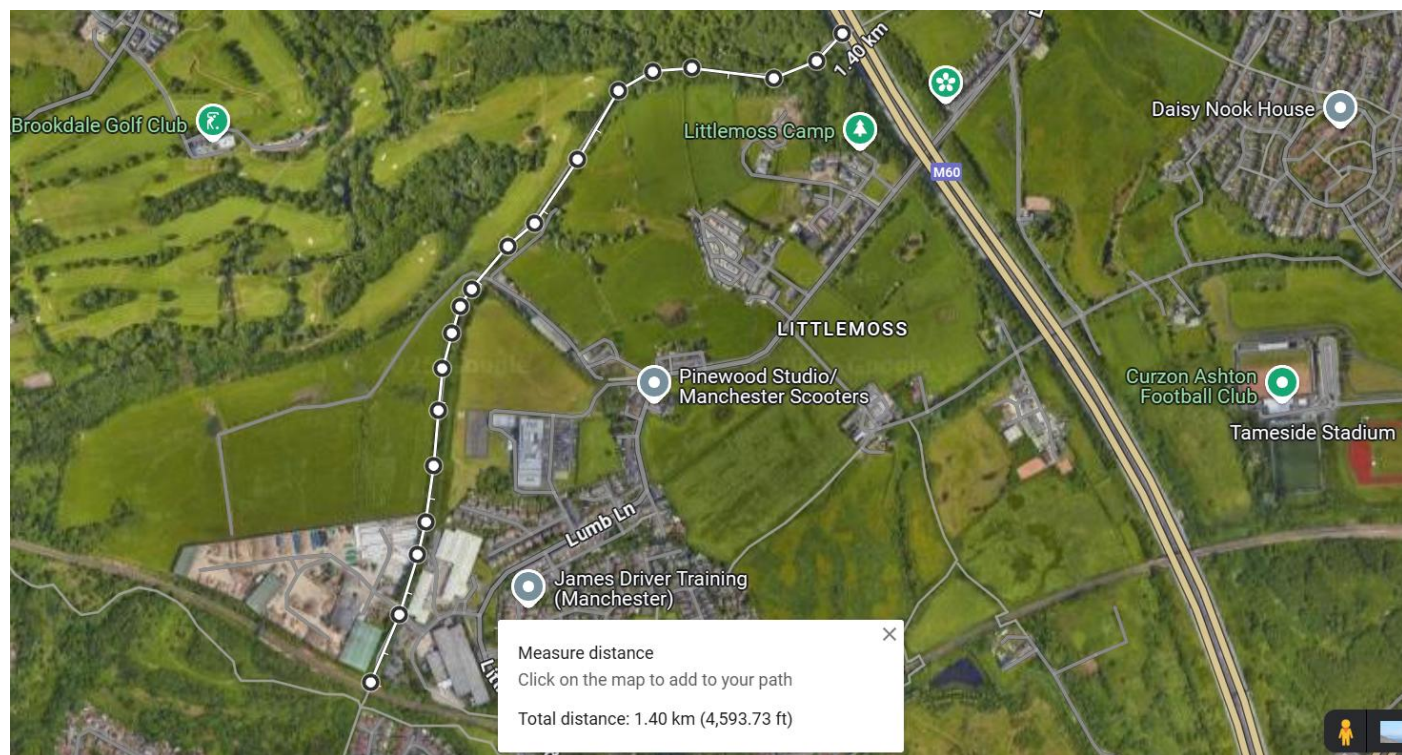


Fig 15: Section 7 of The Medlock Way

Issue:

- Outdated information/interpretation boards
- Stile and concrete barrier causing path to be inaccessible by cycle
- Footpath under bridge too high blocking cyclist access
- Gaps in bordering hedgerow onto farmer's land
- Trees in canal channel
- Encroaching scrub
- Litter in towpath
- Uneven and damaged footpath



Fig 16: Areas of towpath that are damaged, and area for inaccessible by cycle

Proposed Solution:

- Replace interpretation boards SJ 91037 99391 (landowner permission not required, content supported by Paul Breslin, Natural England, share new board locations)
- Lower path under the bridge for head height, curb stones would stay in situ SJ 91160 99885
- Replace stile and concrete barrier with kissing gate/stile and fingerpost
- Existing trees in canal wall to be removed and kerb stones to be relaid
- Stands of mature Willow and Alder in canal channel to be removed
- Existing tow path to be resurfaced/relayed
- Encroaching scrub to be cleared
- Laying hedge and gapping up on farmers side of path

Proposed Costs:

- Contractor Preliminaries £5,750.00
- Clearance Work £6,950.00
- Path Works £38,607.00
- Access and signage Works £3,150.00

Considerations:

- Lowering towpath: Consent is needed depending on methodology. Towpath and ramped approach are included in SSSI but not under the bridge. Concern for works to not impact hydrology of canal and cause a leak, need to be sure that the bunding (could be clay) will not be compromised. No records of how the two sides of the canal are connected, assumed there is a pipe/culvert. The main thing is that when the canal is restored/working towards to favourable condition, that these works don't have an adverse effect on the hydrology linking the two parts of the canal.
- Laying hedge: The width of SSSI is up to the mid-line of the hedgerow, so it would need to be included during hedgerow plans.
- Removing trees in channel and canal wall: Consent is needed under ORNEC 11 and 27, potentially 6 and 8 depending on whether you are treating or burning stumps/wood. Natural England would like target areas of Willow and Alder growing in the channel mapped. Re-fuelling of chainsaws to take place outside of SSSI.
- Scrape back of encroachment on path: Consent is needed under ORNEC 4, 11 and maybe 27. Please state that the works will be limited to the towpath for public safety and it will not be widened beyond its current footprint. The citation mentions damp unimproved grassland, but this is really on the western bank.
- Relaying/resurfacing existing towpath: Relaying surface e.g. gritstone as crusher run (avoid limestone-based material). Is this the whole length or patching/levelling? How will it tie into the existing coping stones? Will it be proud or will some of the existing path be removed to account for the levels? Normally Natural England consenting team want to see a data sheet on the material, specifically mentioning its pH. Re-fuelling of chainsaws to take place outside of SSSI.
- ORNEC 4: Mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation, the introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation and changes in the mowing or cutting regime (including hay making to silage and cessation)
- ORNEC 6: Application of pesticides, including herbicides (weedkillers)
- ORNEC 8: Burning and changes in the pattern or frequency of burning, (don't forget about an Environment Agency waste exemption: D7 for burning)
- ORNEC 11: the destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including tree, shrub, herb, hedge, dead or decaying wood or turf
- ORNEC 12: tree and/or woodland management, the introduction of tree and/or woodland management and changes in tree and/or woodland management
- ORNEC 13b: modification of the structure of watercourses (eg the canal, ditches, drains), including their banks and beds, as by re-alignment, re-grading and dredging
- ORNEC 20: extraction of minerals, including peat, topsoil, subsoil, silt and spoil
- ORNEC 22: storage of materials on the site
- ORNEC 26: use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the soil, flora or fauna.

- ORNEC 27: Recreational or other activities likely to damage the soil, flora or fauna.
- Comments from Paul Breslin
 - Are you intending to replace the "stop planks" that maintain the water level?
 - Are you planning on doing work around the outfall structure at the northern end, such as vegetation clearance? Is there a history of the site flooding?
 - For information: when I was last out, I randomly spotted a small patch of sphagnum and cotton grass growing in the canal. I suppose that this is a legacy of the canal cutting through the old moss land. Although it does indicate that the water is clean (predominantly rainfall fed) and that the levels are pretty stable in the reedbed/swamp/fen. I need to give some thought on what our position is on it, but whilst they are not designated features, it is an unusual feature. It would be worth identifying this area and leaving it/do minimal work around it.
 - Also, could you please share with me any inlets or springs that you identify? Similarly, if you see any leaks/breaches that are losing water. Water supply is a big issue for this site, as it is an isolated canal with few sources of water. This would be appreciated and it can only really be seen when working within the canal. I dare say that you might find some interesting features or unknown historical modifications. Again, please let me know if you come across anything like this.
 - The method statements will need to include: access, moving materials through the site (e.g. power barrow), timing (bird nesting season), equipment to be used, where the waste is going (not to be left in the SSSI), storage of materials, etc... A separate observation, but not a Natural England requirement, you'll need to consider how you will safely work underneath the powerlines.
 - My advice is to write one large consent with the necessary supporting information. Are you planning on doing all of this work within one season, or are you thinking of doing it over a number of years? If so, we can issue a consent for over three years.
- Details of SSSI: [SSSI detail](#)
- Consent form: [Give notice and get consent for a planned activity on a SSSI - GOV.UK](#)

Next steps:

- Identify funding stream

Associated documents:

- Section 7 – Cost Estimate
- Section 7 – Detailed Design Fingerposts
- Section 7 – Detailed Design Kissing Gate
- Section 7 – Detailed Design Stile
- Section 7 – Proposal Drawing

4.8 Hiking trail south of Brookdale Golf Course (1.4km)

4.8.1 Focus 1: Dangerous stile

Location: SJ 91157 99888 to SJ 89968 99419

Landowner: Liam Kennedy and Nik Anderson (Oldham Council)

Aim: Improve accessibility along route with the long-term aim of creating a circular route along the canal



Fig 17: Section 8 of The Medlock Way

Issue:

- Bridge washed away and footpath now inaccessible
- Dangerous stiles
- Steep footpath with rotten steps
- No signage for navigation



Fig 18: Damaged structures along Section 8 of The Medlock Way

Proposed Solution:

- Remove/replace stiles (SJ 90963 99784, SJ 91080 99839)
- Install pedestrian bridge that can accommodate large flooding events (SJ 90368 99529)
- Install new steps with sleepers and tread (SJ 90391 99618 to SJ 90708 99728)
- Install fingerposts along route (SJ 90372 99611, SJ 91154 99892)



Fig 18: Proposed location of fingerposts (white), bridge (green), replaced stile (yellow), step renovation (blue)

Proposed Costs:

- Supply of pedestrian bridge, 1 x £3,450 = £3,450.00
- Installation of pedestrian bridge = unconfirmed, provisional £3,500.00
- Removal of metal stile, 1 x £450 = £450.00
- Replace wooden stile, 1 x £750 = £750.00
- Install finger posts, 2 x £450 = £900.00
- Renew steps and tread, 90 x £75 = £7,125.00

Considerations:

- Consult with Environment Agency for flood management. Use sustainable materials to align with climate resilience goals.
- Ford or stepping stones not suitable due to the access of the site and the requirements to redirect flow for works
- [Issue - items at meetings - Definitive Map and Statement Modification Order S53 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Claim to register a Public Footpath at Brookdale Golf Club, Failsworth \(oldham.gov.uk\)](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/issue-items-at-meetings-definitive-map-and-statement-modification-order-s53-wildlife-and-countryside-act-1981-claim-to-register-a-public-footpath-at-brookdale-golf-club-failsworth)

Next steps:

- Identify official landowner and nature of pipe across water
- Identify funding stream
- Discuss permission from EA (main river)

Associated documents

- Section 8 – Detailed Design Fingerposts
- Section 8 – Detailed Design Stile
- Section 8 – Detailed Design Bridge
- Section 8 – Detailed Design Bridge Guidance
- Section 8 – Detailed Design Bridge with Quote
- Section 8 – Proposal Drawing
- Section 8 – Cost Estimate

5. Technical Documents

Section 1 – Detailed Design Fingerposts

Section 2 – Detailed Design Stile

Section 4 – Detailed Design Fingerposts

Section 4 – Detailed Design Kissing Gate

Section 4 – Detailed Design Stile

Section 4 – Detailed Design Boardwalk

Section 5 – Suez Communities Fund Application Form (half completed)

Section 5 – Detailed Design Fingerposts

Section 5 – Detailed Design Footpath

Section 5 – Detailed Design Pond

Section 5 – Proposal Drawing

Section 5 – Cost Estimate

Section 6 – Cost Estimate

Section 7 – Detailed Design Fingerposts

Section 7 – Detailed Design Stile

Section 7 – Detailed Design Kissing Gate

Section 7 – Proposal Drawing

Section 7 – Cost Estimate

Section 8 – Detailed Design Fingerposts

Section 8 – Detailed Design Stile

Section 8 – Detailed Design Bridge

Section 8 – Detailed Design Bridge Guidance

Section 8 – Detailed Design Bridge with Quote

Section 8 – Proposal Drawing

Section 8 – Cost Estimate

6. Environmental and Social Impact

Environmental Benefits:

- Supports biodiversity by creating wildlife corridors and habitats.
- Enhances ecosystem services such as flood mitigation and carbon sequestration.

Social Benefits:

- Improves access to nature for disadvantaged communities.
- Promotes physical activity and mental well-being.
- Strengthens community engagement with conservation efforts.

Potential Risks:

- Disturbance to wildlife during construction.
- Resistance from private landowners or local stakeholders.

7. Recommendations and Next Steps

Technical Specifications:

- Finalise detailed design for installation of pedestrian crossing (section 6)
- Finalise detailed design for installation of bridge (section 8)

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Section 1
 - City of Trees – natural flood management (decide planting scheme)
 - Oldham Council – natural flood management (agree NFM practices/proposed works, written landowner agreement)
 - Local private landowners – preferences/issues/priorities (address unknown issues)
- Section 2
 - Oldham Council – natural flood management (agree NFM practices/proposed works, written landowner agreement)
 - EA – natural flood management (discuss flooding risks/slow the flow priorities)
 - Local private landowners – preferences/issues/priorities (address unknown issues)
- Section 3
 - Tameside Council – funding streams (discuss long term goals/capabilities)
- Section 4
 - Tameside Council – agree proposed works (written landowner agreement)
 - Local private landowners – preferences/issues/priorities (confirm land use/livestock/access)
- Section 5
 - Oldham Council – funding streams (agree application submission, written landowner agreement)
 - Braugh Brothers – delivery of works (inform of works)
 - GMEU – DLL GCN Pond (agree pond location/requirements)
- Section 6
 - Oldham Council – pedestrian crossing (agree detailed design, written landowner agreement)
 - Local site users/Café – pedestrian crossing (inform of works)
- Section 7
 - Tameside Council – delivery of work (written landowner agreement)
 - Natural England – SSSI works (agree delivery practices)
- Section 8
 - Oldham Council – agree proposed works (written landowner agreement)
 - Tameside Council – agree proposed works (written landowner agreement)
 - EA – bridge and river (discuss installation practices, written river works agreement)

Funding Strategy:

- Apply for available funding streams that have already been identified above
- Identify potential funding sources such as:
 - DEFRA grants.
 - Local council budgets.
- Charitable organisations and community fundraising.
- GMCA have previously expressed interest in providing funding to fill gaps
 - Contact: Rachel Morrison rachel.morrison@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Implementation Plan:

- First Priority – develop project timeline and procure subcontractors
 - Section 5 (straightforward, funding is available)
 - Section 6 (affordable, desirable, site user priority)
 - Section 7 (all documentation available, positive feedback from stakeholders)
- Second Priority – arrange discussions with stakeholders to progress
 - Section 1 (straightforward but requires further discussion with stakeholders about natural flood management)
 - Section 8 (works well with section 7 but requires further investigation regarding bridge)
- Third Priority – desk-based studies before discussions
 - Section 2 (requires further investigation of landownership and natural flood management)
 - Section 4 (requires further investigation of landownership)
- Not a priority
 - Section 3 (high input for low output)

8. Conclusion

The Medlock Valley Active Travel Route presents an opportunity to create a transformative, nature-connected experience for local communities. By addressing technical, environmental, and social challenges, this project will contribute to the region's ecological health and social well-being while fostering a deeper connection between people and nature.

The eight sections of the Medlock Valley that have been researched fall into a range of categories:

- Natural Flood Management (sections 1-2)
- Access repair, health and safety (section 3-6)
- Interpretation and signage (section 1-2, 4, 7-8)
- Route creation/enhancement and development (section 5, 7-8)

These themes inform the funding streams accessed for development and progression. Most areas do not lean towards community engagement or involvement, and therefore should either be considered as independent contracted works, or alternatively be integrated into larger workstreams that target both capital works and community involvement.