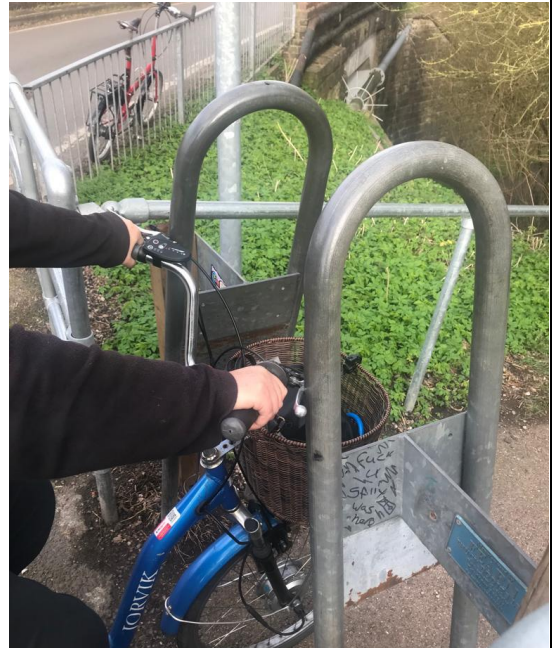
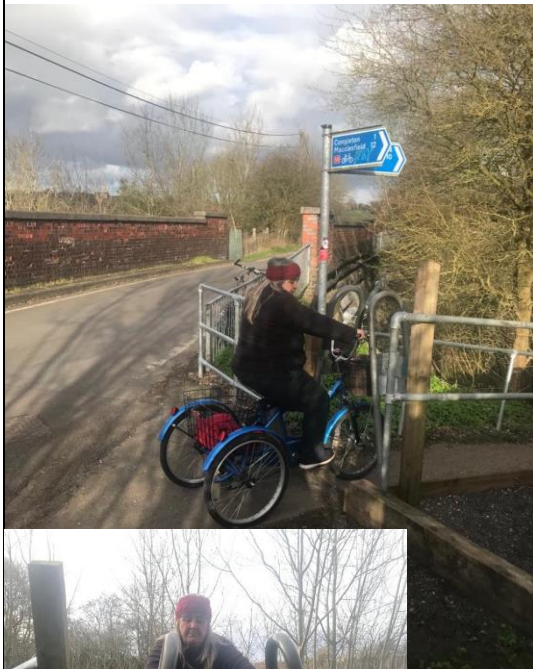


CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Community Committee		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	29 June 20223 7.00 pm	LOCATION	Town Hall, Bridestones
REPORT FROM	Congleton Sustainable Travel Group (part of Congleton Climate Action Group)		
AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE	10. Improving Accessibility at two sites in Congleton – request from Congleton Sustainable Travel Group		
Background	<p>Congleton Sustainability Travel is part of the Congleton Climate Action Group. The group asked if they could submit a question to the Community Committee about inclusion issues that they have encountered that are preventing people with disabilities and young children in double buggies from accessing safe routes for sustainable travel from Bromley Road/Biddulph Valley Way and Ayrshire Way/Bromley Community Centre.</p> <p>As the question was submitted in advance of the papers being sent out, the Chair approved accepting the question as a paper. This enables Councillors to consider the request in advance and to discuss potential action at the meeting.</p>		
Issue (information submitted by the Congleton Sustainable Travel Group)	<p>Congleton Climate Action Group - Congleton Sustainable Travel would like the town council's help in resolving two issues of obstructed access to those with disabilities, and also to young children in double buggies.</p> <p>The group has notified Cheshire East Council (CEC) officers of these breaches of its public sector equality duty (contained in the Equality Act 2010), and its own equality policy but have made little progress to date. These obstructions also breach Congleton town council's equality and inclusion policy.</p> <p><u>The problems:</u></p> <p>1. National Cycle Route 55. Bromley Rd/Biddulph Valley Way access point.</p> <p>An A-frame and motorbike trap obstructs mobility scooters, non-standard cycles (eg trikes), and double buggies, and forces them onto unsuitable local roads to access the route off Brook St (A54, a heavily used main road with many HGVs). This diversion involves a steep hill with parked cars on one side and narrow pavements, plus crossing an A road twice.</p> <p>Sustrans, the custodians of the National Cycle Network, are working to make all these routes fully accessible by removing A frames since they no longer prevent motorbike access, do not prevent access by modern high-powered electric motorbikes used at inappropriate speed, but meanwhile prevent access by legitimate users.</p> <p>The group first contacted CEC's Countryside Services regarding this on 27 March 2023 and their most recent response dated 3 May 2023 states they are waiting for Highways/Legal dept input.</p>		

1. Bromley Rd/Biddulph Valley Way



Map key:

Red dot = access point on Bromley Rd for the former railway line (Biddulph Valley Way) towards Biddulph and beyond.

Black line=Biddulph Valley Way – also part of National Cycle Route 55 from the red dot eastwards

Blue line=Bromley Rd – part of National Cycle Route 55

Red line=the nearest option for those obstructed to access the railway line and ultimately the 55.

2. Bromley play park and community centre access point on Ayrshire Way

The kissing gate is now left open after the Sustainable Travel Group and Cllr Suzie Akers Smith spoke to Ansa, who maintains the site, to remove the jammed RADAR-operated lock. However, the residual structure obstructs wider double buggies and mobility scooters, and other mobility aids such as trikes, including the Beartown Rickshaw. This obstruction forces users on a long diversion including Park Lane (A527, a busy main road) so the group would like to see the structure removed.

The response on 24 April 2023 from CEC via a Freedom of Information request was that there was no plan to change the situation. A month previously, Cllr Akers Smith had received a response stating that removing the residual railings would open up access to an unfenced play park, and that there would need to be a replacement gate that involved cost. However, the play park already has open access with a permanently open vehicle gate on the Edinburgh Rd/Cloud View entrance, a gappy boundary hedge adjoining Bromley woods, and the now permanently wide open kissing gate.



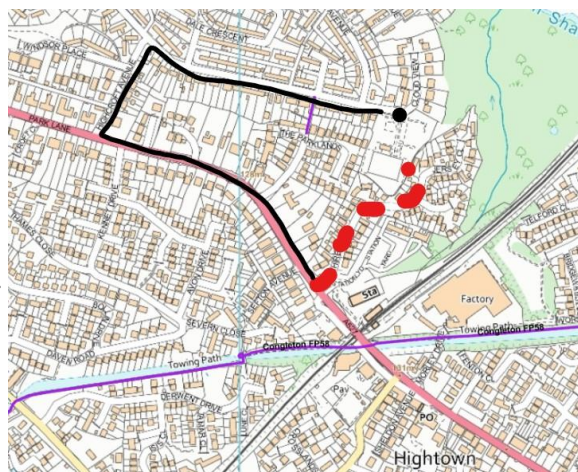
Map key:

Purple line between Edinburgh Rd and The Parklands=footpath (but with steps at one end).

Red dashed line=Ayrshire Way

Red dot=kissing gate access point for the play park

Black dot=access point for play park



	<p>Black line=only option between Hightown/park (at the black dot) for those obstructed at the red dot.</p> <p><u>The solutions as suggested by the Sustainable Travel Group</u></p> <p>1. The removal of the A-frame and the adjoining motorbike trap at the Bromley Rd access point would give access to legitimate users.</p> <p>There would probably need to be a strategically placed bollard to restrict car access, while allowing tricycles, wider non-standard bicycles and double buggies through.</p> <p>2. The removal of the two protruding kissing gate railings would cost little since they are only held in place by padlocks that could be cut through if the keys are lost. Railing removal would leave one trip hazard – a socket that could be removed or cut flush with the ground.</p> <p>REQUEST</p> <p>Could Congleton Town Council assist CEC in meeting its public sector equality duty by providing its own staff to remove these obstacles as a matter of urgency?</p> <p>If not can it reiterate to CEC officers that CEC is in breach of equality laws and policies, and needs to implement changes as a matter of urgency?</p>
Recommendations	That CTC Officers investigate this issue to see if the solution requested by Congleton Sustainable Travel Group is achievable.
Financial Implications	Costings will need to be obtained from CEC/Ansa if work needs to be commissioned and to understand if CTC staff are able to assist. If costings are involved this will need to be submitted to the relevant committee. CEC is ultimately responsible for this area and will need to carry out a risk assessment.
Environmental Implications	Actions which make sustainable travel for all more accessible is in line with the Town Council's current business plan. Care needs to be taken to make sure in solving one problem it doesn't create other problems.
Equality and Diversity Impact	Making safe routes accessible to all is in line with the Town Council Equality and Diversity impacts, as long as it remains safe for all. .
PROPOSALS	For officers to investigate the costs and implications of carrying out the actions and report back to the committee in August.