

Access improvements

During the development phase of the project, people were asked questions about their town's rivers. One of the main things people disliked about them was the lack of riverside footpaths and increased access was the second most popular aspiration after reduced litter.

Access to urban rivers is not always straightforward due to their confinement between buildings and beneath roads. As such, alternative ways of increasing access to rivers were devised, both physically, visually and intellectually.

Physical access to the river was increased on the outskirts of the town by installing a bridge to connect footpaths in the Brun Valley Forest Park in partnership with Burnley Borough Council. Prior to the bridge installation, the river was frequently forded by horse riders and bikers, which caused bank erosion. The bridge now offers access to all footpath users. Elsewhere, another bridge was constructed by volunteers from the British Army, a kilometre of new footpath was laid and a further 2 kilometres of existing footpath was improved.

Visual access to the rivers was enhanced at a number of locations, most notably from the road looking down onto the weir with the newly installed fish and eel passes. The old railings were renovated and viewing windows

were cut, which were fitted with toughened Perspex glass. In other locations, stonework and chainsaw carvings were installed to draw the public's attention to their rivers in places where they would otherwise go unnoticed.

Intellectual access was improved through the use of interpretation boards and walking guides. The interpretation boards were eye-catching and depicted the type of wildlife that would be expected to inhabit Burnley's rivers. The walking guides provided more detail about the heritage of Burnley's rivers, how their power was once harnessed for industry and some of the issues they face at present. The 'Treasure Trails' guide was designed as a treasure hunt suitable for young people to enjoy, whereas the 'Geotrails' guide was aimed at adults. About the Geotrails guide, one local resident commented;

"On reading the notes on the URES Geotrail, I did the Shedden walk the other day and found it very interesting. I have run around that area for years and never knew anything about it."

Making these access improvements has left a lasting legacy for the people of Burnley, increasing their enjoyment of their town's natural asset, helping them to see more wildlife, encouraging them to be more active outdoors and inspiring them to take better care of their rivers.

