



## **Date: 12<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

### **Inspired by a Friends of the Trans Pennine Trail Meeting**

When I took over as Friends Chair, the afternoon following our meeting I cycled from Barnsley to Doncaster on my Brompton bike and found it pretty hard going. I therefore resolved to make route surfaces a key focus of my efforts. Although I can't claim to have done any tarmac spreading myself it seems others had the same vision as me and recent visits have shown this section and many others to be much improved. Here's a description of the ride.

Leaving Barnsley Interchange by the Eastern side (the interchange overbridge is now the most direct route from the TPT into the town centre, since the closing of the level crossing) and negotiating the A61 slip roads with care, a shared use path takes you down to the access point for the Trail. Although this point tends to attract some litter (but is much improved since local litter picking groups have sprung up everywhere) don't be deterred and make your way up the ramp onto the former rail line (a walking route offers a link to the town centre here) You can see how this rail line left the main Sheffield - Barnsley line here. Here you have a steady route downhill into the Dove Valley. Some will wryly remember the proposal to re-imagine Barnsley as a Tuscan hill-top town of the '90s.



Reaching Stairfoot, where the route to Leeds (67) and a branch to Cudworth diverge, you have a good example of a sustainable transport running alongside the congested main road. The surface here is mostly flexi pave, which offers a "hard-enough" surface for cyclists while being quite forgiving on boots and horses hooves. The corridor continues with the evidence of the post-industrial regeneration of the area on either side. 62, the TPT "proper" joins us at Wombwell and you can imagine the heavily laden coal trains heading up the grade towards Penistone and the

Woodhead here. Some of this traffic was bound for Cheshire, and the railway turntable at Godley, restored by our volunteers, was where steam engines took over from, latterly, electric locos, to carry the trucks forward.

Shortly after this 67 leaves us to make its way south to Sheffield and Chesterfield and you now have a choice of leaving points - the first one is a Flexipave route alongside the A6195 while the original route of the Elsecar greenway is still available. Pressing onwards we enter the realm of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the difference is very apparent - hard surfaces give way to gravel, draconian access barriers and boulders block your way and there is a general air of dereliction. We know that councils are hard-pressed but Barnsley and Doncaster have found the money to keep their sections in good condition - Rotherham needs to step up. Thankfully, before long we are under the auspices of Doncaster MBC. A respite awaits though as you can drop into the Old Moor wetlands centre for refreshments and a spot of ornithology if you are so inclined. It's great to be able to visit this wildlife haven where there were once marshalling yards and collieries. The Dove joins the Dearne at Manvers and they continue onwards to make their contribution to the mighty Don.



We continue amongst wetlands towards Bolton-on-Deerne. Originally the trail continued on-road through the town, passing the station (trains between Leeds and Sheffield) and returning to farm tracks. Now, a dedicated route continues with only one busy road to cross until we reach Harlington. Here, a small park on the site of the former colliery is worth a visit. The route doglegs to avoid a busy stretch of road, then down a rather pot-holed lane to run alongside the river. Some recent works have led to a big improvement in the trail here. This is part of the former line to Goldthorpe and I wonder whether there is scope to open more of this as a trail? I hope this has inspired you to get out on the Trail soon and explore what the TPT has to offer.

Simon Geller - Chair, Friends of the Trans Pennine Trail

