

Long-term impacts of barrier redesign – a case study in York

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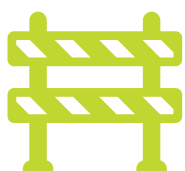
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Key findings

Key findings from path user counts and interviews include:



Every day at each site, an average of 45 trips were counted on modes such as pushchairs, wheelchairs and cargo bikes that may not have been able to access the path before barriers were changed.



Since the changes, both interviewees using non-standard cycles could access more of the path and therefore use it more frequently to get to work, the hospital or other personal business.



Over a two-month period, only two motorbikes and two quadbikes were recorded at each site, representing 0.002% of trips counted.



For every illegal trip counted, 22,212 trips were also counted of people using legitimate modes that benefit from increased ease of access since the changes.

Motorcycle use was not a concern for local residents interviewed. All were happy with the redesign of the barriers, and most were using the path more as a result.



About half of those interviewed either knew people who now use non-standard cycles or mobility aids on the path who could not previously or thought diversity of these modes had increased.

Introduction

Access control barriers on cycle and walking routes attempt to restrict access of unauthorised motorised vehicles such as cars, vans motorbikes, mopeds and quadbikes. However, they often also prevent legitimate users, such as people using non-standard cycles, mobility scooters and wheelchair from accessing the path due to their narrow widths or protruding shape which can be difficult to negotiate. In addition to their exclusionary impact, these barriers can cast a negative light on public spaces and contribute (ironically) to increased levels of anti-social behaviour.

Foss Islands path in York is one of many places that Sustrans chose to remove and redesign barriers. By 2016, around 30 barriers were removed or redesigned from the path to make it more inclusive and accessible to a wider range of users.

Barrier's policy context

Background

In 2015/16, an independent audit of the National Cycle Network reported that 52% of issues recorded on traffic-free sections were due to barriers, pinch points and other obstructions that reduced flow and access .

Despite many barriers being installed to deter anti-social behaviour and motorbikes², there is limited evidence to prove their effectiveness³, whilst we know they prevent the legitimate access of people using adaptive cycles, wheelchairs, hand-cycles, mobility scooters, tandems, trikes, cargo bikes, running frames, buggies and horses . This disproportionately affects older people, young families and disabled people .

Barriers prevent many groups from being active and getting around without a car. Many disabled people use cycling to support mental and physical health , and as a vital form of independence and mobility if they find cycling easier than walking⁷ This is especially important as some people are unable to drive due to a medical condition such as epilepsy but can use a standard cycle .

Wheels for

infrastructure is the greatest barrier to cycling for disabled cyclists, ahead of lack of parking and storage and cost . More specifically gates, A-frames and poor-quality cycleways often have narrow widths or more difficult to pass through using longer non-

¹ Sustrans, Paths for Everyone, 2018

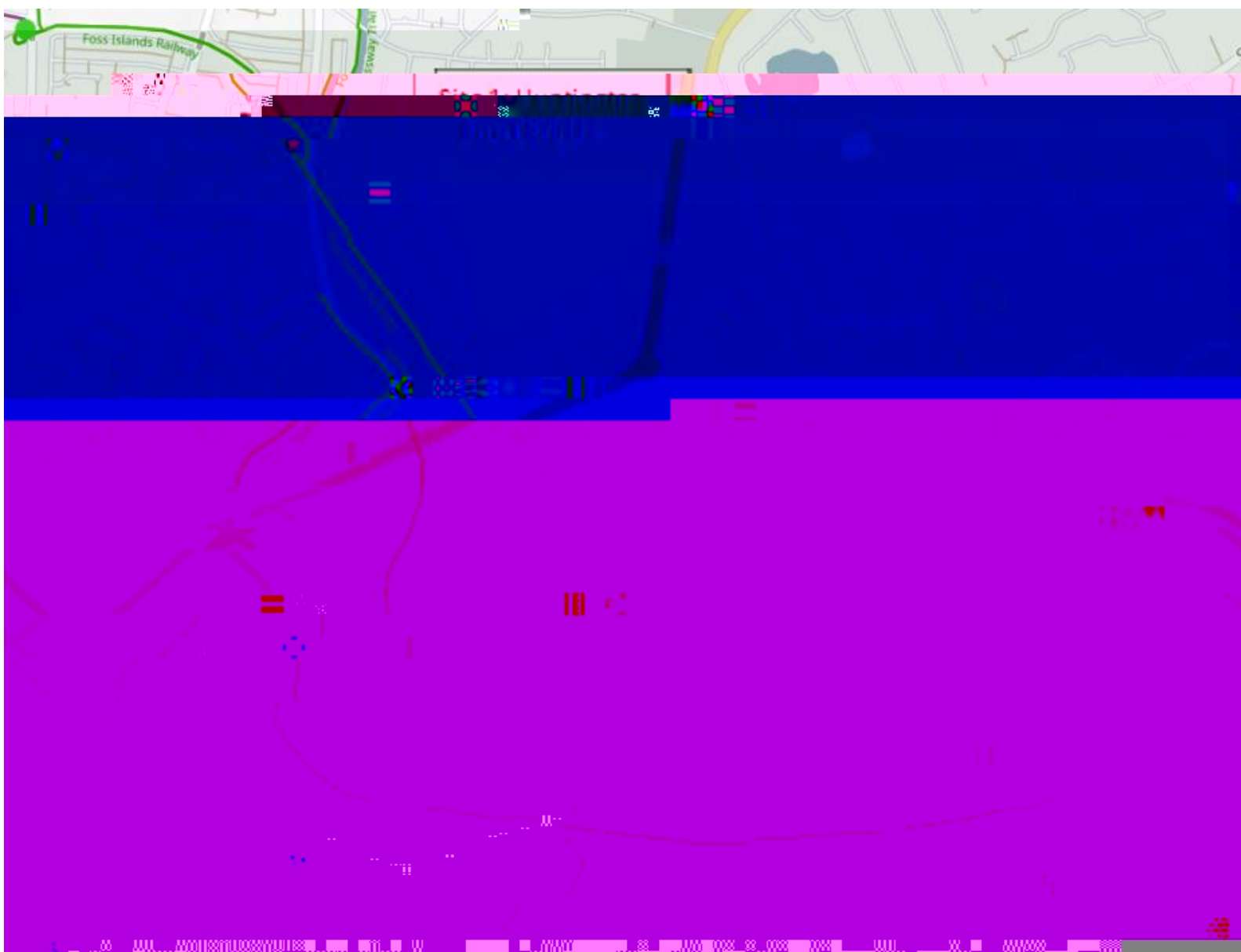


Figure 3– Map showing the Foss Islands path and locations of the two VMCs

Figure 4 – A barrier on the Foss Islands path before changes were made (c) 2ade

Themes in interviews

Convenience and accessibility

All interviewees expressed that they were happy with the removal of barriers, but the degree to which this affected their path use varied greatly. At one end of the spectrum, the barriers were described as a [redacted] did not deter use. Up from this, some postulated that they had subconsciously used the path [redacted] caused bottlenecks. On the other end of the spectrum, a non-standard cycle user who now uses the path 3-4 times per week to travel to work, on personal business and for exercise did not regularly use the path before 2016 as he could not access it at key points.

[redacted] before because I
it where I wanted on my trike.

Others have similarly started using the path in different ways, for example, cycling with grandchildren on the path or using a cargo bike to

Motorbikes

Motorcycles using the path was not a concern for those interviewed, with only three of those interviewed having ever seen a motorbike on the path themselves. This is a higher proportion than you would expect, considering that only 4 illegitimate vehicles were counted on the route over a two-month period. This may reflect the considerable time spent on the path by those interviewed or that one motorbike can be seen or heard by many people and news of it can travel far beyond eye witnesses.

One user who lived on the path said he could see motorbikes on the path from his house, but he could not specify the frequency as he is

flooding which were reported on various sections of the path, but especially between Derwenthorpe and Tang Hall Lane.

Where resurfacing has taken place, sometimes it is only done for half

Conclusion

This report has deepened our understanding of the long-term impacts of barrier removal on the Foss Islands Path.

All local path users said the removal of barriers was a positive change and many increased their use of the path or changed the way they used it as a result. For example, by taking grandchildren on the path or using a cargo bike. Both people interviewed who use non-standard cycles were able to access more of the path since the changes, which facilitated both exercise and everyday journeys.

Our count data showed that approximately 45 trips were counted daily at each site using modes that may not have been able to access