

PARK & RIDER?

Redbridge Cycling is keen to hear your feedback on proposals to open new cycle routes through Wanstead Park. **Gill James** and **Haydn Powell** report on an often contentious subject

The last few months have been tough for everyone, so it is good to have silver linings. During lockdown, Wanstead Park was a haven to those wishing to get some fresh air and exercise. Park wardens report a 122% rise in visitor numbers.

For the climate crisis, the exponential growth in the popularity of cycling has been another real positive.

At present, a 1950s by-law restricts cycling in the park to a 200m stretch from the entrance at Wanstead Park Avenue up to the tea hut, then bearing left along the northern edge of the Heronry Pond. Cycling is forbidden in all other parts of the park, but the signposting is, at best, erratic.

The Friends of Wanstead Parklands Facebook page witnessed some lively discussion, including complaints about cyclists not sticking to the sole designated route. Offline, users have also reported more serious incidents, including an altercation between a cyclist and a dog walker, and bikes being ridden in Chalet Wood, home to a notable colony of bluebells, which are easily damaged by trampling.

Since the park's keepers began returning to work, the by-laws have been more rigorously enforced, notably around the Ornamental Water, where cycling is off limits.

At a meeting in July, the Friends of Wanstead Parklands committee members discussed the possibilities of expanding cycling in

the park. The current situation is an area of dissatisfaction for all parties. Cycling has become a free-for-all, which is antagonising some pedestrians. In contrast, government and local council support for increased use of bikes has stoked demand for improved cycle routes through the park.



The Friends of Wanstead Parklands committee supported, in principle, the opening up of a shared-use route between the gate at Wanstead Park Avenue to the gate at Warren Road. This would make a good general 'artery' route for crossing the park.

Other proposed shared routes which Redbridge Cycling would like considered are:

- The wide path between the River Roding and the Ornamental Water, connecting Warren Road with an entry from the Ilford side of the park. This route is good for family cycling.
- A small section of pathway from the southern tip of the Ornamental Lake to the

tea hut, north of Perch Pond. This would complete a circular leisure cycle route, which would be a tremendous benefit to safe family cycling. Resurfacing would also improve access for wheelchair users.

Redbridge Cycling wants to hear your views on the concept of new cycling routes around Wanstead Park.

To submit your views on the concept of new cycling routes around Wanstead Park, email wansteadpark.org.uk@gmail.com or leave your comments on the Friends of Wanstead Parklands Facebook page at [wanstead.com/fwp](https://www.facebook.com/wansteadpark/)