

The Friends of Hockley Viaduct

The City of Winchester Trust had campaigned for over twenty years for the viaduct to be properly maintained and brought into public use. Former chairman Michael Carden commented:

"We saw in the Hampshire Chronicle that the Army had agreed to a request from Winchester Council to blow up the viaduct as a training exercise.... I wrote on behalf of the Trust to Field Marshall Lord Bramall (of Bushfield)... he assured me that the Army would never act in a case like this if the matter were locally controversial, so the offer had been withdrawn. He finished his letter with the words 'good luck with the defence of Winchester'."

In 2007 a local Friends of Hockley Viaduct Group was set up to lobby for the structure to be properly preserved and for its future to be properly planned. The Friends regularly took local leaders to see the structure, keeping it in the local media and eventually persuading the City Council to allocate £500,000 towards essential repairs. This sum has since been almost doubled by contributions from Hampshire County Council, from Government through Sustrans and from the LEADER rural funding programme in order to integrate the viaduct into National Cycle Route 23.

The Friends also paid for the salvaging of the lattice mast signal from Network Rail following a tip-off from the South Western Circle, and are supporting the next phase of the project which will see interpretation panels and other features added to the route.



The signal gantry before and after



The Friends of hockley viaduct Group



George Beckett on one of the visits to the viaduct

The Viaduct Story

1880 - The viaduct, also called the Twyford Viaduct, was designed by engineer W R Galbraith and built by the London and South Western Railway (LSWR). The viaduct provided a link from the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway (DNSR), to the London South Western Railway's (LSWR) main line.

1891 - The line was planned as a quicker route from the Midlands to the docks at Southampton, and opened between Didcot and Newbury..

1880

1890

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

1885 - Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway opened the extension to a new station at Winchester (Chesil) in 1885 but finances could not be raised for the continuation to Southampton. The LSWR stepped in and built a line from Winchester (Chesil) to their own main line at Shawford, where DN&S trains could use the main line into Southampton. As part of the deal, GWR locomotives had to be replaced by LSWR locos at Winchester.



1914 - In the First World War the viaduct was in the main supply route to France. Huge camps sprang up around Winchester with a branch line to Avington.

1942 - In the Second World War the line was closed to passengers but used to carry military traffic for the invasion of Europe. In the year prior to D-Day 16,000 trains crossed Hockley Viaduct's single track joining the main line to Southampton at Shawford Junction onto the new loop line to Eastleigh.

1923 - Set up of the Big Four - a name used to describe the four largest railway companies in the United Kingdom in the period 1923-1947.

The Big Four were:

- Great Western Railway (GWR)
- London, Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS)
- London and North Eastern Railway (LNER)
- Southern Railway (SR)

1960 - The viaduct was last used by the railway in the 1960s with the Newbury to Winchester and Southampton passenger service finishing in March 1960.

1966 - Freight services lingered on into the mid 1960s when the line closed to all traffic in 1966.

1968 - Winchester City Council then constituted as The Mayor Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Winchester, acquired the Viaduct from the British Railways Board as part of a conveyance of old railway land on 15 January 1968. Applications for statutory designation were rejected in 1984, 1990, 1997 and 2005. A plan for the Army to blow it up is rejected.

1998 - WCC Council commissioned a feasibility report: the 'Hockley Viaduct Access Project' included a condition survey, structural assessment and costings. This report was updated in 2005 by consulting engineers Waterman Civils and set out three options for repairing the viaduct (minimum, maintenance or desirable repairs) ranging from £569,100 to £1,066,100.

2007 - The Friends of Hockley Viaduct Trust was established to lobby for the preservation and future maintenance of the structure.

2011 - WCC Council affirm their commitment to retaining the Hockley Viaduct as a feature of local heritage interest; support in principle for the completion of National Cycle Route Network Route 23, as an integral part of the South of Winchester Park and Ride project and an important link to the South Downs Way. Work begins on the project.

2013 - February 26th 2013: Official opening of Hockley Viaduct as part of National Cycle Route Network Route 23, with Olympic Gold Medallist Dani King.

The Hockley Viaduct - A Short History

An impressive structure, spanning the River Itchen and the M3 motorway, the Hockley Viaduct is a lasting reminder of the heyday of the rail transport network.

The viaduct once linked the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway line with the London and South Western Railway (LSWR) main line which connected all the major towns and cities in Hampshire.

Consisting of 33 arches, it is over 600 metres long. It is largely constructed of concrete, but with brickwork arches and parapets. The viaduct was built by the firm of Galbraith and Church under the supervision of W L Galbraith, who had completed several mass concrete railway viaducts in the West Country during 1889 and 1890.



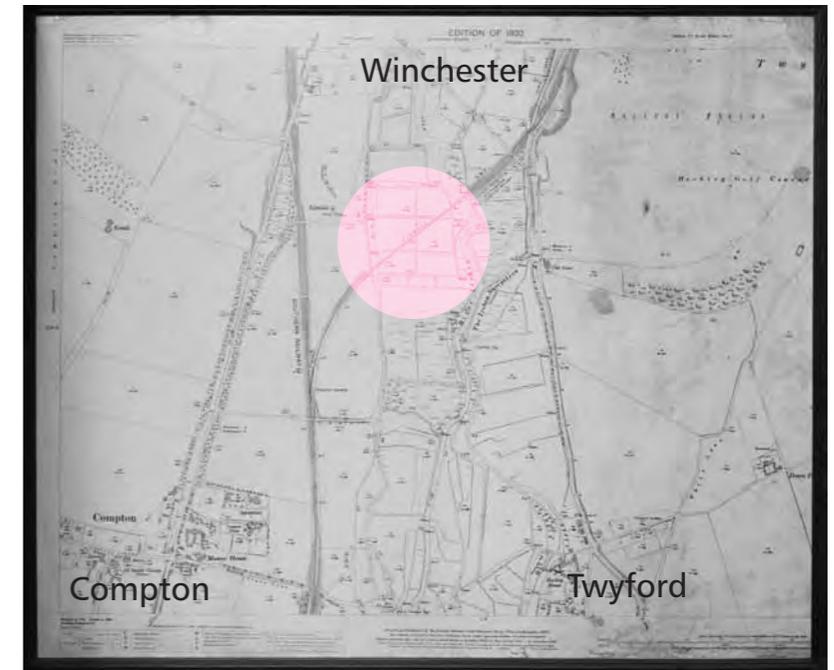
Painting of train crossing Viaduct.

The railway line opened in 1891. It was closed to passengers in 1960, and to freight in 1966, under the Beeching Axe. Winchester City Council, then constituted as The Mayor Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Winchester, acquired the viaduct from the British Railways Board as part of a conveyance of old railway land on 15 January 1968.

Until recently, the viaduct had been in a state of disrepair, although well used by local dog walkers and much loved as one of Winchester's heritage gems. In 2013, it takes on a new lease of life as part of the National Cycle Route Network.



full length shot of viaduct.



Old map showing London and South Western Railway with Viaduct highlighting in red.



Chesil Station.

Sustrans and the National Cycle Route Network

Sustrans was founded in 1977 to help people travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. Now a leading charity, the organisation works with families, communities, policy makers and other agencies to encourage and enable people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys they make every day.

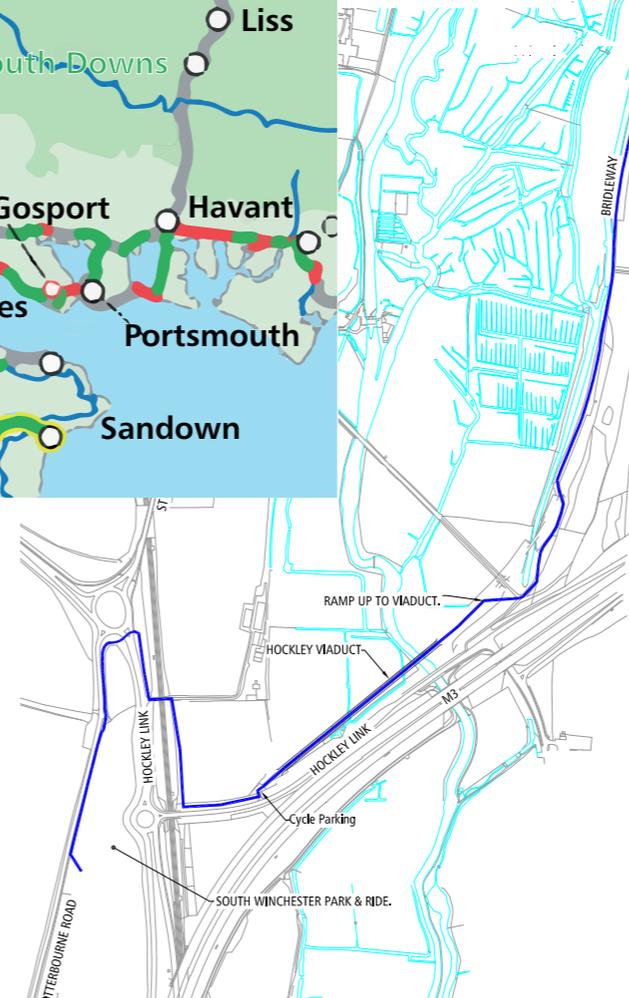
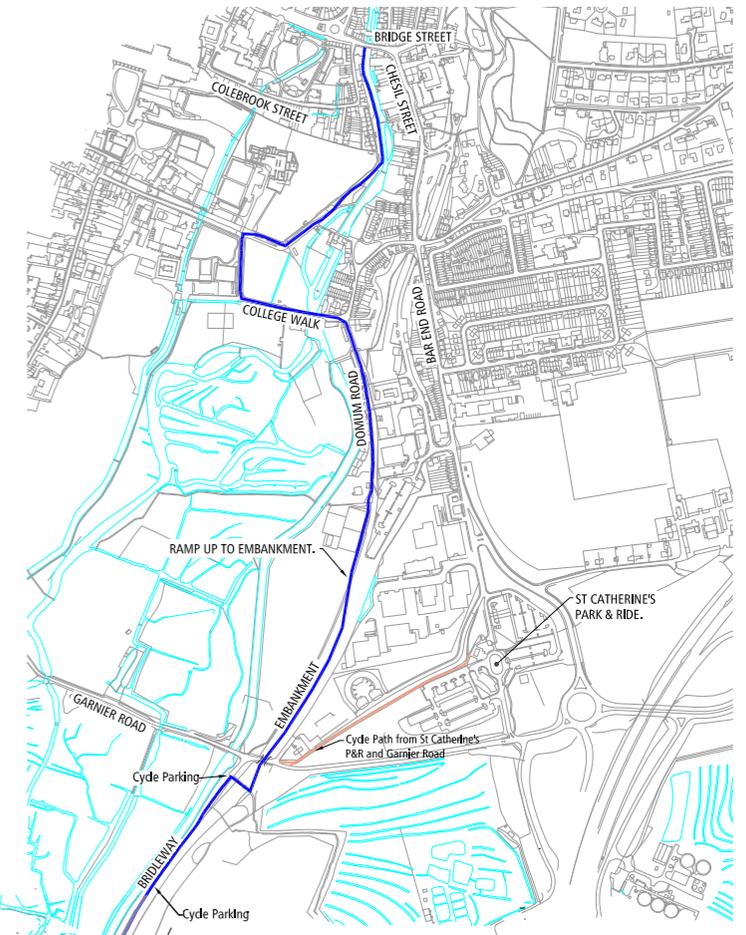
The first route which was created by Sustrans was the Bristol and Bath Railway Path, a 17-mile traffic-free trail along a disused railway. The charity went on to set out plans for a national network of routes in 1995 with a grant from the then newly-created National Lottery. Routes are a mixture of on-road and traffic-free. The length and popularity of the network has grown enormously, and it now carries over a million walking and cycling journeys daily and passes within a mile of 57% of the population.

The refurbishment of the Hockley Viaduct created an opportunity to complete the final stretch of National Cycle Route Network Route 23 which now connects Reading all the way to Southampton, and on to Sandown in the Isle of Wight.

The section through Winchester is one of the most exciting, running alongside the River Itchen, making use of parts of the old railway embankment and – of course – passing over the Hockley Viaduct.



- On road sections
- Large traffic-free sections
- Proposed routes



cycling on local stretch of the National Cycle Route

Restoring the Viaduct

As part of an eighteen month project, the viaduct has been carefully restored and the onward links to National Cycle Route 23 developed.

Water had seeped into the viaduct, filling the cavity between the cement core and the outer brickwork, creating pressure on the bricks and leaving them permanently wet. There was serious damage to the mortar, caused by the roots of ivy and buddleia plants which were flourishing on the exterior of the viaduct. The parapet walls were crumbling, and coping stones falling off: some still lie in the river beneath. The works often required specialist skills, and were carried out in a way which ensured minimum disruption to local wildlife.

New decking was installed and vegetation was cleared along the trackbed and further afield, to prevent future damage. Then, to complete the links to Route 23, ramps were created onto the railway embankment and scrub was cleared along almost two miles of the path.

The project would not have been possible without the co-operation of local landowners, such as Winchester College and Hampshire County Council, across whose fields the Route lies.





Hockley Viaduct supported by:

