

Job Ref: 'The Future of MK'

Dear Milton Keynes Council and MK Highways,

I would like to apply for the above position: 'The Future of MK'.

I am an experienced network of shared-use pathways and have had the pleasure of bringing people together to walk, run or ride on my surfaces for 50 years. My life is enriched by the trees, lakes and darting insects, microorganisms, birds and flowers I share my environment with.

I sometimes sense people's fear as they travel, and recent reports of an assault on a woman have made communities wary of me again. Longstanding problems of day-to-day use remain: poor sightlines, remote routes, rough surfaces, vandalism, being bordered by fences, high barriers and bad lighting all contribute to a general feeling of danger in parts.

I support mobility scooters and wheelchair users and aspire to making our town accessible to all. There are many homeless people living in tents under bridges in central MK; a homeless woman in a wheelchair travels all over on me. Being homeless is not a crime like other places, and I understand the council is working to re-house homeless people with local connections who have fallen through the safety net after being subject to wider government cuts caused by austerity.

Because the road grid system is so dominant here, not everyone knows about me. People from outside MK who do know of me speak about my routes with fear. But many people use me every day. Abdullahi, who lives in Fishermead, does minimum-wage warehouse work and walks or cycles on me to go to work, visit friends and shop. He says many people use my routes because cars are too expensive and the bus system is insufficient, only radiating out from the centre, making it difficult to move across large parts of Milton Keynes without a private vehicle. Emma, who lives in Greenleys, travels by bus and also walks to work on me, though sometimes takes a different route

when feeling threatened, coming off my red surface to cut through an industrial estate instead. Kim, a teacher, does leisure walks with other parents that switch between Parks Trust pathways and Redways. When she was pregnant she went on 'bumps and baby' walks, where her group were encouraged to walk to induce labour and get baby out. Żaneta, a Polish art student works in MK shopping centre and lives in Oldbrook, she doesn't know I exist, but walks to work on me every day. She dislikes the rubbish that builds up on my verges – so do I come to that.

Invest in me! Furnish me with more signs, lighting and surfaces and as I become more popular and people use me more, I will help reduce air pollution, encourage biodiversity and keep people healthy. I'm keen to form part of an integrated public transport system of buses, trains, commuting lanes for cyclists and leisure routes, to reduce carbon emissions and connect and improve life for all in MK.

Yours in hope,

The Redways