

Sustainable Living for Over 50s

Building A Community for Our Futures



On 5 January 2025, all bus services in Greater Manchester became part of the Bee Network, under the control of Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), and the cheery yellow buses can now be seen on all our bus routes, alongside our yellow trams.

We're looking forward to more exploring by public transport as new bus routes are added to the network. Love or hate the colour, one thing's for sure – you can spot them a mile away now!

Café Socials

Following on from a couple of very enjoyable social gatherings at the end of 2024, we have planned a couple of informal drop-in sessions over the next few months.

The first is taking place on **Wednesday 26 February** between 12 and 2pm, at the café in Manchester Art Gallery, Mosley Street M2 3JL.

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The second will be on **Saturday 29 March** between 1 and 3pm, at the café in the People's History Museum, Left Bank, Spinningfields M3 3ER.

Please RSVP to this email to let us know if you're intending to come along to one of these, so that we know how many to expect, and can let you know if dates change.

Visit to Forgebank Cohousing, Halton, Lancaster

Southway Housing Trust has been working on a [project to explore cohousing for older people](#) over the last year, with support from GM Community Led Homes Project Officer Rachel. Following a meeting between MUCH and Paul, one of the Southways team, MUCH were invited to join the Southways steering group on a visit to Forgebank Cohousing on a cold day last November.

Forgebank is an intergenerational cohousing community with a mix of houses and a small number of 'walk-up' flats. The whole scheme is Passivhaus certified and the group are committed to living a low-carbon lifestyle, sharing resources, including a car share club (privately owned cars are only allowed in exceptional



circumstances, despite limited public transport between the village and Lancaster) and a large bike shed which also houses canoes – the cohousing is on the banks of the River Lune!

We were shown around the site by one of the residents, including the mill building which is a separate venture and home to a number of small businesses and houses the biomass boiler. This, together with solar PV and the nearby Lune Valley hydro, provides an element of renewable energy, although our tour guide explained that if starting again they wouldn't put in a biomass boiler, despite the wood being sourced locally. Understanding of available options has moved on a long way since it was installed.

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We all managed to squeeze into the open plan ground floor of our tour guide's house, but it highlighted that the house in question was not readily accessible to the wheelchair user in the party. Some adaptability had been designed in, so that the downstairs WC could be extended to become a shower room, but that would be at the expense of living or storage space.

It was very useful to be looking at the homes and shared facilities through the eyes of a group of older people with a range of mobility issues, and highlighted the importance of age friendly and accessible design, as well as indoor temperatures and the challenges of living in a smaller space. But as always an inspiring visit, thanks to the community for making us welcome.

Downsizing

by Vera, MUCH member

I had the opportunity to visit the show flat on this canal-side construction site in Stretford. I was particularly interested as it had 2 bedrooms, with a balcony but was



only 59 square metres. To move from an old family-size home to a modern flat is a daunting task. Standing in the show flat with no personal belongings or sentimental 'junk', no evidence of stuff related to hobbies, no book-cases no laundry basket.....what a task to whittle down the accumulation of over 40 years in one property. I'm looking forward to the feeling of liberation that people tell me I'll have when I've finally managed to minimise my possessions. In the meantime, I'm at least trying not to accumulate any additional non-essential items.

It was only studying the plans of the development later that I realised I'd want a first floor flat as I liked the large balcony - even on my visit I hadn't realised the other flats didn't have the same amount of outdoor space.

Two canals, a golf course and a stately home

by Sian, MUCH member

[GM Ringway](#) is a circular 200 mile walk around Greater Manchester, broken down into 20 'stages', with public transport options for getting to/from the start of each stage. It's been on my to-do list ever since it was launched, so when a friend invited me to join her on Stage 5 (Middlewood to Strines), I instantly agreed – then panicked because I haven't walked more than 5 miles for several years! This stage was 8 miles, and she is a seasoned long distance walker.

But nothing ventured, nothing gained, so I met Glynis at the local tram stop early one Wednesday morning and just over an hour later we stepped off the train at Middlewood. There was no sign of the fog which had been forecast, and the birdsong was deafening! Following the GM Ringway waymarkers, and using the Go Jauntly phone app, we ventured into the woods, and then on to the Macclesfield Canal.



It wasn't much further before we entered Lyme Park at one of the pedestrian gates, and made our way to the Timber Yard cottage where we sat outside in the sunshine drinking coffee, and eating the last of my spicy Xmas biscuits.



The route took us up to the iconic Cage. From there we could see the city on one side, and the rolling hills leading to the Peak District on the other, and blue skies in all directions. A dash across the A6 and we were up in woodland once more, passing through Disley Golf Course on our way to the Peak Forest Canal, where we perched on a wall in a small patch of sunshine to eat our lunch.

Then through a couple of particularly wet and muddy fields, over the River Goyt and past Bruce's Clock to arrive at Strines Station.

The good company and conversation made the miles fly, and I was so pleased I'd taken up that invitation. I'll definitely be going back to do some more stages.

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Roundup of Cohousing news

We haven't spotted anything new in the mainstream press since our last newsletter, but it's heartening to know that cohousing is mentioned a number of times in a report published by the Older People's Housing Taskforce in November 2024.

[Our Future Homes: Housing that promotes wellbeing and community for an ageing population](#) is by no means a quick read, and we're not recommending that you read it all!

We hope you've enjoyed this newsletter. Do get in touch if you'd like to know more about any of the content.

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