



# CASTLEFIELD FORUM

2021: A Year in Review



## Executive Summary (and 2072!)

Welcome to our annual report and to the year that was - and you'll have to read the whole report to understand what 2272 means. All we can say is that it's very exciting indeed.

2021 saw some huge changes: the Forum back in full swing after the 2020 hiatus, a release of our first-ever Clean and Green strategy, over 1000 volunteer hours delivered, the Castlefield viaduct pilot went from dream to gaining planning consent, we started a new way of tracking our quarterly objectives and outcomes and we saw a change in leadership and our Trustee numbers hit a record high. Alongside that, official membership via our mailing list as well as more informal indicators (such as social media numbers) are the strongest we have seen.

**Two of our biggest 2021 successes were being approached by the National Trust as the lead community organisation behind the Castlefield viaduct development with the pilot scheme being approved by Manchester City Council in the autumn and secondly the enormous successes of our Clean & Green Castlefield group.**

Clean and Green as many of our members know are two of our core Forum themes, and the others being Safer and Better and to have our first ever Clean and Green strategy is a major success story. It is important to recognise the unrelenting focus from Trustees Gary and Nena that come rain or shine, Castlefield looks a little better each week.

Some of our biggest Castlefield dreams have remained top of our wishlist but bottom of our to do list. It goes without saying that for the mighty Castlefield viaduct to move all at once from being 'in managed decline' - how dreadfully sad - to suddenly becoming a huge regeneration, greening and amenity project has blown us away. Had the wonderful Ian Christie (founding member and our first Secretary) still been with us he would not have believed it is now happening.

**The one phrase that keeps sticking in our mind is that since the National Trust approached us, they have always said "when" not "if" the viaduct goes ahead in its permanent state. Please join us in helping to make the viaduct pilot a roaring success.**

We have also made various new connections this year as well as rekindled old ones. It's heartening to be working again with BDP on our community plot which will be part of the wider viaduct pilot and wonderful to meet new residents and neighbours in Castle Wharf and Deansgate Square. We also welcome a myriad of new residents with the schemes in Britannia Basin coming on stream.

As Trustees, we hold ourselves accountable so further ahead you will find more detail, laid out by quarter, of how we have achieved against our objectives, as well as a narrative around some of the challenges we have had. It's worth mentioning that the majority of the Trustees also have day jobs, and those who are retired also have a myriad of other commitments, so sometimes things do not move quite as fast as we had planned. We are also heavily reliant on third parties to deliver some of our aspirations (plus we like to set ambitious goals!).

Core themes you will read below include:

- Action group updates including Clean & Green, Roman Gardens and Castlefield viaduct
- People (Trustee) updates
- Financial health
- A long view on opportunities and challenges

## About Us

Castlefield Forum is a voluntary, community group established in 2009 with the key aim of making Castlefield a better place for local residents, businesses, workers and visitors.

Membership is open to anyone who lives, works, or has an interest in Castlefield.

Recognising the need to create a more formal structure, we made an application for charitable status and became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Associate model) in April 2019.

The Forum meets quarterly, and meetings and action groups are open to all. Our elected Trustees typically meet twice a quarter and feed back to the wider Forum.

The Trustees run our action groups which help to address our four key themes around **Cleaner, Green, Safer** and **Better**. Our Trustee activity is planned in a quarterly cadence using quarterly objectives. Find out more about our Trustees and our action groups in the Appendix.



## Trustee News

In late 2020 and despite the ongoing horror of Covid 19, because enough of the various organisations on whom we rely were slowly returning to some sort of normality we agreed to exit our hiatus and restart our Trustee activity.

The Forum is run by you, for you. Without the Trustees the Forum would not exist. None of us are paid, some work full or part time, none of us bring egos and we all strive for a better neighbourhood, so a huge thank you to them all for their hard work and energy even through a pandemic.

In 2021, Carol Middleton stepped down having been at the helm for over a decade and remains as a highly valued Trustee. On behalf of Castlefield and the Forum, thank you, Carol.

Calum McGowan stepped up from Vice Chair to Chair and Lou Pullan became Vice Chair.

We gained a new Trustee, Nena Adrienne. Nena has helped Gary Rumens to lead and grow the Clean & Green Castlefield group and along with her talent for data and insight is a natural fit.

Finally, in November 2021 due to pressing work commitments and after an extended tenure with the Forum, Beth Rose Hopper stepped down as Trustee.

## Financial Update

We continue to pursue the Manchester City Council Neighbourhood Investment Fund as and when the need arises. To reduce our reliance on one source we have also applied for other pots of money and were, for example, successful in being awarded £600 from First Central.

### Funding awards

- Notable awards of funding in 2021 included:
- Manchester City Council: £6000 towards evolving the Roman Gardens masterplan
- National Trust: £5000 towards our community plot on the Castlefield viaduct
- First Central: £600 towards Clean & Green work
- Screen Manchester: £1000 donation for filming events hosted in Castlefield (including Peaky Blinders!)

It is important to note that the vast majority of our funds are restricted as they are allocated against specific action group initiatives.

### Current financial position

Our 2021 financial position is £32,804, broken down as follows:

#### **Uncommitted**

General funds £852

#### **Restricted Funds**

Roman Gardens £30,982

MCC Clean & Green £440

Held on behalf of Manchester Cladiators £530

**Total** £32,804

We will submit examined accounts as part of our annual submission to the Charities Commission which is also published to members.

# Updates by Quarter

2021 was the first time that as Trustees we broke down our objectives into clear quarterly goals.

We liked the format so have kept it going. Each objective has measures under it, graded from **Good** (the minimum we would like to achieve) to **Great** to **Incredible**.

At our public meetings we typically present our objectives plus results from the previous quarter. To get involved with any of our activities, please get in touch (contact details are in the Appendix below).

## January-March (Q1 2021)

### Wins

- Active programme of environmental work  
The Clean & Green Castlefield group absolutely excelled and beat every goal they set themselves and in the coldest part of the year completed 8 organised events (7 clean ups and 1 gardening) plus 5 solo litter picks.
- Commence Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity so we can build the east-west path  
We received a major win on this with agreement in principle to dig the Roman Gardens east-west path being received from Laing O'Rourke as part of their CSR programme.
- Deliver successful online Forum events  
We had 30 members present at our first-ever online AGM. This was our first event since taking a break due to the pandemic and demonstrated that we had engagement as well as testing a new event format.

### Challenges

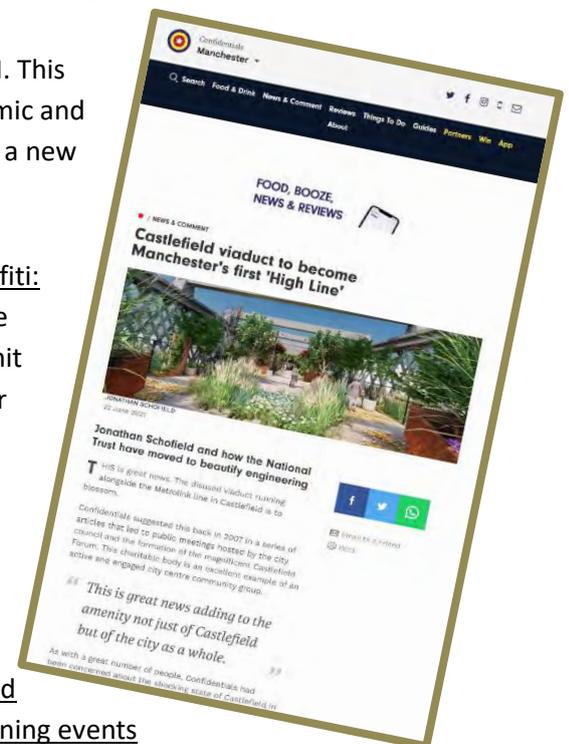
- Run our first pilot activity so we can clean up Duke St graffiti:  
Although we drafted a success framework for the multiple stakeholders involved in trying to remove the graffiti we hit a stalemate and we ran out of steam and decided to defer this activity to later in the year.

## April-June (Q2)

This was the first time that we started to organise our objectives under our Cleaner, Greener, Safer and Better themes.

### Wins

- Have an always-on programme of environmental work and to kick-start our gardening activity with community gardening events  
The Clean & Green team of Clean & Green Castlefield and ably lead by Trustees Gary and Nena again hit every single one of their goals for the quarter. Amazing!
  - 11 Litter pick sessions;
  - 10 Gardening sessions; and
  - 8 solo litter picks.This equated to 192 volunteers committing 431 hours to help keep Castlefield clean and green. They also picked 260 bags of rubbish. Whilst it's horrifying that so much litter exists, it's also hugely inspiring to see our community galvanise to look after our patch.
- We want to grow our official member base so that we grow our reach  
We were quoted in [Manchester Confidential](#), [Marketing Manchester](#), [About Manchester](#) and [Manchester Wire](#) as part of the viaduct project and saw our membership continue to grow through the quarter.



## Challenges

- Utilise current funding and CSR offers to improve the Roman Gardens  
Partly hit; in advanced negotiations with Amey for the North Gate lighting & east-west pathway build was originally due by end of September. However, delays at The Factory appear to be impacting Laing O'Rourke's timeline and we are grateful for the help so will wait until they are ready.
- Run our first pilot activity so we can clean up Duke St graffiti  
We downed tools on this for now; superseded by Viaduct project work which was not on our radar back in March. We will pick up this objective in 2022.
- To have our first fundraising strategy & started to deliver against it  
Although we workshopped this, we did not produce the final strategy and have not yet started to deliver against it. It has become clear that this piece of work needs specific and sustained ownership and at the moment we don't have enough Trustee capacity to make this happen.



## July-September (Q3)

### Wins

We had a healthy round of discussions with the Council's Events team and the organisers of Sounds of the City. For the first time ever the multi-evening event went off relatively uneventfully; there was good engagement on all sides, well-informed event staff and no notable escalations had to be made. We also for the first time were awarded a tranche of tickets (some 240!) to ballot out to local residents. This was a very kind and appreciated gesture and makes up for the inconvenience not only of the events themselves but build phase, sound checks, deliveries and tear down.

- To have an always-on programme of environmental work  
Once again, the Clean and Green group delivered some brilliant outcomes with over 10 events. They also took an objective to replace various broken timber planters in the former visitors centre garden. Although this work was not completed, timber was donated to the group with a view to doing the work in the spring.
- To have our first fundraising strategy & started to deliver against it  
We now have a draft strategy though it still needs work to complete it. That said, it's the first time we have had a 'modern' draft version from which to iterate.

We also applied for funding from a new source and were awarded £600 from First Central. This helps us to diversify away from being very reliant on the city council's NIF funding which we cannot guarantee will always be available.

## Challenges

After acquiring a dinghy with which to do canal litter picks, the first actual activity has been delayed to ensure health and safety was well covered through new public liability insurance and training.

- Utilise current funding and CSR offers to improve the Roman Gardens:  
Various positive noises but progress which has again moved at a glacial pace due to a heavy dependency on third parties. Kudos to Carol for her tenacity, especially around the lighting which has been particularly arduous. Amey are specifying the lights but we appear to be far down their priorities. We will probably need to escalate this.

We still do not have a date to build the east-west pathway so this objective will carry into 2022. We had also hoped to reignite a relationship with United Utilities because pre-pandemic they had expressed interest in getting involved in an unspecified capacity.

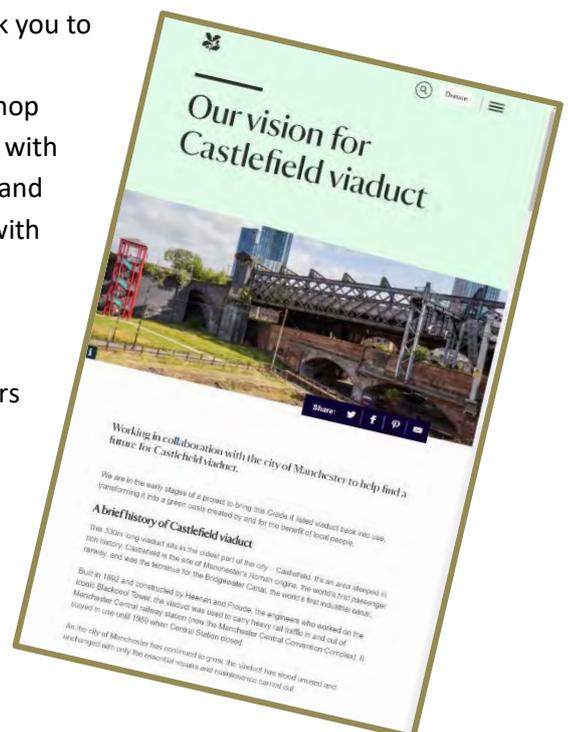
- Setting up a community safety network (linked initially using a WhatsApp private group)  
We got off to a slow start but nevertheless do now have the group set up. Our local Neighbourhood Beat Officer & two colleagues from GMP held a safety event held in October at The Wharf. Small number of residents attended (5) as well as two Trustees; it was good to network with our new officers though the community turn out was a little disappointing.

## October-December (Q4)

### Wins

We like to set ourselves a tough set of objectives, to keep us on our toes. The Trustees and working groups have worked incredibly hard against some tough targets and crucially a bunch of frustrating external dependencies (Roman Gardens) which have held us back, as well as a whole new proposal for a community space on the viaduct which only landed after Q4 had started. In summary, extremely proud of how Q4 shaped up!

- Spirit of Place action group is back and Viaduct activity has ramped up considerably:
  - the pilot scheme gaining planning consent (amazing!);
  - We were approached by the National Trust
  - to host our own 7-month presence on a community plot
  - and this has diverted a lot of our energy. Thank you to everyone involved;
  - We have been involved in a fundraising workshop and there will be a follow-up summit in March with Andy Burnham where the Forum will present; and
  - Lou and Calum had a successful first meeting with Tom and Jo Bloxham and as an outcome new connections with Manchester School of Architecture were established. The Forum has submitted a project idea for a cohort of Masters students to work on.



- Clean & Green activity continues to thrive with some incredible end of year stats:
  - First ever clean and green strategy agreed - through to end of 2022;
  - Network Rail came down to help litter pick;
  - New members from Castle Wharf and Deansgate Square joined as we were approached by Renaker's residential team; and
  - 1,800 bulbs planted.
- Ian Hay expressed interest in joining us as a Trustee.
- Q4 Forum membership stats:
  - database membership: 251 officially signed up (up +5.5% on Q3); 4,100 members on Facebook, 3,283 on Twitter and 550 on Clean & Green Castlefield. Social media links can be found in the Appendix.



## Challenges

- Trustee news  
Beth announced her plans to step down.
- Climate change  
Calum and Gary also attended the City Council's city centre Climate Change Summit, which was informative and allowed networking opportunities with Groundwork, councillors and residents. The event opened our eyes to the role we can play as a neighbourhood organisation and highlights how far we have to go to start making a difference. Literally, so much to do, so little time - both on a planetary and Trustee front. The Council has a clear responsibility to deliver ambitious carbon reduction targets; as a community group we will keep climate change nearer to the top of our agenda.
- Q4 what could have gone better?
  - Roman Gardens activity continues to creep forward with frustrations abound around the lighting (for which we have funding and permission), plus a firm date for the east-west path laying (we now have a commitment from Laing O'Rourke but many months later than expected). On a better note United Utilities have started to talk to us, so we may yet be able to bring forward the rain garden element. Thank you Carol for your tenacity - we appreciate it!
  - Safety group: we set up a new group and managed to get coverage from one in three Castlefield residential blocks (target was 4 in 5) and managed to get PC Josh Lee involved; a good start with more to do as we start 2022.

# 2021 Clean and Green Wins



With such an incredible year under their belt, we wanted to dedicate a specific section to clean and green.

Thank you Nena for pulling together this infographic.

An amazing set of statistics.



### RHS In Bloom - via Carol Middleton: 2/11/21

"Great news folks, just had a call from Mel Kirby, MCC lead for RHS In Bloom. We have been awarded Outstanding again for RHS It's Your Neighbourhood. There's no presentation event this year but we will get a certificate to add to the pile. Mel's delighted because we were one of 3 groups in the city to get Outstanding. The others were Victoria Sq and Mayes Almshouses, both in Ancoats. As a result the city has been awarded gold for the first time. Well done guys 🍌🍌🍌"



# Biggest Opportunities

## Castlefield Viaduct Pilot Scheme

We never thought we would be shouting from the rooftops about the viaduct because it's always remained top of our wishlist but bottom of our to-do list. The energy and enthusiasm and language from the National Trust has at all times been wholly optimistic. We have a HIGH level of confidence that a transformative piece of green space right in the centre of Manchester is on the horizon and better than that, a piece of public space which better connects the southern part of Castlefield, Pomona and Cornbrook with the northern canal basin area.

The pilot scheme which opens to the public in June 2022 sailed through the planning system with ease. All eyes are now on the success of the pilot because the engagement and ideas from the 12-month scheme will help to drive the full and final proposition. The time frame to deliver the final scheme is in theory by the end of 2024; this is subject to design, funding and planning consent, construction and operational readiness.



## The Factory

The permanent home of Manchester International Festival is slated to open at some point in 2023. A multi-million pound commissioning space for the Arts as well as a permanent home for the Festival itself will all at once transform what was a very unloved sector of our neighbourhood. Nobody knows how things will pan out but the opportunity to experience world-class creative arts right on our doorstep is tremendously exciting.

## St John's Neighbourhood and rejuvenated Science + Industry Museum

With construction of St John's underway including a myriad of new office space and a residential tower coupled with the rejuvenation work currently in progress at the Museum will see unprecedented numbers of people both visiting and living in our area. It's not impossible to imagine that in just a few years time there will be a real throng of people especially coupled with visitors to The Factory and of course to the viaduct. The draw of Castlefield will be stronger than ever. Our duty as Trustees is to help capitalise on this and make sure our neighbourhood drives accordingly.

## Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

As CSR bubbles nearer the top of the corporate agenda as well as as untapped offers of help from our Spirit of Place 2019 summit, leveraging CSR becomes a new way to help deliver outcomes for Castlefield. 2021 has seen Clean & Green Castlefield work with some new names, including Expedia, Royal Haskoning DHV, Virgin Media and Network Rail - thank you one and all - and we have further firmed up our relationship with Laing O'Rourke. We are thrilled that they will help deliver a vital piece of the Roman Gardens infrastructure: the 'east-west' pathway which significantly opens up the site. This is slated to happen in summer 2022.

A big thank you to friends and neighbours in Castlefield Estates. We have been blessed with free event room hire now for over a decade so thank you to Sarah Ramsbottom and her team for your generosity.

We also welcome help from Maurice Shapero and long-standing Forum friends BDP as they work together to deliver the design for our community plot on the viaduct pilot.

# Biggest challenges ahead: short, medium and long term

## People

Neighbourhood engagement - notably with existing communities in Hulme and Ordsall plus residents from:

- Under construction and planned blocks in the Britannia Basin area of Castlefield; and
- Under construction and proposed towers in St John's, Trinity Islands and Great Jackson Street.

## Trustees

Bringing on board skills and experience to not only keep our organisation resilient but to help us flourish and help us deliver on longer-term grand plans, including the full viaduct scheme and realisation of our Spirit of Place ambitions.

## Castlefield viaduct

Viaduct pilot logistics (design, cost, build, operate our community plot) through to medium term challenges around funding the full and final scheme. A scheme which needs to be bold from the beginning to give it a real chance of delivering an outstanding experience which is not just a 'visitor attraction' but has a sense of real purpose and thus drives much higher footfall.

## Increased traffic and footfall

With The Factory completed and in full use, Water Street permanently closed to traffic and the St John's neighbourhood nearing completion there will be more people living, visiting or working in Castlefield than ever. This will present challenges around parking, idling vehicles, pollution and of course the inevitable outflow of thousands of people from each and every Factory event. Aside from the annual flurry of 'Sounds of the City' gigs, we have never had to deal with sustained large volumes of people. We will monitor things carefully as new buildings and spaces come on stream and lean on help from the Council if any interventions are required.

## Graffiti...

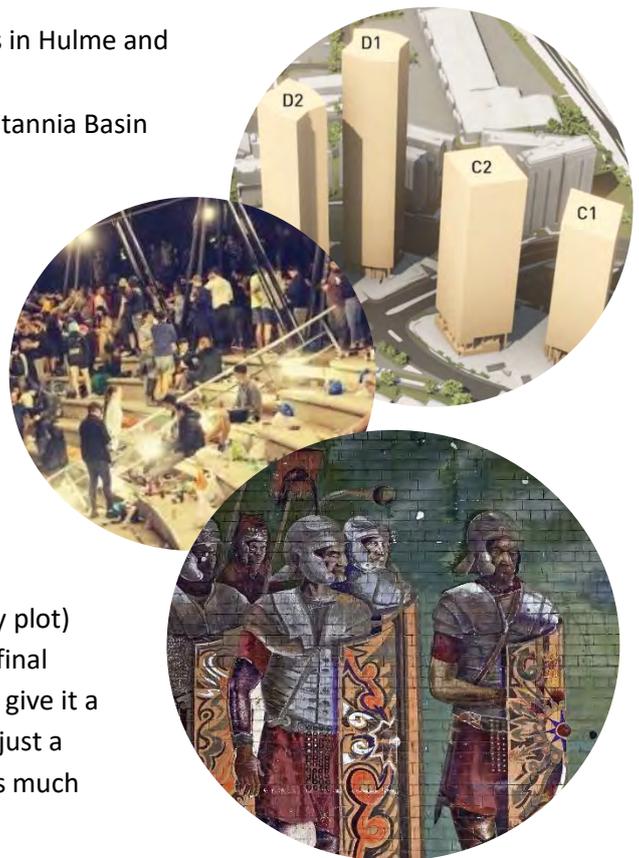
...which continues to blight Castlefield. How might we address this? How might we turn a problem into an opportunity? We have started discussions around a more formal public arts programme. The city centre has had some great successes with turning blank and unloved surfaces into public art; save for not having enough time to make it happen, there is no reason we cannot replicate the best bits of this in Castlefield.

## Funding and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The Forum has grand ambitions for Castlefield (including but not limited to the viaduct) and as a small community organisation with a busy set of Trustees, trying to acquire the right levels of help and or funding and to coordinate our ambitions and deliver against them is difficult. In essence a chicken and egg situation: wild ambitions but not enough capacity to pursue the very funding which would unlock our ambitions.

## Climate Change

It goes without saying that climate change brings an incredible set of challenges to the planet and right down at local level we need a much clearer plan of how we can all act differently to help Drive real change. The forum is only at the beginning of this journey and we would readily welcome any expertise available.



## Closing Remarks

We start 2022 with high spirits; the Castlefield viaduct pilot build starts in March and we have much to be optimistic for as a community. Cast your minds forward to the longest day of the year and a decrepit but wonderful relic which has had no real purpose since 1969 will be awash with residents and visitors. Come and marvel in the twilight at a project which will not only reverse decades years of decline but secures the mighty viaduct until at least the year 2272. That's not a typo but the longevity of the lease that the National Trust are weaving into their business case for the viaduct which will not only help to further regenerate Manchester but provide amenity to over 50,000 people who live within a 20 minute walk. We say, thank you, and bring on the next epoch of Castlefield's story.

Finally, a reminder that the forum exists by you, for you. A huge thank you to all of our Trustees who helped to keep the forum alive and thriving. And if you feel like you might want to get involved yourself, just get in touch.

**Calum McGowan**  
**Chair - Castlefield Forum**



## Appendix

### **Our organisation**

Organisational overview for the period ending 30 April 2021.

Trustees who served during the year:

- Calum McGowan (Chair)
- Lou Pullan (Vice-Chair)
- Giles Grover (Treasurer)
- James Bowers (Secretary)
- B Hunter
- Beth Rose Hopper (stepped down November 2021)
- Carol Middleton
- Debbie Hubbard
- Gary Rumens
- Ian McIlveen
- Nena Adrienne

## Action Groups

### Clean & Green Castlefield

- To work in conjunction with Manchester City Council (MCC) and other local partners to keep the area attractive, green and tidy
- Expanding the group's remit to maintain and develop green spaces, including community growing space
- Delivering an exciting new strategy which takes us to the end of 2022 and beyond
- To work in liaison with MCC and local partners to present a credible entry to the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' section of North West in Bloom, aiming for a Level 5 'Outstanding' award each year

### Events, Marketing, Media & Signage

- To raise the profile of Castlefield within the city, to develop our own events and contribute to events organised by others.
- To increase financial self-reliance for the Forum by developing Castlefield's marketing potential, including improving our website.
- To extend our programme of replacing damaged and out-of-date signage by producing new interpretative signs for new locations throughout the area.

### Roman Gardens

- Delivering against our original masterplan to realise exciting, inspiring urban retreat in Manchester city centre

### Spirit of Place & Castlefield Viaduct

- Building on our work with the National Trust to understand the spirit of Castlefield, including its value to the city of Manchester and beyond, its heritage, people, buildings, open spaces, structures, waterways and stories.
- Supporting the National Trust's consultation, fundraising and delivery of the viaduct pilot (opens June 2022) and development of the full scheme
- Delivering the Castlefield community plot on the viaduct (opens June 2022)

We have medium-term ambitions to spin up a specific fundraising group but we simply don't have the capacity to pursue this at present.

## Social Media

Facebook Group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ourcastlefield/>

On Twitter - <https://twitter.com/ourcastlefield>

Facebook Clean and Green Group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cleangreencastlefield>

On Twitter - <https://twitter.com/CGCastlefield>

Join us as a member by contacting [info@ourcastlefield.co.uk](mailto:info@ourcastlefield.co.uk) (opt out / leave at any time)

## Administration

Address: 73 Liverpool Road, Manchester, M3 4AQ

Auditor: Dan Coles FCCA

Bankers: Co-operative Bank, Manchester

