



Registered charity No. 1166492
www.fromesmissinglinks.org.uk

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

22nd June 2021 at 7.00 pm
on Zoom

Present: Chair Rich Ackroyd, trustees Tricia Golinski, Grant Gellatly, Chris Green, Adrian Warren and 30 supporters/members of the public

Apologies from trustee Ruth Knagg and Emma Parker

Introductions were made of trustees and other key players.

Chairman's report

Rich gave the following report of the past year's activities:

It was always going to be a long journey. But while the curtains remain down on the live performance so to speak, behind the scenes our backstage crew of volunteers have been as busy as the pandemic restrictions have allowed. The show must go on, but sadly due to circumstance there is little to see for all this effort in terms of new multi use path on the ground. However, despite these delays, significant steps have been taken and the political winds of change are there. Positive signs that the mood music is changing nationally and regionally in our favour are everywhere.

Lobbying has been a big issue of late, with many a politician having to tread carefully when declaring personal and financial interests. Frome's Missing Links supporters and trustees are all volunteers and give up their time entirely for free. In that way we are a truly independent campaigning group. However, as a small charitable organisation we have to be mindful of the wishes of key stakeholders such as landowners, who ultimately can make or break a project. In that respect, FML remains committed to accessible paths for all, including equestrian access and walkers, but we sometimes have to make realistic compromises. We don't want to exclude anyone. Primarily our active supporters tend to be cyclists, but we will continue to negotiate for the best outcomes for all active travel participants.

Our own lobbying efforts have been aided by working with Sustrans, Somerset Rail to Trail, Strawberry Line, Greener Greenways and Cycle Routes Ltd, staff and councillors at Mendip and Frome Town councils and by taking part in some joined up group meetings covering Taunton, Bridgwater, Bruton, Wells, and Glastonbury. Work with FTC on producing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) are continuing. By working together with others we think we make a stronger case for an extensive network of active travel routes across the whole area.

In other news, we now have an updated and revised preferred route document, which covers the whole 'missing links' section north of Frome. If Network Rail agree to these plans we will have for the first time some firm proposals for a completely traffic free path out of Frome to the Colliers Way.

Phase 2 of the route from Great Elm to Elliots Lane already has planning permission and while construction has ground to a halt, we have at last been able to agree the sale of some land to help us finish this section. We are grateful to landowners who offered us alternative possibilities and to Sustrans for drawing up those proposals. However with the agreed sale of land along the original route now agreed, we are just awaiting completion of contracts and can then once again look to completing Phase 2 as originally envisaged by the end of next year.

Phase 3 also has planning permission but progress at Whatcombe has also stalled, although we now anticipate adding tarmac on the next 150m of path by the end of August. Thanks are due to landowners and to Frome Town Council for approving a grant of £3,000 towards the cost of the completion works at Weylands.

Thanks to earlier work done by FTC and FML trustees a multi use path now exists from Asda through to the edge of the newly built Edmund Park estate, which we hope will eventually run out on the southern end of the development to Feltham Lane. Developers Persimmon have constructed an excellent path as far as their southern boundary. Negotiations on this last stretch to Longleat are at an early stage but we hope to have positive news and revised drawings soon.

Fundraising continues and some long term and sizeable funding possibilities are on the horizon. We are grateful for an individual donation of £2,000 recently and indeed for any donations large or small. We found out recently that we can qualify for Gift Aid on all donations and hope to backdate that – a nice surprise!

Coming up soon on June 27th is the Bike Jumble, which last year raised £3,700 so lets hope we get somewhere close to this again. Already as I write this we have in excess of 70 bikes of all shapes and sizes and the usual plethora of spare parts and accessories. We'll be near the library along with some of the Ding crew – make sure you catch a bargain!

The School Travel Challenge is always a success, although this year we have had to push it back to September/October for obvious reasons.

As ever, the Friday Crew volunteers continue to improve and maintain the Colliers Way and regularly check on work in progress – without them the cost of these plans would be even greater. Together they have saved the project many thousands of pounds, so again, massive and heartfelt thanks to them. This is a good time to be pushing for changes. Frome has a wealth of new enthusiasts, campaigners and organisations such as Ding, Pronto, Health Connectors and others, all of whom are keen to improve safe travel options in the area. So, thanks again to all of our volunteers and supporters, from marketing, media messaging, practical earth moving, offers of equipment and services and the many other ways you support the project. It's with your help that we will continue to improve the off road network of paths for everyone.

Treasurer's report:

Adrian gave the following report:

Although it has been a quiet year for us, this is a good time for change with the government finally pushing active travel.

We have had £4668 income over the year: £3721 from the Bike Jumble, £479 from local giving and £360 from regular donors.

Our outgoings of £2502 were made up mostly of expenses of the Friday Group such as a bridleway gate.

The year ended with a cash surplus of £2165 and a balance of £22172 (soon to be £25000 with a grant of £3000 from Frome Town Council).

The **annual accounts 2020** were approved by the trustees prior to submission to the Charity Commission.

Nominations and elections of trustees:

Chris Green stood down as a trustee and Helen Johnstone was elected as a trustee. Rich Ackroyd, Tricia Golinski, Grant Gellatly, Adrian Warren and Ruth Knagg were re-elected as trustees for the year. Rich welcomed anyone else who is interested to come along to the regular trustee meetings (next one: 20 July 2021 at 2.00 pm at the bandstand, Victoria Park).

Presentation from John Grimshaw MBE, founder of Sustrans and Chief Engineer with Greenways and Cycleroutes. The presentation will be available on our website www.fromesmissinglinks.org.uk.

Presentation from Charlotte Carson, Green Health Connector, on her work as part of the Green & Healthy Frome project, linking health and environmental choices with active travel. Charlotte trains

Green Community Connectors to talk to people in the community about climate change and the choices we make. She is also hoping to start a Frome Critical Mass on the last Friday of the month. Contact her at charlotte.carson2@nhs.net.

Questions & Answers

Adrian asked John Grimshaw what has changed now?

John said that getting planning through was more difficult now, that money was often the least of the problems, and that Network Rail and land negotiations were still difficult.