



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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2 May 2023
Frome Town Hall

Present: Chair Rich Ackroyd, trustees Tricia Golinski, Grant Gellatly, Ruth Knagg, Helen Johnstone and Adrian Warren, plus approximately 24 supporters/members of the public

Apologies were received from Geoff Pell.

Introductions were made of trustees and other key players.

Chairman's report

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

It's not easy to build new active travel paths. Route choice, designs, plans, landowners, barriers (bridges, rivers, roads, canals), the need for ecological, topographical and physical surveys, public consultations, opposition and discussion from the myriad of user groups (Ramblers, railway restoration groups, Trails Trust, Wildlife Trust, etc), rights of way changes, flood risk assessments, badgers, bats, noise, planning permission, insurance, tools, storage space, and general lack of funding are just a few of the problems we regularly have to deal with. No wonder we talk about this as a long-term project!

At least this year, there is some tangible progress to report on the much-anticipated Phase 2 northern link into Frome. After many years of patient negotiations with various parts of Network Rail (NR), we have been able to open up and fence off a small but key piece of land along what was the old GWR branch line to Radstock. This saw brilliant efforts from our volunteers as they first hacked their way through 50 years of undergrowth and vegetation; removed the final ten pairs of old rails, sleepers and iron works (each rail weighing about 1 ton) and erecting about 200m of weld mesh fence under Network Rail supervision. This development has kick started the whole Phase 2 route and we now look for a completion date this side of Christmas. Our volunteers and contractors have been making huge progress on this technically difficult section and it is in no small part down to our volunteer support that this has been made possible.

To add to the excitement we now also have permission to fence off another 180m of adjoining land, which will complete the link to Elliots Lane. In total Phase 2 will add another 1.3 km of useable path to the Colliers Way and will eventually become an important gateway to the much anticipated 70 mile Somerset Circle. Obviously we are quite excited by the prospect of opening a new section of path after so many years of grindingly slow progress.

More progress on the ground on Phase 3 should see another 450m of path surfaced along the river at Whatcombe by the end of the summer. We have committed £30,000 to this and will again be working with Connor Construction, who with Aggregate Industries and Mrs Yeoman's team are helping us to complete the work.

With the help of Somerset Council and Mendip District Council we have applied to Sustrans for development funding from the DFT transport fund, which will enable the next stretch to Cooper Hall and beyond. As always we say thank you to all involved.

Phase 4 is now the last part of our missing links and is only a mere 1.3km long. However, this is technically the most expensive section, as it will run largely along the existing Mendip Rail mineral line

from Whatley. We have conducted a detailed survey of this whole section, with NR staff and a newly revised workbook of our plans has been submitted to NR – we thank John Grimshaw and Greenways for their help in this endeavor. Volunteers also installed a new gate and planted 400 saplings at the Coalash Lane site, where we already have a short connecting section of completed path. More progress indeed!

The main fund raising event this year was the Ceilidh, which raised almost £3,000. We also received £800 from the sale of scrap iron works. We also had a very successful day at the Independent Market and raised more funds from our collecting tins and stall. The Frome Community Bike Project, which now has CIC status and successfully raised £30,000 start up capital, will donate any excess funds to Frome's Missing Links.

Frome's Missing Link volunteers have also been helping out with various elements of the proposed Somerset Circle, which will join up disused railway lines such as the Strawberry Line and could eventually form a 76 mile circuit of traffic free routes across Somerset. Already about 2km of path has been newly created between Shepton Mallet and Wells and our volunteers played a big part in making this happen. The Frome section will form the link from the Somerset Circle to the rest of the National Cycle Network to the east.

We have had a lot of support from staff and councillors at Mendip District Council (MDC) in the last few years. MDC is now defunct and subsumed into the new Somerset Council, but we did receive a parting gift of three penny farthing bike racks, which we will place along our path in due course.

Finally, thank you to our trustees and key volunteers who have all made massive efforts this year. Sometimes it feels like a full time job rather than a useful hobby but the rewards are obvious and the enthusiasm from the general public drives us on. As I have said before, this remains a long-term project, one step forward, two back, two more forward with an unexpected twist or two along the way – a bit like ceilidh dancing perhaps. The big difference is that we should all be able to walk, dance, ride or skip along some new bits of path this year. I know I intend to do just that.

Treasurer's report 2022

Adrian gave the following report:

Our total income for the year was £17,203, mostly from Mendip District Council.
The main expenditure was on fencing and machinery.
At the end of the year, the cash balance held was £43,000.

Nominations and elections of trustees

Trustees Rich Ackroyd and Grant Gellatly retired from office and were re-appointed as trustees. Rich asked anyone else interested in volunteering or being a trustee to speak to one of the trustees.

Nikki Brain of Frome Town Council: Frome Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Nikki reported that Frome Town Council (FTC) has been working with Somerset County Council (SCC) on the LCWIP for 18 months, following the Department of Transport's strict methodology. The aim of the LCWIP is to create a planned network of safe routes for walking, cycling and wheeling to and from key destinations across town, to support active travel. All local councils need an LCWIP to be in place in order to bid for active travel funding from the government, and FTC will be able to use the LCWIP to inform requests for S106 funding when negotiating with developers.

The creation of the LCWIP was funded by Somerset's Climate Emergency Fund and produced by Phil Jones Associates. It was created by a working group of councillors, officers and community representatives, and used data from the Walk Ride Frome survey done in 2020. The output of the LCWIP is a network of routes, each with a list of recommended interventions which are grouped into short term (1-3 year) medium term (5 year) and long term (10 year). Interventions are prioritised and a rough cost estimate given.

Frome's LCWIP is available from [this link on the FTC website](#).

Emma Parker: Frome Community Bike Project (FCBP)

Emma works for FTC on active travel in addition to setting up FCBP as a non-profit Community Interest Company with the aim of encouraging more people to cycle for everyday journeys. All profits from FCBP will go to Frome's Missing Links.

In September 2022, FCBP ran a Crowdfunder campaign and raised £30,375 from 161 supporters. In November they submitted a planning application for a workshop to be made from containers. The outcome of the application remains unknown, despite the fact that the target date for decision has passed. In January 2023, they successfully applied for funding from Sport England for bike maintenance classes, cycle confidence classes, community bike rides and tools and equipment. They also received funding from Somerset Community Fund to put solar panels on the roof of the workshop once the planning application has passed. In March 2023 they got funding to deliver Cycle Together in partnership with FTC, Edventure and Frome Medical Practice.

Bike sales and events will continue while FCBP continues to chase the planning application, while also looking at other options for the workshop.

[Link to Frome Community Bike Project website.](#)