

## **Strawberry Line Association (SLA)**

Report to Westbury sub Mendip Parish Council AGM

19 April 2023

Summary of April 2022 - April 2023

### **1 Village route opened Christmas Eve 2022**

Station Road bridge to Erlon Lane stretch made available through the generosity of local landowner, Dave Limond, and Church Commissioners. Route designed by John Grimshaw of Greenways and Cycle Routes. Landscaping and surface (stone dust) completed on Christmas Eve 2022, by local firm Goldings (Rodney Stoke).

### **2 Planting Trees**

Planting of whips and standards had been completed during winter 2021-22 along the Station Road to Erlon Lane stretch before the route was landscaped and surfaced. During winter 2022-23, whips and some standard trees were planted along the additional permissive path Dave Limond made available (running perpendicular to the SL, south from Dave's viewing area, connecting to footpath that skirts the sewage works). This is a purely pedestrian route, but is most valuable for those seeking a shorter, circular walk.

Other locations where whips/standards have been planted: a small triangle at the north corner of the Station Road entrance to the path; along both mounds, north and south of the SL, east of Station Road bridge; beside and opposite small bridge on north side of SL, west of Erlon Lane.

A community resource bid to Thatchers cider company was successful, resulting in them donating five apple trees for the Westbury section of the SL. In recognition of her excellent support and effectiveness in bringing about several sections of the SL, we invited Kelly Knight, Principal Sustainable Travel and Tourism Officer, MDC, to help plant the apple trees, on 20 March 2023.

Thanks are due to members of the village Tree Group, both for helping SL volunteers in planting out, and for providing some whips, grown on the village tree nursery.

### **Troughs**

Goldings excavated four stone troughs during their landscaping of the path. Two were placed at the Station Road entrance to the path and two across the path, east of Station Road bridge, to deter entry by inappropriate vehicles. The troughs have been planted up with herbs and local, native wild flowers.

Thanks are due to members of the village Gardening Club, for advice and for help in planting up the troughs.

### **3 Path furniture**

#### **Benches**

Three benches have been installed along the path: 1 funded by Parish Council on Dave Limond's viewing area, 1 funded by Westbury Friendly Society, placed just under bridge to west of Erlon Lane, 1 crowd-funded, placed slightly east of Station Road bridge.

#### **Finger post**

A four-way oak finger-post has been purchased, to be installed on Dave Limond's land indicating Easton, Westbury sub Mendip, Knowle Hill and Strawberry Line. It was crowd-funded and presented to Dave Limond as thanks for his generosity.

### **4 Path maintenance**

Volunteers have come forward to maintain the path now in existence in Westbury, caring for whips (weeding/strimming around them), strimming the banks, regular removal of rubbish and removal of dog poo (arrival of new dog poo bin, purchased by PC, to be sited at Station Road entry to SL eagerly awaited by SL volunteers).

### **4 Campaigning**

Campaigning continues for extension of the route east towards Wells, and west, towards Cheddar, with the ultimate aspiration of completing the Somerset Circle.

Close connection continues between SLA and other groups campaigning for other stretches of the Somerset Circle, notably: Strawberry Line East (SLE – Wells to Shepton Mallet and beyond); Coxley/Glastonbury route; Axbridge and Cheddar; Strawberry Line in Clevedon (SLiC); Frome's Missing Links. Also close connection continues with other groups in Somerset, eg Taunton Cycle Campaign, Bridgwater Cycle Campaign, Active Travel at Somerset Council.

Close collaboration between the groups has helped each group become more effective. Accordingly, one short stretch beside Easton village hall has been prepared and planted with whips. Two further stretches have been completed in Shepton Mallet, through the September 2022 working party organised by John Grimshaw and attended by, among others, Westbury members of SLA.

### **6 Future**

Ongoing collaboration with new Somerset Council (people key to SL have roles in Somerset Council) and John Grimshaw, with emerging appreciation of critical importance of SL, and change of heart at County level, makes future look promising.

Everything completed so far has only been achieved through continuing dedication of volunteers. Thanks due to all volunteers, for long-term campaigning and now for continuing maintenance

New volunteers, for campaigning or physical path maintenance, always welcomed. Greenways September 2023 work camp will be at Shepton Mallet again: all welcome.

Rachel Hewson, Secretary, Strawberry Line Association