

DEAN FOREST GREENWAY

Notes of Steering Group meeting by Zoom, Thursday 11th March 2021

Present:

Cycleroutes & Greenways

J Grimshaw (JGri), C Levett (CL), J Linden (JL)

West Dean Parish Council

P Dunford (PD) (Chair), A Grant (AG), D Kent (DK) (Notes)

Lydney Town Council

R Kemsley (RK), J Greenwood (JGre)

Forestry England

T Sagar (TS)

Forest of Dean District Council

P Hiatt (PH), C McFarling (CMcF)

Pedalthatbike

P Andrews (PA)

West Dean Community

S Freeman (SF), E Highfield (EH), R Sanderson (RS)

Dean Forest Railway

W Barnett (WB)

Apologies:

B Watkins (GCC), A Preest (also GCC), S Stockdale (LTC), A Moore (WDC) and K Thoday (FE)

Notes

Notes of the Steering Committee meeting on 14th January 2021 were presented.

It was agreed that County and District Councillor Richard Boyles would be invited to all future meetings.

1. Summer Camp.

JGri presented a plan of what was required.

A work camp would be organised to maintain the profile and momentum of the project and to enable the general public to participate and take ownership of the project. It was likely that this project would be carried out in September. Works would include land clearance and boundary work, including fencing.

EH would speak to the local Whitemead Park management to seek a venue for the camp.

It was noted that DK had already contacted the management of Boundless, the parent company of Whitemead Park, seeking support from the company. PH also offered his support.

Beaver Lodge, Parkend, would also be considered as a possible venue for the work camp. SF to pursue this.

2. Meetings with Dean Forest Railway

It was noted that relations with DFR were positive. An on-site meeting at Norchard with DFR and Lydney Park estate was being arranged. Plans to avoid the cottages at Norchard were being pursued.

3. Planning Application

Support from the Mining Agency had now been offered.

It was noted that as substantial sections of the route ran through 'Ancient Woodland' (Parkend and Norchard), which held special protected status, then strong reasons would be necessary to support the planning application. To achieve this, the track wherever possible would run along existing tracks or other Forestry England tracks to be constructed for FE forestry management access. We have submitted a statement to the Council Ecologist to secure their support for passing through ancient woodland. Without this matter being cleared we cannot proceed.

Apart from the need to address the 'Ancient Woodland' issue, ecological and other necessary reports were available or being commissioned.

Letters of support for the application from the public would be helpful. SF has offered to go through the original letters of support and to compile a file of supportive information.

4. Ecological Reports

Ecological reports and surveys to be negotiated, including for newts (not required until work on the track begins), dormice and bats. As commercial costs for such surveys are high, members of the committee were invited to seek 'pro bono' consultancy for ecological surveys from local qualified experts to back up the work of the Greenways Bristol specialist who is based in Bristol. TS to follow up.

CMcF with TS would contact Kevin Stannard of Forestry England to set up a working partnership to progress the project.

5. Relations with Residents Parkend.

In view of the private right of way at Fountain Way, Parkend, BW of GCC Highways had offered an alternative route connecting to the central Forest cycle track network.

Greenways would be designing a revised link on Forestry land adjacent to the current private drive at Fountains Way, Parkend. Assistance from FE was also requested to assure this link.

6. Alternative routes.

Although alternative routes are being considered and we continue to follow the alignment shown in the planning application document, there will be a number of detailed route improvements either as a result of land agreements or as a consequence of a better understanding of the locality. Path projects of this kind are usually revised all the way through to their final construction.

It was noted that the short 1.8 metre clearance for the track north of Whitecroft could not be increased, but that many cyclists would opt to take the B4228 instead for that section of the route.

7. Land Deals

No concluded agreements reported to date, but deals would be reported to the group when confirmed. JGri reported wide support for the track from landowners along the track.

8. Funding/Grant Awards

PH explained the Government 'Levelling Up' award scheme through which national funding was available for projects in designated parts of the country, available through then District Council. The local area is in the Tier 1 band, which is the band favoured for grant awards.

Forest of Dean District Council was making available officers for implementing these grant bids. Applications for funding are due by 18th June 2021.
CMcF would check on the availability of District Council funding of £55k for the project.
Further work would be carried out in creating a partnership with Gloucestershire County Council in developing the project as a County amenity.

9. Road Crossings

Co-operation with GCC was required. The Parish Council would endeavour to secure the County's positive buy in to the project. With Lydney Town Council, a speed limit of 20mph was required at Forest Road Lydney to facilitate the road crossing there. WDPC offered to conduct a preliminary speed survey at the site.

10. Publicity

DK would set up a web site and Facebook page for the project, linked to the WDPC web site and to the Lydney Town Council site.

11. Other Matters

- i) A walk of the track to involve TS would be arranged by JGri.
- ii) WDPC would seek to ensure the inclusion of a route for the track at the proposed Pin Factory, Whitecroft, when the application for the development there was re-presented. Consideration would be given to commissioning a mural on a bridge on the track.

Meeting closed.