



AAGP Newsletter

November 2020

AAGP Executive Committee: Chairman - Joe Harvey; Vice Chairman and Warwickshire Representative – Liam Maude; Hon. Secretary – Colin Tether; Hon Treasurer – Daryl Bailey; Worcestershire Representative – Jill Smith

Message from AAGP Chairman, Joe Harvey

Dear Members,

Welcome to the November newsletter and a lot of the news is very good, and also very encouraging. Of course the new situation of national lock down inevitably will have some effect on work but it will not stop us continuing to make progress on a number of fronts.

As you know our strategy has been to look to build partnerships with landowners and politicians at local, district and county levels as well as other organisations and individuals who can be a positive influence on driving things forward. We have already made a lot of those links and details of these can be found below. Though the original Evesham to Alcester route is running well ahead of the Broom to Stratford spur, there is no doubt that the combination of the two now offers a much more attractive opportunity at a political level than the original on its own.

Because the amount of work required keeping things moving is growing rather quicker than I think we imagined, we are now aiming to divide up the tasks a little more systematically to make the most of our time. It is interesting to see how we are learning new skills, gaining more knowledge as we bump into the various challenges thrown up along the way. The well-worn concept of 'this is a marathon not a sprint' is most certainly true of the AAGP, however our strong ambition is to have at least one section of the Greenway open by the end of next year – and that is very exciting!

Our Funds and Indemnity Insurance

The AAGP is in a satisfactory position. Following the very kind donations from Worcestershire County Council and Evesham Town Council earlier in the year, the Broom Action Group donated £500 to AAGP in August. The Executive Committee agreed to pursue Indemnity Insurance as at this stage officers are dealing with more significant issues.

Extent of the AAGP – Linking to Stratford upon Avon

We reported in the August Newsletter the approach from Bidford Health Centre Patient Support Group to join with our project and we asked Members on their views of extending the AAGP to include the link from Bidford to Stratford upon Avon. No member voiced any opposition although the point was made that we should not neglect our current work.

The route from Broom to Stratford lies along an old railway line. It extended from the wartime concrete signal box still to be seen alongside the A46 north of Salford Priors, past the south of Broom, then the north of Bidford and Welford, to connect into an existing cycleway at the edge of

Stratford racecourse. This cycleway connects with the existing popular Stratford Greenway. This route adds about another 12km to the route of the AAGP.

The route was part of the Stratford upon Avon and Midland Junction railway and there were stations at Bidford and Broom. The line was notable for iron ore trains and banana specials. It closed to passengers in 1949 and to freight in 1960. There are still sections of the line to be seen including a number of bridges.

Strategic approach to building partnerships

Since before Christmas 2019 we began a process that had at its heart the absolute necessity of creating partnerships at all levels of political influence. We had already spoken to all of you and you had given us 'in principle' and financial support. Since then we have contacted all parish councils on the Broom to Stratford spine and sent them materials and information on the project. We have had meetings, either in person or by Zoom, with Welford, Luddington and Stratford Town Council – Bidford are of course already strongly committed.

We are now in regular contact with both District Councils. Over the last six weeks or so we have met with the Leader and CEO of Wychavon and are working on a presence in their planning for health and well-being as well as climate change/green spaces developments. We have had meetings with officers at SDC and recently with Daren Pemberton (Planning portfolio holder). Again we are seeing great progress in becoming a part of their key objectives both in terms of infrastructure and climate change.

We have recently met with Nadhim Zahawi (MP for Stratford upon Avon) and Nigel Huddleston (MP for Mid Worcestershire). Both MPS are showing their interest and commitment to the project and confirmed our strategy of engaging with local politicians is correct as the funding opportunities announced by the UK Government over the last year will be distributed through local councils and organisations. They will keep us informed of funding opportunities and undertook to assist with bids.

We have spoken to officers at Warwickshire County Council and have had a very helpful response – we are pursuing a similar relationship with Worcestershire CC. These layers of political engagement are vital to access the support for policy change as well as attracting government funding through the good offices of the county councils. Our aim is to have the AAGP, or sections of it, 'oven ready' when grant funding comes available often with very short turnaround requirements.

We are pursuing a very similar approach to our landowners, identifying and then setting up meetings in order to get their understanding and then their support for them to give us access. A big part of this is agreeing a package of measures to reassure them that the project offers great benefits and little or no nuisance!

Joe Harvey

Salford Priors Parish Council – CIL Funding to be provided to make Salford Priors to Wixford route accessible

Following a number of meetings with representatives from Salford Priors Parish Council, they have agreed to ring-fence a sum of £100,000 from their Community Infrastructure Levy ("CIL") funds to develop part of the cycle path in their area. Landowners are being consulted to gain

permission of access, and quotes for Ecology Surveys are being sourced, to enable a bid for CIL monies from Salford Priors Parish Council to clear the route from Salford Priors to Wixford. This is a joint operation between AAGP and Salford Priors Parish Council Leisure Trails Working Group.

Land ownership investigations

Discussions with the primary landowners along our proposed routes are continuing. Initial results have been very encouraging and there appears to be a genuine interest and support for what we are trying to do.

Most of the land along the route, and that to either side of the route, is registered land and ownership details are therefore public record via the HM Land Registry. HM Land Registry holds ownership details of 85% of land and property in England and Wales. The remaining 15% is unregistered, primarily because it hasn't been sold over the last 30 years. Since 1990 it has been compulsory when buying unregistered land to apply to have the land registered within two months of a sale.

A small proportion of the land on the route is unregistered and therefore we have been in discussions with various organisations, including parish councils, Highways England and Historical Railways Estate to determine ownership.

We now have a good overview of the various landowners we need to be engaging with for the Evesham to Alcester route as well as the Broom to Stratford route.

Ecology Surveys

The AAGP are now in the process of obtaining quotes for a Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA). This will be a survey of the route from Salford Priors to Wixford to assess habitats and wildlife. It will flag up any issues and give an indication as to how we deal with them. We are not surveying the entire route at this stage as these PEA's have a limited shelf-life of 18 months so it makes sense to deal with the sections that will be constructed first. It is hoped that we can engage the services of a specialist company to undertake this work in the near future. The PEA will establish any special habitats, plant and animal species that need to be protected. The PEA will inform our future planning and any mitigation action we may need. The PEA will also allow us to apply for funding that will go towards implementing the route. This is an initial assessment and depending on what is found further in depth surveys may have to be done later to obtain planning permission. In Warwickshire there is the principle of 'No Net Loss' with regard to biodiversity and it is hoped that the Greenway will overall add to the ecology along the route.

New AAGP Website by Jill Smith

The AAGP are pleased to announce the intention to launch a website. We are hoping to reach a wider audience by doing this and eventually encourage a volunteer group to work alongside us and support the work of the AAGP. When the route is established it will also help to advertise the cycle route to potential new users. To be included in the new website will be an overview of the route and what has been achieved so far along with AAGP documentation. If anyone has any contributions, they wish to make or ideas to be included in the new website your ideas will be most welcome. We also need a logo to represent the AAGP so any budding graphic designer's contributions please.

Parish Working Groups for Leisure Routes – Using CIL money – The Salford Priors Experience

The CIL is a charge levied by local authorities on new development in their area. CIL monies are used to deliver local infrastructure projects such as the one AAGP is promoting for the benefit of the local community. Setting up a working group in a Parish for leisure routes can be immediately beneficial as it will allow the Parish to allocate the project against CIL monies Parishes receive.

This means that CIL money is no longer as open to bids from elsewhere in the county. Parishes will need to identify a deliverable piece of work and we are happy to share our experiences with Parishes to achieve that. AAGP is very positive about the work done in conjunction with Salford Priors. Spending AAGP resources on sourcing Ecology quotes, etc. meaning it is not a burden on our already overworked Parish Clerks. It allows the Parish to develop local infrastructure that will eventually link up and provide continuous improvement as a leisure, health and wellbeing benefit to all.

Calling all Parish Clerks - We need your help.

To secure funding for the cycle route we need to know the current population of your parish. This information can be sent to avonandarrowgreenway@gmail.com and from this we can collate the information. Your help and assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated. The following parishes are asked to reply, Alcester, Arrow with Weethly, Bidford on Avon, Binton, Cleeve Prior, Evesham, Exhall, Harvington, Luddington, North & Middle Littleton, Norton and Lenchwick, Offenham, Salford Priors, Stratford, Welford, Wixford, Temple Grafton and Welford.

Future Member Zoom Meetings

Our last 'Face to Face' meetings were the AGM then the General Meeting back on 13th February, in Dunnington Baptist Church. Since then, with the varying Covid Regulations in force, we have been unable and unwilling to hold another 'Face to Face' meeting.

You will have seen that a lot of progress has been made since February and we do feel that Members should have the chance to discuss the Project and to ask questions and get further involved. Consequently, we plan to hold 'Zoom' sessions.

There will be two meetings:

- Thursday November 26th, starting at 7:00pm for the main 'Spine' route, Evesham to Alcester including Cleeve Prior, The Littletons and Offenham
- Thursday December 3rd, starting at 7:00pm for the Broom to Stratford upon Avon section

We will issue invitations to the appropriate members a few days before the meetings. Only one member per Parish Council please! It will be useful if you wish to raise any particular issues to email them beforehand to avonandarrowgreenway@gmail.com

The Zoom session will be run on a Question and Answer basis and we will ensure that every member has a chance to speak and be heard. We look forward to seeing you again.

This Newsletter has been written jointly by members of the Executive Committee
9th November 2020