

The Avon and Arrow Greenway Project

Mid Summer Newsletter

Hello to all members of the Alcester to Arrow Greenway Project (AAGP).

We hope you are all in good health. Given the difficulties all of us have been facing during the lockdown we have been very limited in the actions we have been able to take and the progress we have been able to make. Hopefully some of the constraints will be lifted over the coming weeks and months and we can get back to work on the project.

To bring you up to speed with what we have managed to do and what might lie in the near future for all of us to engage with, we thought a brief newsletter would be helpful.....

The last time the whole group met was at the AGM on 13th February 2020. Our intention now is to let our members know the AAGP continues during the Covid-19 Pandemic and some progress has been made. Your officers have held meetings using 'Zoom' every three weeks and Joe has contacted some principal officers in the County and District Councils and some landowners.

Finances

Since the AGM, the AAGP has received a generous payment from Cllr Anthony Hopkins' Divisional Fund (Worcestershire CC) and a further contribution from Evesham Town Council. Therefore we are able to fund all the Sustrans Feasibility Study and some funds remain to take the project forward. We envisage some further specific study work will be needed together with ecology surveys.



Funding Opportunities. Your help is needed.

Joe and Daryl have been active identifying funding opportunities including the recent Government fund to mitigate against the pandemic. An example would be getting children to school along a cycle path instead of a school bus. We ask that if members from the Parishes and Clubs are aware of any promising funding opportunities then please let us know.

Working with the Councils and the Landowners

To take the project further we need to ensure that all County and District Councils know about us, are on board and supportive. To date the Parish and Town Councils have been fully involved but we do need to ensure that the officers and members at the top level of the Districts (Wychavon and Stratford upon Avon) together with the Counties (Worcestershire and Warwickshire) have been contacted. We need to ensure the project is in their future plans and that they will be happy to adopt the routes when completed.

In short we need to form a partnership with the Councils to take the project forward. Joe has been active in identifying who we should contact and will be continuing with his charm offensive in contacting the right people.

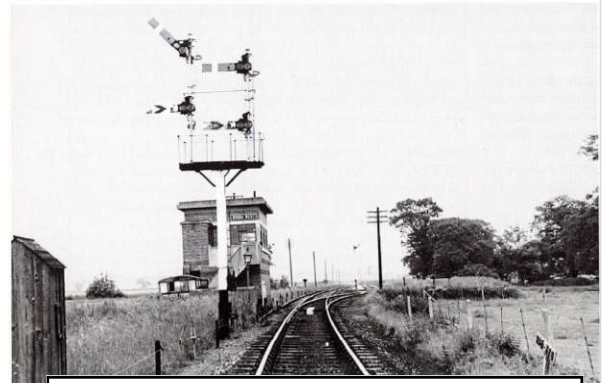
We also need to talk to landowners. Daryl and Colin are busy in identifying who the various landowners are, and there are a lot of them. Once the exercise has been completed, we will ask for members' help in contacting the landowners they know as we think landowners will prefer to deal with a 'Friendly Face'.

A very short history of the old railway lines.

The proposed spine route of the AAGP follows the line of the old railway line between Evesham and Alcester. The branch across the river Arrow to Broom and onwards to Bidford on Avon would follow the route of the old railway line from Broom Junction to Stratford upon Avon. The days these railways were last used is long gone but it may be of interest to review some of the history. For more information please read the excellent 'Illustrated History of the Ashchurch to Barnt Green Line—The Evesham Route' by R. J Essery.

Evesham to Alcester: This section of line, single throughout, was opened in 1868 with stations at Harvington, Salford Priors, Broom and Wixford (closed 1950). The line closed in 1962, before the Beeching Axe fell. The line formed a link from Ashchurch to Barnt Green, both on the main Midland main line from Gloucester to Birmingham which includes the famous Lickey Incline. In its heyday the line took a lot of horticultural freight and also had a direct passenger service between Evesham and Birmingham. In latter days there were five through trains a day, the fastest of which took 1 hour 22 minutes, a time which has only just been beaten with the opening of the Worcestershire Parkway station.

Broom Junction to Stratford upon Avon. This section of line opened in 1879 with stations at Bidford and Binton. The line formed a link across country via Stratford all the way to Blisworth in Northamptonshire, connecting with the main London to Birmingham main line. It was closed to passengers in 1949 and to goods in 1960. It is ironic that the remaining signal box to be seen beside the A46 dual carriageway was only opened in 1942 when a new chord was installed to allow trains to travel between Evesham and Stratford without reversing at Broom junction. The signal box was built to a ARP design with 14 inch thick concrete walls, reinforced floor and roof.



Broom West Signal box, looking to the north
The chord to the right runs towards Bidford .
Thanks to R J Essery

A Photographic Record. Your help is needed.

Much of our route will run along the old railway lines and some along footpaths and bridleways. The installation of the route will inevitably change things and so it will be good to have a comprehensive record of what is there now in 2020. The old railway line includes many structures including bridges and some railway buildings. Some of the station houses remain, at Evesham, Harvington and Salford Priors.



The photograph shows the bridge located close to the river Avon at the northern extent of 'The Valley' land. Our route will run over the top of the bridge and a footpath runs underneath. The remains of some coping stones can be found scattered around and most probably some remedial works will be needed before the status of the route changes from the existing 'Permissive Path' to a formal shared cycle and walking route, adopted by the County Council.

Taking photographs of the various structures can be a challenge as many are difficult to reach through the brambles and stinging nettles. But we would welcome members tackling a section. If you want to help, please ensure you record the following:
The description, the date and the exact location. Then send them on to our new email address, shown below.

AAGP Email and Further Meetings

The AAGP now has its own email address: avonandarrowgreenway@gmail.com so please use this to get in touch with us - all officers can see these emails. We will schedule a full group meeting once we have something significant to discuss. This may be in person or by Zoom depending on the situation at the time. As always we are interested to hear from you and if you have some information you think is useful please let us know on the email above. Until then the newsletter will be our main form of communication.

With best wishes from The Committee

Chair: Joe Harvey

Vice Chair: Liam Maude

Hon. Secretary: Colin Tether

Hon. Treasurer: Daryl Bailey

15th June 2020