

## Otter Valley cycleway campaign

*From the blog of Ottery Councillor Claire Wright - with an interesting exchange with Sidmouth Councillor Stuart Hughes...*

### **Otter Valley cycleway campaign shifts up a gear Claire | Wednesday, 12 September 2012**

A campaign to create a cycleway from Feniton to Sidmouth will shift up a gear next month, with an open invitation to all residents who are interested in knowing more about the project.

The event, which will be held at The Kings School on Thursday 18 October, will aim to demonstrate the benefits of such schemes to the local economy and also to residents health.

The Tarka Trail in North Devon has given a huge boost to tourism in the area.

Organisers - Kings School teachers Jo Elliott and Jason Wood, myself and Cllr Roger Giles, are aiming to set up presentations from individuals who have been involved in creating similar schemes locally and at the end of the meeting will be asking for volunteers to join a committee who will work towards making the scheme a reality.

The task now is working on removing the blocks that have so far prevented the scheme from coming forward. The key questions are who do we need to influence in order to get the scheme off the ground and how do we do that.

Funding will be a big piece of the jigsaw.

Kings School students are expected to present their own ideas for the project.

It is proposed that the cycleway follows the old railway track which met with Beeching's axe in the 1970s and has been agreed in principle for many years. The cycleway would start at Feniton, go through Ottery St Mary and Tipton and finish at Sidmouth.

The meeting on Thursday 18 October will begin at 7pm in Kings School canteen. It is expected to last for around an hour and a half.

All are welcome!

### **Comments**

1. At 09:53 am on 16th Sep Chris wrote:

Sorry to be negative about this plan, but why has no one approached the farmers / land owners along the route. The bed of the old railway was sold to the farmers and many have now integrated this back into the fields.

You will need to get the farmers on side before any of this can happen.

2. At 10:03 am on 16th Sep Claire wrote:

Roger Giles knows much more about this than I do but as I understand it, the cycleway has been agreed in principle by Devon County Council for years.

More work needs to be done though and we are setting up a committee to find what what blocks there are and work out how we can resolve them.

Perhaps you will be at the meeting on 18 October so we can talk then?

**3.** At 09:52 am on 21th Sep Stuart Hughes CC wrote:

I believe that you need to back pedal and not falsely build up peoples hopes that this scheme is on track to be realised.....Having been involved in this since the start with Roger Giles and held many meetings looking at the route with officers at County and last year a round table meeting where it was agreed that to deliver this scheme would need to be done in stages the first of which should be from Ottery St Mary where the Connect 2 project Coleridge Bridge has been provided to Feniton which would then link in to the new town at Cranbrook and then link to Exeter via Redhayes bridge. This can be a community based initiative drawing down contributions from other sources which would allow the scheme to slowly move forward like the Culm Valley Trail....this isn't however a priority of the County Council although we may assist through the planning system.

As local member I am looking at the Sidmouth end of the scheme to Bowd which would require the provision of a bridge across the A3052...this would then link into the Byes Cycle trail (Sid Valley Trail) and then the final stage would be from Bowd to Ottery St Mary.

Whilst this scheme has been flagged up as a future aspiration, it hasn't been included in a forward programme which would then attract Local Transport Plan funding.....There are many land ownership issues that will need to be overcome before anything happens and putting a timescale on this project I would say you are looking at 10 years or longer before completion.

The benefits are immense the Exe Estuary trail between Exmouth and Topsham is seeing 150,000 users and businesses along the route have seen increase in trade and many new businesses have opened....The final sections of the trail are still to be provided at Powderham a new bridge and also the Clyst Bridge....this project has taken almost 10 years.....The Drake Trail recently opened has taken many years to complete however I estimate 250,000 users during the next year....Yes the Otter Valley Trail will be a huge boost to the local Economy and provide a valuable asset...but it won't happen over night and there is no need to start campaigning for a scheme that has already been agreed in principle and will eventually become reality ...Stuart Hughes CC Cabinet member for Highways and Transportation Devon County Council

**4.** At 02:25 pm on 21th Sep Claire wrote:

Hi Stuart, we have said that this is a long-term project and funding is an issue and I don't think anyone is under the impression it will be created overnight, but to achieve the project I do think it needs a bit of community enthusiasm and an active working committee to try and get around the blocks. If we don't do that it may never happen.

We hope that by forming an active committee the cycleway (particularly the Ottery end, which is what we are focusing on) will become a reality sooner than it might otherwise have done.

**5.** At 12:53 pm on 22th Sep Stuart Hughes CC wrote:

Your committee should be established to look at purely the Ottery St Mary to Feniton end of the cycleway.....I shall be organising a similar group from the round table that is being set up to establish a comprehensive Sidmouth Traffic Management Plan. This group will look at the Sidmouth to Bowd section of the route along with other cycleway links in and around Sidmouth and how these will link in with other routes.

Once these two phases of the scheme have secured funding we can then look at Bowd to Sidmouth but this is longer term ....10 years.

**6.** At 04:46 pm on 26th Sep Emily Redman wrote:

hello, i am a student at the kings school and we thought that the cycle path will be a good

idea because it will be safer for people to ride their bikes. Also it may encourage people to ride their bikes more and exercise more.

**7.** At 04:52 pm on 26th Sep Claire wrote:

Thanks for your comment Emily. The support of residents and especially Kings School students will be vital in helping us secure the funding.

We are very much looking forward to working with you all!

**8.** At 09:31 pm on 31th Jan Laura Conyngham wrote:

This is heartening for cyclists in Crediton who are desperate for a safe route to Exeter. It is an effective way of bringing together the different strands in your campaign and brilliant to see Year 9s leading it.