

Friends of the Railway Path

Annual Report June 2012

The Friends started up in May 2011 with a small committee and a charitable constitution. We are not yet a registered charity, as the Charity Commission refuse to register charities with an annual income of less than £5,000 per year. I hope that we will shortly be able to register!

We've adopted an initial set of objectives:

1. To advertise and promote links to paths, byways, bridleways and minor roads to enable walkers, runners, cyclists & horse riders to relax, exercise and explore the local countryside.
2. To support the biodiversity of the area by maintaining and improving habitats along the path, and its surrounds.
3. To improve and develop the path thereby supporting local communities with a safe route for people to get to work, schools, shops and local businesses, connecting people with the local economy.
4. To help attract people to the area, and encourage a fuller appreciation of its history, agriculture, ecology, culture and geology; promoting the path as a gateway to the Marlborough Downs, the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and to "Jeffries' Land".

We are delighted to have the active support of several partner organisations:

- North East Wiltshire Ramblers
- Wiltshire Bridleways Association
- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, from whose Sustainable Development Fund we have received a grant of £3,200
- Sustrans, who lease and manage the Path and who have provided extensive support in kind including the donation of tools and a trailer to keep them in, and the commissioning of a report on the ecology of the Path, with management recommendations.

We formally launched the Friends in the autumn of 2011 with a cycle ride along the Path from Coate Water to Marlborough on 10th September. This was exactly the 50th anniversary of the last passenger train to use the railway, and 30 cyclists took part. It was followed by a well-attended exhibition in Marlborough Town Hall on 22nd October. We now have a list of contacts about 90 strong (two of whom run village websites in Baydon and Ogbourne St. George, giving us helpful local publicity), and 28 paid up members. We've set up a simple website to help us communicate

We held an Open Meeting in Chiseldon on 25th January, and 26 people turned out to help generate ideas of what we would like to see (or sometimes, like not to see) on the Path. We have used this both to help Sustrans adapt their maintenance plan, and also to start developing project proposals of our own. We will present some of these during this evening's meeting: the main headings include:

- Producing and distributing leaflets and information
- Route development, access and signing
- Information/ Amenity improvements on the Path
- Improving Ecology / Biodiversity
- Volunteer capacity building and Workday programme

We have also organised 4 workdays, jointly with the Sustrans Swindon and Marlborough Rangers Group. Attendance seems to have been growing steadily, and on the last one there were 17 willing workers doing a variety of maintenance and improvement activities at the Marlborough end of the

Path. Previous workdays have been held Between Chiseldon and the motorway, between Chisledon and Gipsy Lane, and around Poulton Down. Our next workdays will be on October 14th (planned to work in between Ogbourne St. George and Ogbourne St. Andrew), and 18th November (planned to work between Coate Water and Chiseldon).

We have received grants and donations from

- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: £3,200 as mentioned above
- Marlborough Town Council: £300
- Marlborough Cycling Club: £300

We have so far used these to fund our start up activities. A statement of our finances is shown in the appendix to this report.

Where next? We think our priorities now are

1. To define specific projects which we now want to get done, and match these up either with funding (so that we can pay someone to deliver) or with a volunteer workforce
2. To develop our volunteer network so that it's capable of delivering simple projects either as stand-alone or as part of a longer, continuing programme of workdays.
3. To identify and apply for funding to deliver selected projects.

To do this, we will need

- More members: please consider joining (if you haven't already). A large membership base helps demonstrate that the local community is behind us.
- More committee members: please let us know if you could help out on our committee, which meets about 4 times a year.
- More volunteers on workdays: please consider joining one of these (planned for October 14th, November 18th).
- Feedback on priorities for projects: we will progressively put these on our website.
- Access to funding: please let us know if you know of a grant or sponsorship opportunity which we could use.
- Skills and help with organising: please let us know if you have a skill we could use in one of the projects – hedging, leaflet design, wildlife surveys, ...

Dick Millard
Chair and Secretary
Friends of the Railway Path
12th June 2012

<http://www.friendsofthepath.org.uk/index.htm>

Appendix: Financial Statement

Friends of the Railway Path					
Unaudited accounts from 20th Jul 2011 to 11th Jun 2012					
<u>Petty cash</u>	<u>Income</u>			<u>Expenses</u>	
MCC contribution	£302.50			Deposit Hire of Town Hall	£40.00
Subscriptions	£20.00			Transfer to Lloyds a/c	£200.00
				Book 2nd stamps	£4.32
		£322.50			
				Total	£244.32
				Petty cash balance	£78.18
<u>Lloyds Bank Account</u>	<u>Income</u>			<u>Expenses</u>	
Deposit from petty cash	£200.00			Town Hall balance	£40.00
AONB grant	£3,200.00			Friends of the Path banner	£75.97
Coffee stall takings	£20.50			Scout hall bookings	£25.00
Town Council grant	£300.00			Printing	£199.35
Subscriptions	£173.00				
		£3,893.50			
				Total	£340.32
				Bank balance	£3,553.18
				Unpresented c/qs	£209.35
				Unprocessed s/o	£5.00
				Bank balance at 2nd Ap 2012	£3,757.53