

## **Primrose Trail - response to questions**

We welcome the many private and public responses to recent publication of our Feasibility Study/Proposal Outline. This document has been written to answer a range of questions posed by landowners, residents and local councillors in the Avon Valley area.

### **1 Type of trail**

#### ***What type of paths would you expect to be required on the off-road sections of the route?***

We envisage well-drained cinder paths that would have a lower environmental impact than tarmac and provide an adequate surface for pushchairs and wheelchairs, a more forgiving surface for walkers and horses and, at the same time, prevent excessive speed from cyclists.

We take the recently completed Wray Valley Trail, between Bovey Tracey and Moreton-hampstead, as a model. The trail uses the route of a disused railway and passes through landscape similar to that of the Primrose Trail.

### **2 Consultation with landowners**

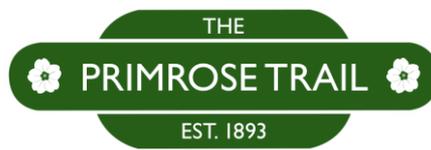
The Primrose Trail community group is made up of local, permanent residents of Kingsbridge, South Brent and the Avon Valley area. We have been meeting regularly for four years, during which time publicity and consultation with interested parties has been as extensive as possible given that members give their time voluntarily. The activities and progress of the project are reported openly to the public via our website, in the press and via social media.

The group has always been open to discussing objections and concerns raised by interested parties. Meetings with many of the landowners - 30+ have been identified along the proposed route - have taken place. In the main the response has been positive. Over the past few weeks however, a few objectors have highlighted opposition to the project. We are grateful for their feedback and are keen to address any thorny issues and answer any difficult questions.

Although many landowners were approached along the route as it was proposed three years ago, further consultation is long overdue because the route has evolved, and land and property ownership has changed. Covid-19 has, of course, hampered the revisiting of discussions. We aim to address this in the coming months but meanwhile we ask landowners to contact us directly if they have not already been in touch.

#### ***To what extent do you believe that you have a realistic chance of obtaining agreement for the use of the key sections of off-road route that would need to be included in order to make the route viable?***

We accept that to get agreement for the whole route will be a long task and relies on real governmental determination, at local and national level, to follow a green transport agenda.



Meanwhile, the trail route is designed so that if individual landowners oppose through-passage, an alternative route using existing public rights of way is available. Over time, we hope such diversions will be minimised.

In the absence of an off-road option, the route would generally follow minor roads. Where safety is a concern, in particular where the route would come into contact with more major roads, then traffic-calming may have to be considered.

### 3 Use of the trail

Re access to schools and shops. ***Which shops, which schools, and who would you envisage travelling to and from them?***

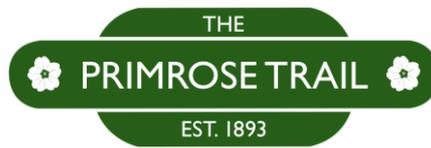
The Primrose Trail is aimed primarily at serving the communities along its length, and to provide an alternative to car use. Currently, the central Avon Valley is virtually inaccessible except by car - visitors and residents have to drive in and out. The objective is to reduce the need to drive by allowing visitors to walk or cycle, primarily from the ends of the trail at Kingsbridge and South Brent but also from Loddiswell, Diptford and Avonwick. At the same time residents along the route could walk or cycle to other facilities along the trail, and to Kingsbridge and South Brent at the ends.

Several residents of villages near the proposed route have recognised that they might benefit from non-vehicular travel provided by the trail. The trail would provide a route for leisure, exercise and tourism purposes, but more importantly provide an alternative to car travel for everyone along the route. Teenagers could cycle safely to school at Kingsbridge Community College and, particularly with the growing uptake of ebikes, residents could use the route for shopping, employment, and social travel. The concept of 'Active Travel' could become a reality.

***How many of the 50,000 visitors a year would you expect to drive to mid sections of the trail rather than start in Kingsbridge or South Brent?***

Car-parking in the mid section of the trail is limited and users will be actively encouraged to walk or cycle there from access points at or near the ends of the trail. While visitor numbers to the mid section would inevitably increase on a sunny day, it is hoped that the number of people driving there would actually reduce because the trail itself would give a realistic alternative to driving.

The estimated figure of 50,000 annual users mentioned in our Feasibility Study/Proposal Outline has raised alarm, but in reality, that figure equates to an average of 137 per day, and the trail is 19km long. We recognise that there would be seasonal variations, with possibly many more than this on a sunny summer day. In practice, the majority of these users would only access a short section of the route, maybe for an hour or two, perhaps from Kingsbridge to Loddiswell, or from South Brent to Diptford.



## 4 Effects on nature and environment

### ***What mitigations do you foresee?***

Creation of the Primrose Trail is intended to support biodiversity, not to degrade it. Environmentally sensitive sections will be fenced, and users of the trail restricted where necessary. Demographics and access points alone would result in far fewer users in the more sensitive middle section. Planting schemes, such as creating hedge banks to conceal fencing, would be introduced. We work with ecologists who advise on relevant issues to ensure not just that we mitigate environmental impact but that we actively enhance biodiversity. Government policy is to increase and encourage public access to green spaces, and there is evidence that when people connect with nature, they respect it more.

We will work bodies such as the AONB, Devon Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust to minimise disturbance to the area.

### ***What effects do similar trails have on the natural environment in other parts of the country?***

We are not aware of similar trails having a detrimental effect. They certainly raise public awareness and, with suitably designed viewing points, they seem to represent a win-win situation. The Plym Valley trail passing the peregrine nesting site in Cann Wood is an example of this on a very popular route.

We feel that fears that users might behave irresponsibly, trespass and rampage noisily through the valley dropping litter are unfounded. Appropriate signage will inform and advise users of the need to respect nature and each other.

## **Summary**

In summary, we look forward to creating an asset which connects our small rural communities to mutual advantage, by integrating a low-carbon option into the local travel and economic infrastructure and enabling it to be shared and appreciated by a manageable number of welcome visitors.

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