

Do residents want to expand the Strawberry Line to Shepton?



Friday, August 30, 2013



[Shepton Mallet Journal](#)

Do you want the Strawberry Line to come to Shepton Mallet? Do you want Shepton Town Council provide a £10,000 grant to create a network of safe paths for walkers, cyclists and families? These are some of the questions that will be asked at Tuesday's town council meeting.

The Strawberry Line could come to Shepton Mallet if the town's people show they want it.



Should the Strawberry Line be expanded to Shepton Mallet?

Shepton Mallet Town Council has agreed to release a £10,000 grant to kick start the process if it can be shown that the people of Shepton Mallet support the project. The ultimate aim is to convert the old Strawberry Line railway track from Clevedon to Cranmore into a network of safe paths for walkers, cyclists and families.

The line already runs from Clevedon to Cheddar. (*Note: It actually runs from Yatton to Cheddar. RR Webmaster.*) The Wells to Shepton section of the route would go through Croscombe, Bowlish and on to Shepton Mallet. The last stretch runs from Shepton through Doulting and on to Cranmore. A connecting route from Evercreech to Shepton is also proposed.

Strawberry Line chair Rob Reed has requested one-off grant from Shepton Mallet Town Council of £10,000 to cover the cost of a full survey and planning application needed to get the project off the ground.

He said that this sum would return at least ten times that amount in investment in the town, would ease access and promote sustainable transport to the town centre from the estates in the south of the town, and put Shepton Mallet on the tourist trail and the National Cycle Network.

A proposal to grant the cash was put forward by councillor Bob Champion, followed by lively debate. The council agreed that a grant of £10,000 would be made if it could be shown that the people of Shepton Mallet support the Strawberry Line project.

Mr Reed added: "I am very happy with the outcome. To get all the partners behind a project that will bring such benefits to the town is very encouraging. We urge everyone who would like to see the scheme become a reality to write to Shepton Mallet Town Council and tell them they support it."

The cost of opening up the path is estimated at between £100-150,000. Mr Reed said: "Our partners in Sustrans have a very successful track record in obtaining grants from the National Lottery for these schemes, and are confident of doing so again."

Mr Reed added: "Working with Sustrans, we have approached landowners to get their permission, and have been sourcing funds. Progress has been very encouraging, and we are very close to securing a key element of the route, which is to extend the Millennium Way from Collett Park through the district council car park, and through the old railway cutting into Station Way.

"Mendip District Council is supporting the scheme by letting the path go through their car park, and under the cutting, which is on their land.

"They have even supported us by ensuring the path is identified on the redevelopment plans proposed on the site."

Mr Reed presented a history of the Strawberry Line path to the town council saying that the opening of the old railway line from Yatton to Cheddar as a multi-user track had proved a great success for residents and tourism.

The aim is to extend the line from Cheddar to Shepton Mallet through Wells to meet up with the East Somerset Railway to complete the route.

So, do the residents of Shepton Mallet want this project to proceed? Tell us your thoughts on our Facebook page.