

Frome's Missing Link Project: connecting to Great Elm and Radstock

Elliots Lane to Selwood: the final missing link

with details of the overall route from Buckland Bridge to Welshmill



View of Coalash Lane with proposed bridge



Revised March 2023

Frome's Missing Link Project: connecting to Great Elm and Radstock

Elliot's Lane to Selwood: the Final Missing Link

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Frome's Missing Link Project: connecting to Great Elm and Radstock

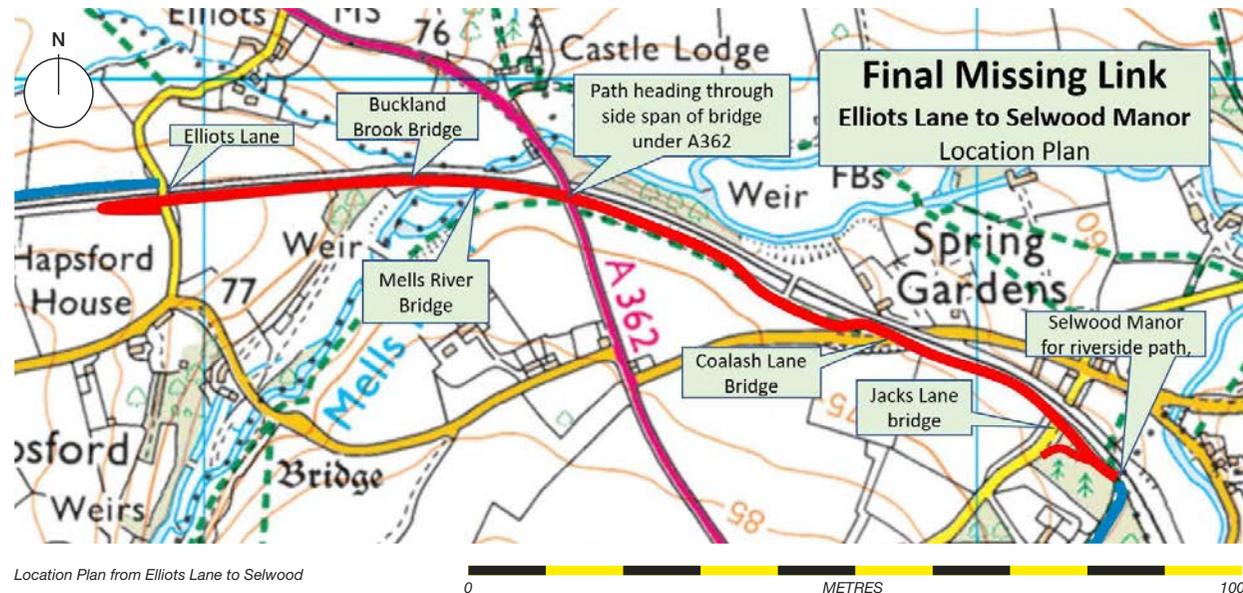
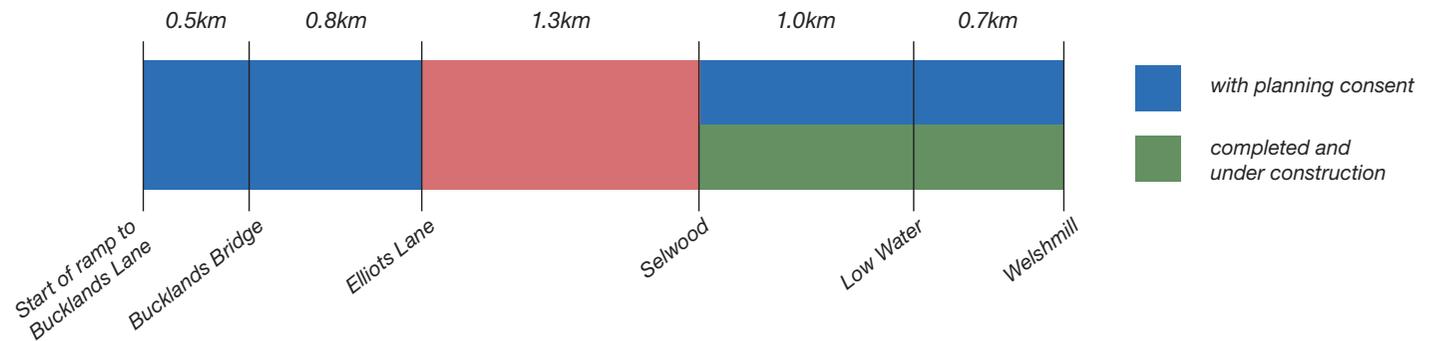
Elliots Lane to Selwood: the Final Missing Link

1 Summary

This report covers the details of the Final Missing Link to complete the greenway route from Radstock to Frome. The first section of this 13kms long traffic free path was completed 20 years ago. At that time it terminated at Buckland's Lane Bridge and Great Elm, a frustrating 4kms from Frome Town Centre. Over the subsequent years the Council, Sustrans and Frome Missing Links Group have chiselled away at closing the gap till now only the 1.3km Elliotts Lane to Selwood section remains to be approved. Naturally this is a particularly challenging section whose solutions are described in the following pages.

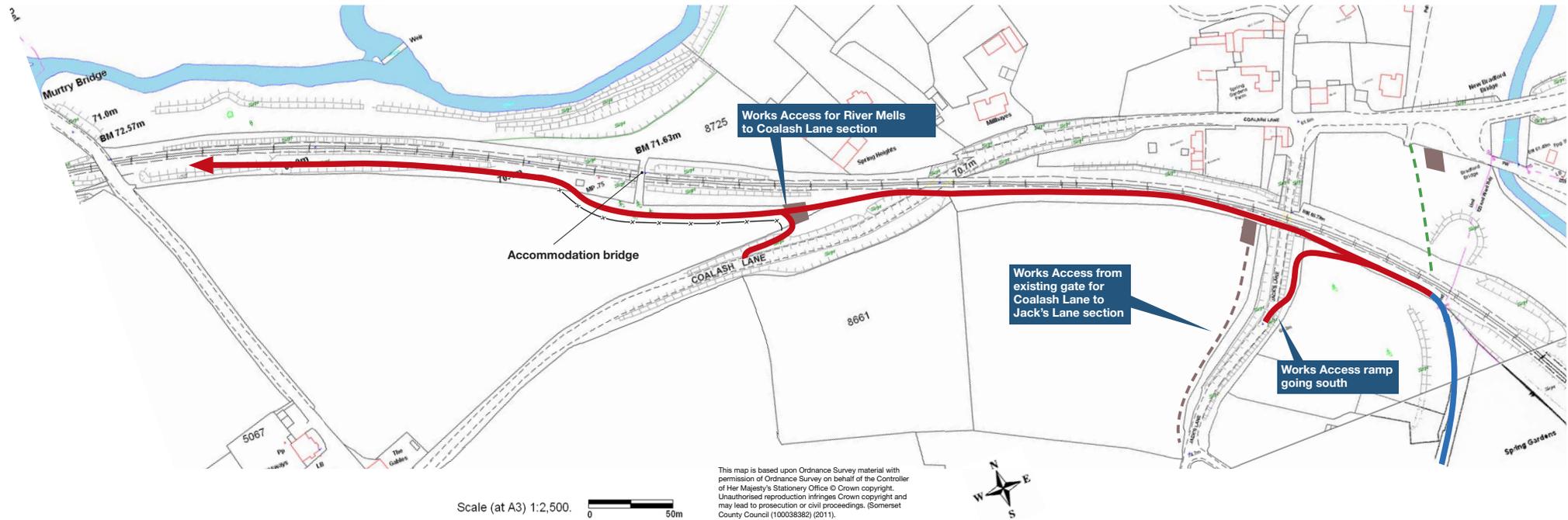
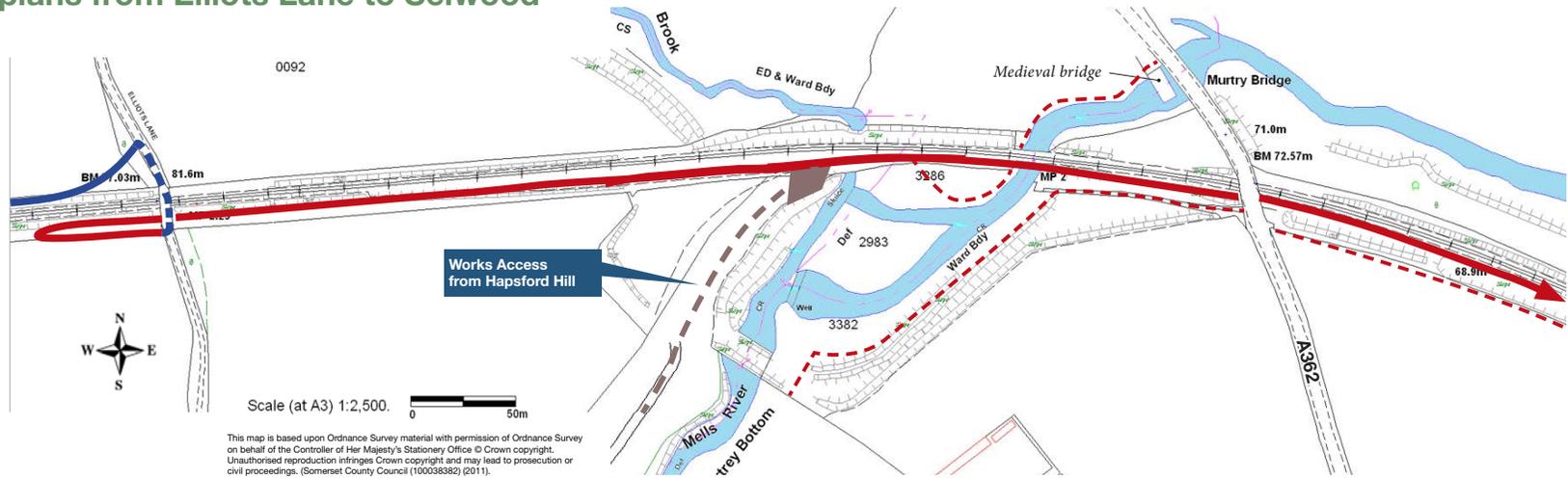
The report also covers the details of the whole section from Bucklands Bridge to Low Water and Welshmill in order to record the various sections with planning consent and works in progress.

Diagram showing the Frome Missing Link



2 Summary of detailed plans from Elliotts Lane to Selwood

The plans covering the final Missing Link are grouped here on a single page for convenience.



3 Introduction

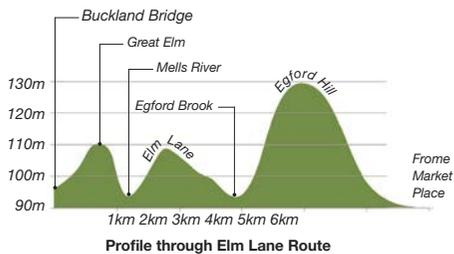
It is now 20 years since the Colliers Way was opened along the line of the old railway from Great Elm to Radstock. Since that time it has been an ongoing frustration that a combination of busy roads and demanding hills has all but made this popular traffic-free path inaccessible to cyclists from Frome itself.

The long delay in completing the project has been so frustrating that local people set up Frome's Missing Links Group and in the course of just a few months registered over 1,500 affirmations of support, numerous offers of help and commenced detailed surveys and negotiations on the ground.

There is no question that overcoming the gap, which requires more than 4km of new path, presents a considerable task.

The only minor road route via Egford Hill is attractive but with steep hills which most families and novice cyclists would have to walk.

After 6 miles on the easy gradients of the Railway Path from Radstock this is a challenge too far for many.



Coalash Lane and Hapsford Hill are slightly less hilly but the crossing of the A362 Frome/Radstock Road is dangerous with little opportunity of improvement, whilst Coalash Lane itself runs in a narrow defile without any trace of a relieving footway.

Compared with this, the Whatley Quarry Railway, the remains of the Dorset and Somerset Canal, and the Buckland Brook/River Frome corridor, all offer the chance of continuing on easily graded and almost completely traffic free paths all the way to the centre of Frome.

This report sets out the proposals developed by Frome's Missing Links Group, which has teamed up with Sustrans (the owners of the existing Railway Path) and Sustainable Frome to put this crucial connection in place.

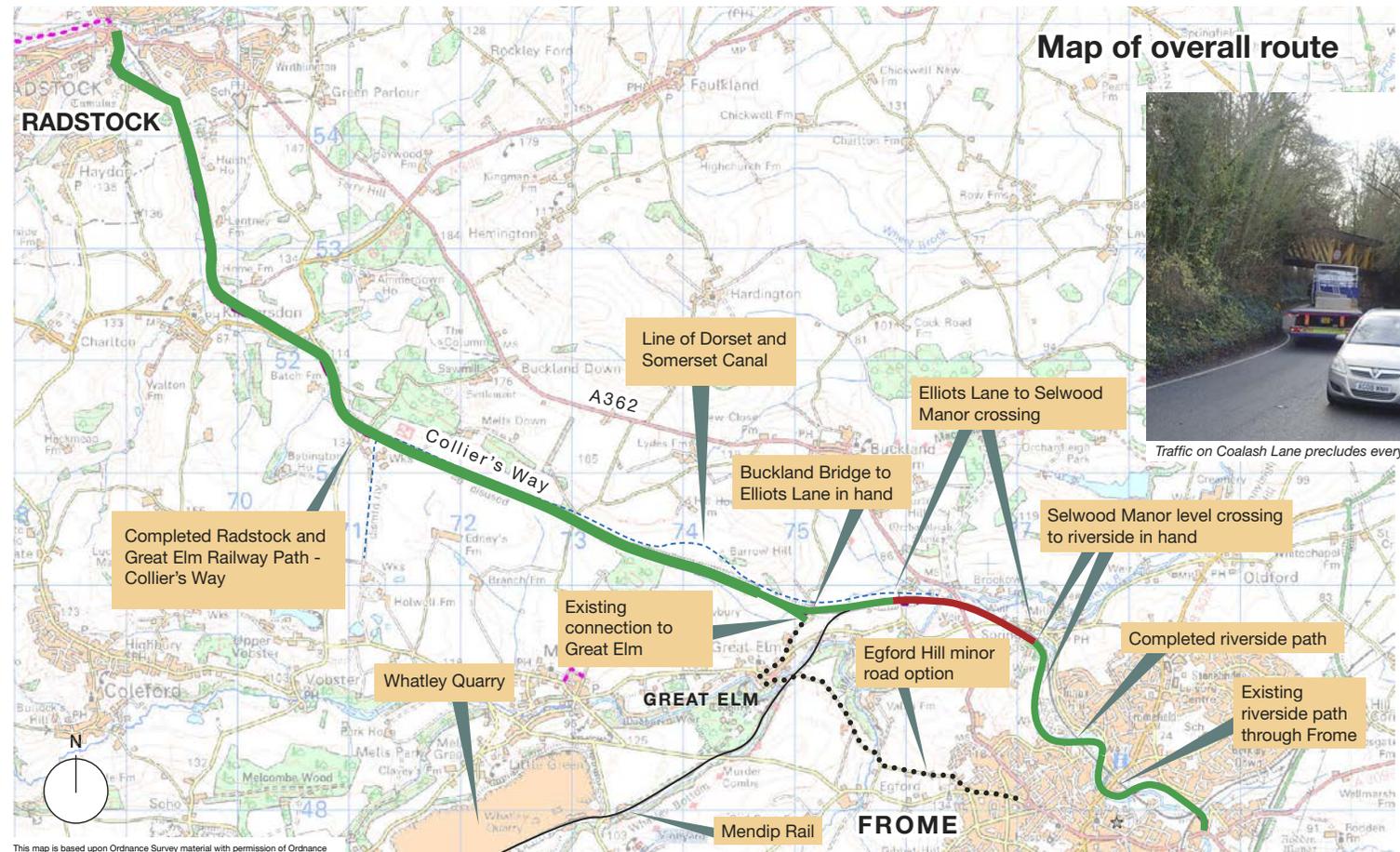
A traffic free route from the centre of Frome would be a popular local resource, it would promote active travel for fitness and health, it would be a catalyst for encouraging

the public to start cycling again, a popular visitor activity and a positive addition to developing Sustainable Frome.

These notes show the working details of the proposed route which reaches through to the outskirts of Frome at Welshmill. They have been drawn up in discussion with the landowners and the authorities. The support of landowners is critical and much valued for the success of this project, and we envisage that the details will

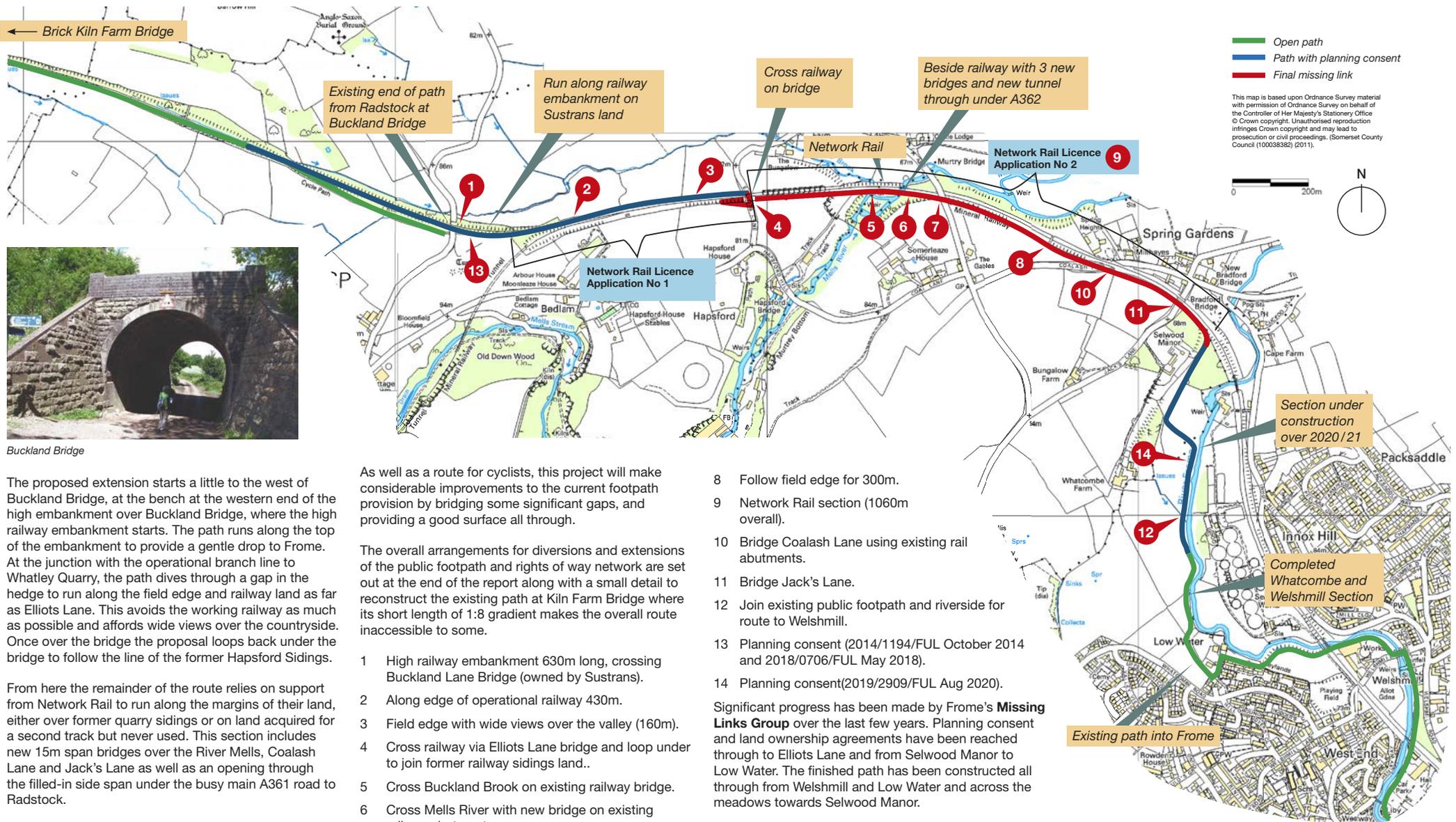
evolve still further until we reach a position where land agreements can be signed, funds secured and planning consents granted.

Over the last few years the initial riverside path from Frome Town Centre to Welshmill has been extended to Low Water, and then across the Meadows towards Selwood Manor where a further section is currently under construction.



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4 An overview of the proposed route from Bucklands Bridge to Welshmill



Buckland Bridge

The proposed extension starts a little to the west of Buckland Bridge, at the bench at the western end of the high embankment over Buckland Bridge, where the high railway embankment starts. The path runs along the top of the embankment to provide a gentle drop to Frome. At the junction with the operational branch line to Whatley Quarry, the path dives through a gap in the hedge to run along the field edge and railway land as far as Elliotts Lane. This avoids the working railway as much as possible and affords wide views over the countryside. Once over the bridge the proposal loops back under the bridge to follow the line of the former Hapsford Sidings.

From here the remainder of the route relies on support from Network Rail to run along the margins of their land, either over former quarry sidings or on land acquired for a second track but never used. This section includes new 15m span bridges over the River Mells, Coalash Lane and Jack's Lane as well as an opening through the filled-in side span under the busy main A361 road to Radstock.

Once over Jack's Lane the path would follow a short length of the existing footpath, before swinging away from the railway for a direct route to Frome itself.

As well as a route for cyclists, this project will make considerable improvements to the current footpath provision by bridging some significant gaps, and providing a good surface all through.

The overall arrangements for diversions and extensions of the public footpath and rights of way network are set out at the end of the report along with a small detail to reconstruct the existing path at Kiln Farm Bridge where its short length of 1:8 gradient makes the overall route inaccessible to some.

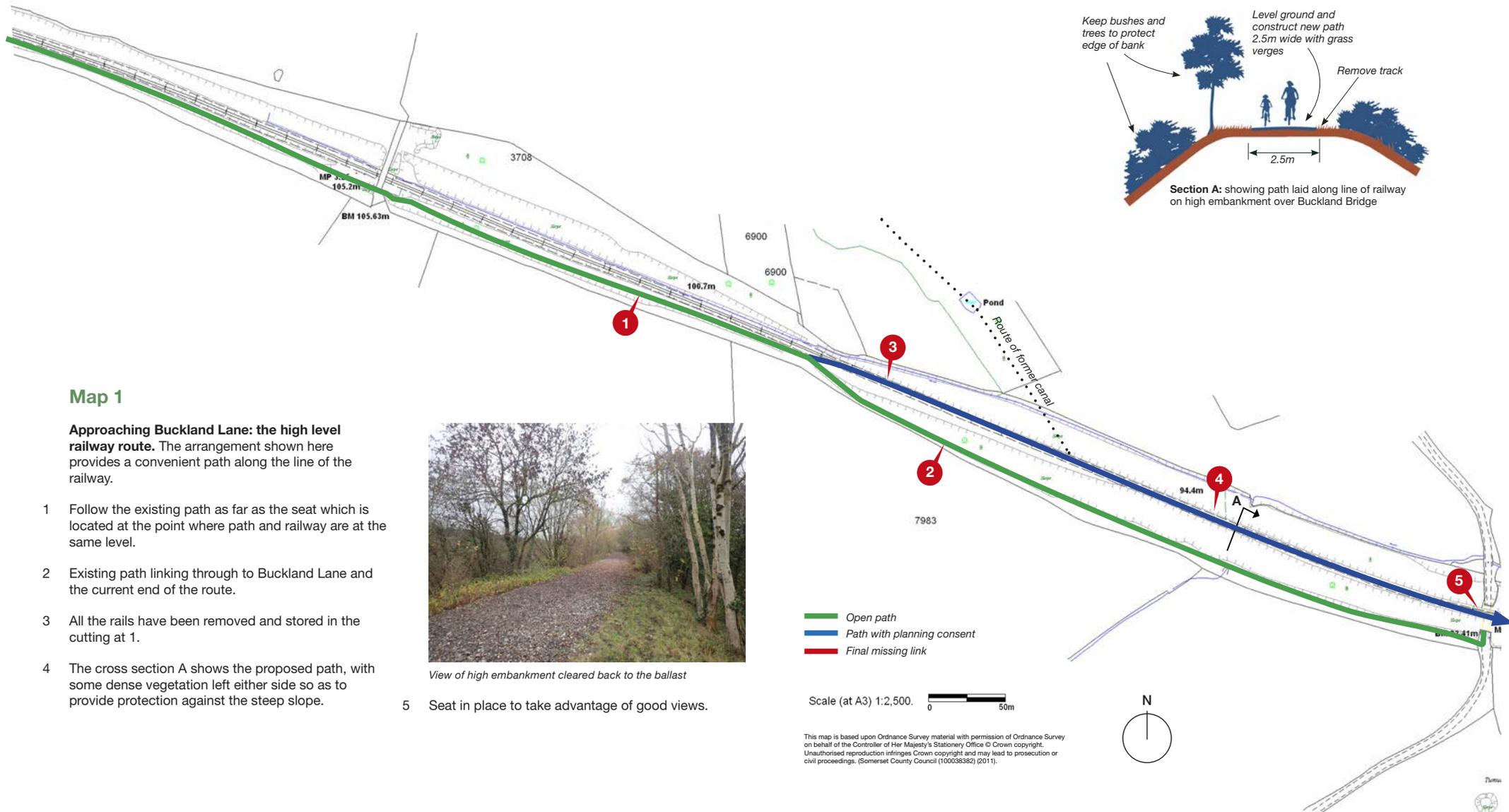
- 1 High railway embankment 630m long, crossing Buckland Lane Bridge (owned by Sustrans).
- 2 Along edge of operational railway 430m.
- 3 Field edge with wide views over the valley (160m).
- 4 Cross railway via Elliotts Lane bridge and loop under to join former railway sidings land..
- 5 Cross Buckland Brook on existing railway bridge.
- 6 Cross Mells River with new bridge on existing railway abutments.
- 7 Open up heading under filled-in side span under A362.

- 8 Follow field edge for 300m.
- 9 Network Rail section (1060m overall).
- 10 Bridge Coalash Lane using existing rail abutments.
- 11 Bridge Jack's Lane.
- 12 Join existing public footpath and riverside for route to Welshmill.
- 13 Planning consent (2014/1194/FUL October 2014 and 2018/0706/FUL May 2018).
- 14 Planning consent(2019/2909/FUL Aug 2020).

Significant progress has been made by Frome's **Missing Links Group** over the last few years. Planning consent and land ownership agreements have been reached through to Elliotts Lane and from Selwood Manor to Low Water. The finished path has been constructed all through from Welshmill and Low Water and across the meadows towards Selwood Manor.

This document outlines the overall route by way of supporting material for the final missing link from Elliotts Lane to the Spring Gardens level crossing.

5 Detailed plans including specifically the section from Elliotts Lane to Selwood



Map 1

Approaching Buckland Lane: the high level railway route. The arrangement shown here provides a convenient path along the line of the railway.

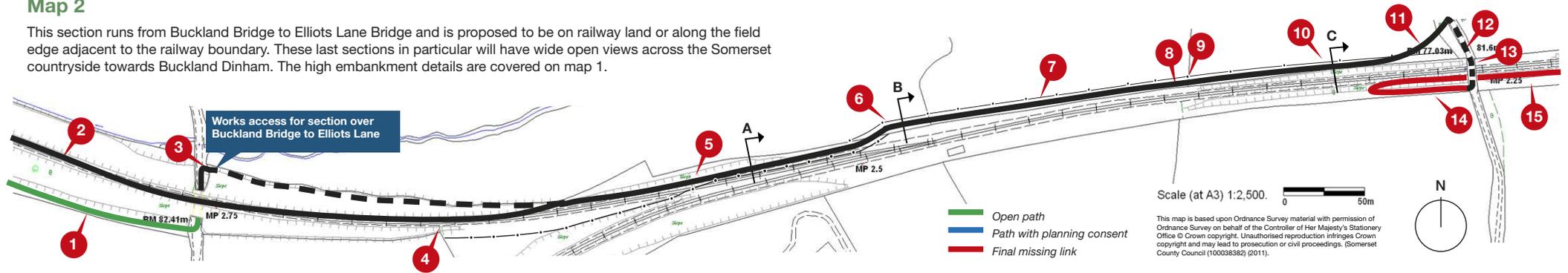
- 1 Follow the existing path as far as the seat which is located at the point where path and railway are at the same level.
- 2 Existing path linking through to Buckland Lane and the current end of the route.
- 3 All the rails have been removed and stored in the cutting at 1.
- 4 The cross section A shows the proposed path, with some dense vegetation left either side so as to provide protection against the steep slope.
- 5 Seat in place to take advantage of good views.



View of high embankment cleared back to the ballast

Map 2

This section runs from Buckland Bridge to Elliotts Lane Bridge and is proposed to be on railway land or along the field edge adjacent to the railway boundary. These last sections in particular will have wide open views across the Somerset countryside towards Buckland Dinham. The high embankment details are covered on map 1.

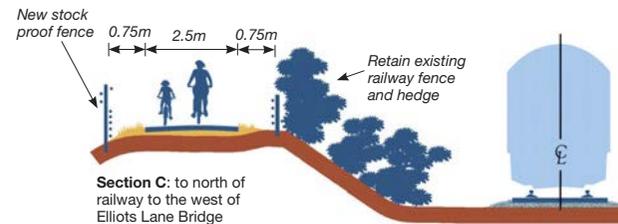
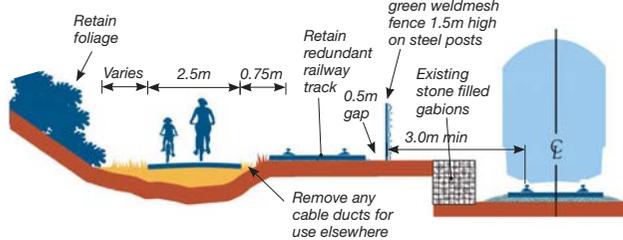


- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>1 Existing railway path, Colliers Way, currently terminates on road leading up to Great Elm.</p> <p>2 The route along the railway is described on map 1.</p> <p>3 Provide a new gate for the farmer and run path at the foot of the embankment. This route to be finished in stone for works access track.</p> <p>4 Continue along the railway alignment past Sustrans boundary here.</p> <p>5 Once in this shallow cutting there is space to run alongside the rail tracks which can be kept as a feature as shown in section A.</p> | <p>6 Cut through into the field at the first opportunity and run along its field edge to enjoy the views.</p> <p>7 Cut through the hedge and continue along the field edge with new stockproof fence, as shown in Section B.</p> <p>8 Farm crossing has been removed.</p> <p>9 Cut through the field hedge to continue along field edge.</p> <p>10 Path continues along field edge as shown in section D.</p> | <p>11 Path links to Elliotts Lane on an embankment crossing the sunken gully which was the route of the original lane.</p> <p>12 Join Elliotts Lane.</p> <p>13 Cross the railway on the existing bridge.</p> <p>14 Go just beyond the bridge and then double back so as to allow a 1:15 gradient down to the south side of the railway.</p> <p>15 The path now runs along next to the railway as described on map 3.</p> |
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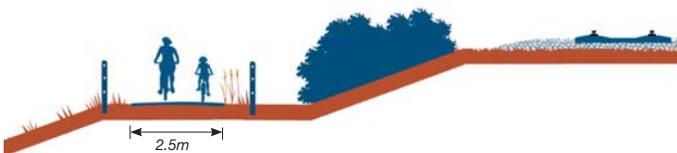


Point 10: View of fenced corridor along field edge looking towards Elliotts Lane

Section A: to north of old railway track



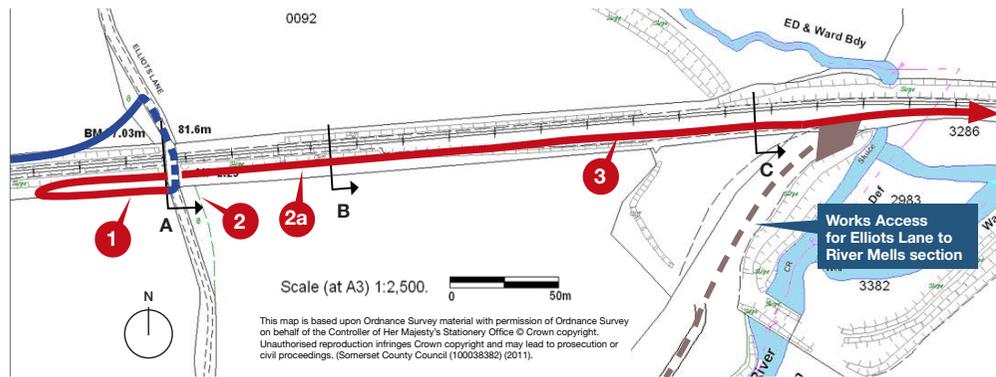
Section B: path runs along field edge



Example of path beside mineral line at Nelson, South Wales with 1.5m high boundary fencing

Map 3

This map covers the section from Elliots Lane to the river bridge



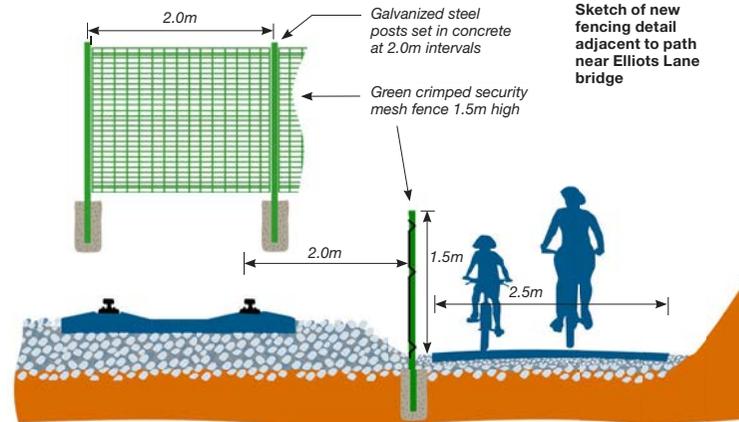
- 1 Ramp down from Elliots Lane along the line of the existing Network Rail line-side access. Remove the existing concrete steps and replace with an earthworks ramp, doubling back to reach formation level adjacent to Elliots Lane Bridge, so as to achieve an even slope of 1:15 gradient down from the Lane to railway path level.
- 2 Pass under the bridge as shown in the section with the fence set 2.0m off the inside face of the nearside rail. The photograph on the previous page shows a similar arrangement adjacent to a mineral line at Nelson in South Wales.
- 2a Alternatively cut new ramp going towards Frome. This will depend upon the quality of the rock and whether it can be excavated and on the availability of 1-2m of additional land off the field edge if needed. This arrangement shown in the section would reduce the overall length of path and railway fencing.
- 3 Continue along the line of the former Hapsford siding clearing the ground back to the rock face but keeping the original lighting posts in case they could be used as a feature along the path. The sketch shows the proposed fencing arrangement; either side is palisade fencing or preferably in proprietary weldmesh, green and 1.5m high, as in the photograph. In this rural location it will make a considerable difference if the public can look over the fence rather than feel imprisoned in a narrow defile. Note that nearer the Mells River Bridge the path can move away from the line allowing the fence to be set 3.0m off the rail.



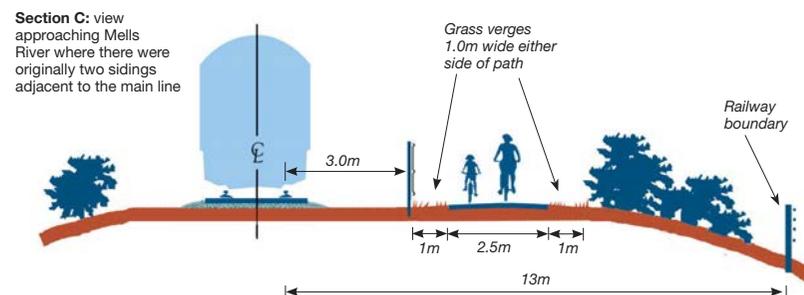
Example of palisade fencing



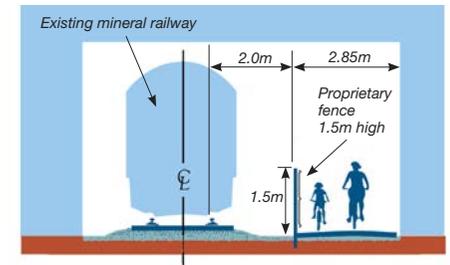
Example of weldmesh fencing



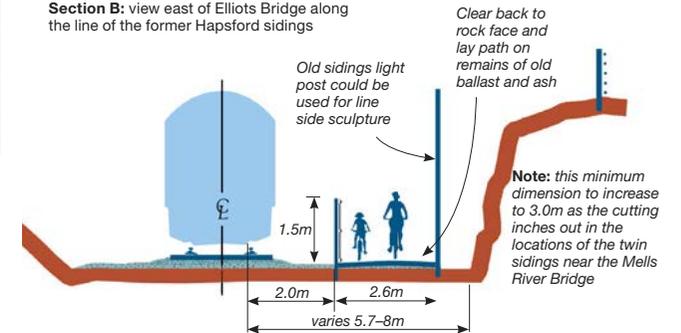
Sketch of new fencing detail adjacent to path near Elliots Lane bridge



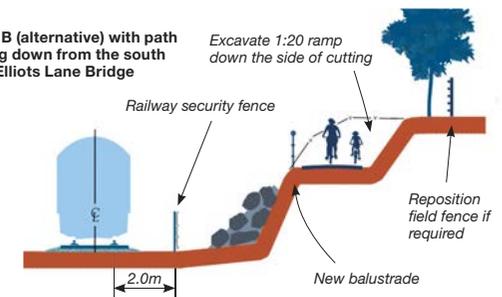
Section A: view at Elliots Bridge looking towards Frome



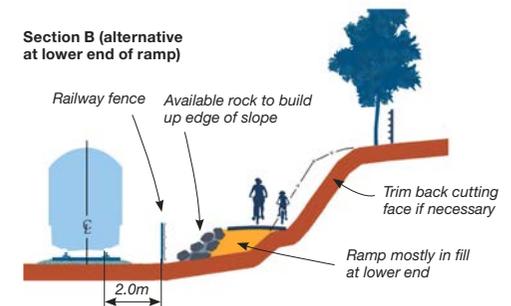
Section B: view east of Elliots Bridge along the line of the former Hapsford sidings



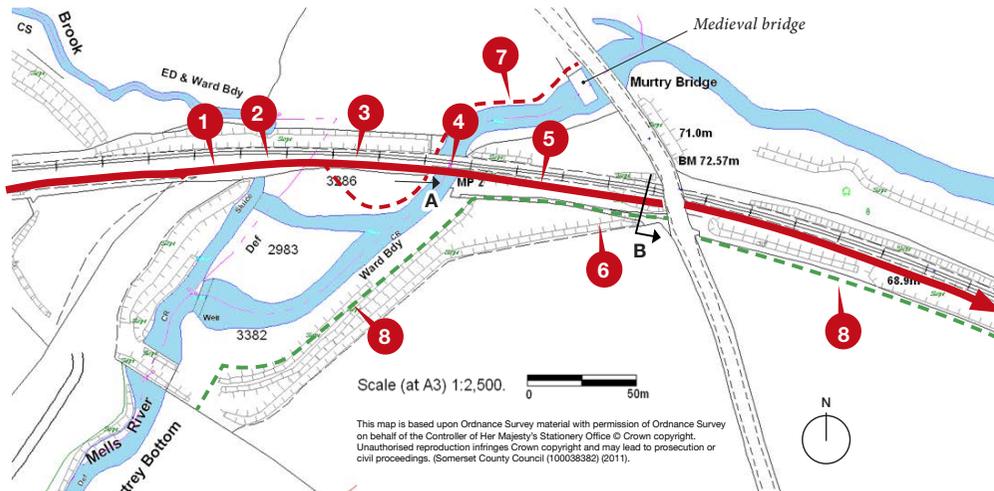
Section B (alternative) with path dropping down from the south side of Elliots Lane Bridge



Section B (alternative) at lower end of ramp



Map 4 This covers the Mells River Bridge



- 1 Continue along the edge of the railway land.
- 2 Cross over Buckland Brook bridge, which was built wide enough to provide for the branch line into Vallis Vale (the original route to Whatley Quarry) - 5.85m from rail to parapet.
- 3 Continue along railway land.
- 4 Cross Mells River with a new bridge 15m long. The existing masonry railway abutments appear sound and they were probably constructed to take a second railway bridge. The bridge here, and the one proposed at Coalash Lane and over Jack's Lane, are all proposed to be 1.5m wide. They are relatively short and their sight lines are good. This width will match the proposed opening under Murtry Road. Because of this restriction at Murtry Bridge, and because this path runs parallel to the operational railway, there is no possibility of horses using this section of the Missing Link. In each case they can be set 2.0m clear of the existing railway bridge structure as required.
- 5 Continue alongside the railway, filling the hollow on this area with material excavated from the approach to Murtry Railway Bridge.
- 6 Remove the fence against the existing footpath and manage the vegetation between this and the new path below. Note this public footpath will need to be kept, even though all the public will use the new route, because the rail side path will only be permissive in nature and held by licence.
- 7 Possible informal permissive path passing under railway to view the medieval bridge.
- 8 Existing footpath remains.



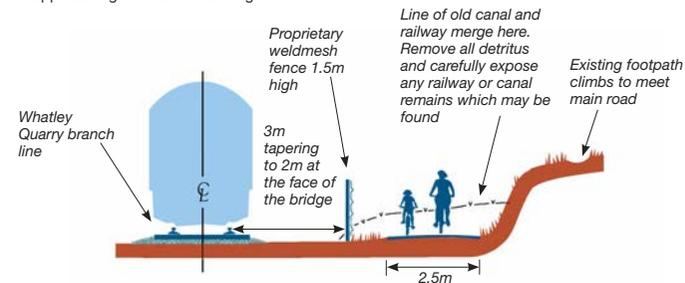
View A: showing how new bridge would run parallel to existing railway bridge over River Mells

Steel bridge assembled on site because access will be difficult here, alternatively install all 3 bridges by rail.



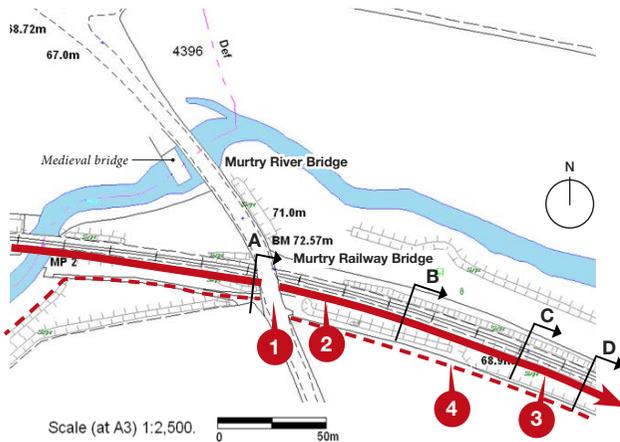
View of recent bridge over Fleet Marston brook (12m). This was constructed by volunteers at the Greenways summer camp 2019

Section B: at railway boundary approaching the main road bridge



Map 5

The crucial Network Rail section centred around passing under the Frome/Radstock Road. The technical proposals for doing this are covered in some detail.

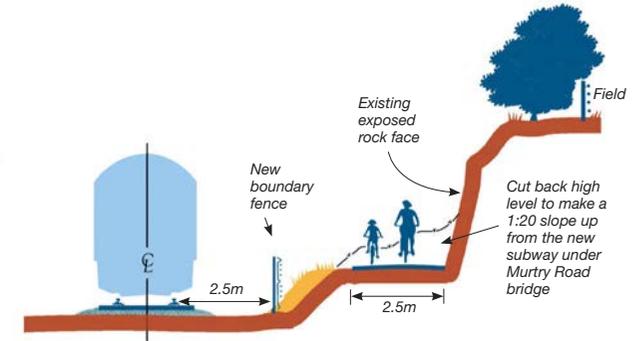
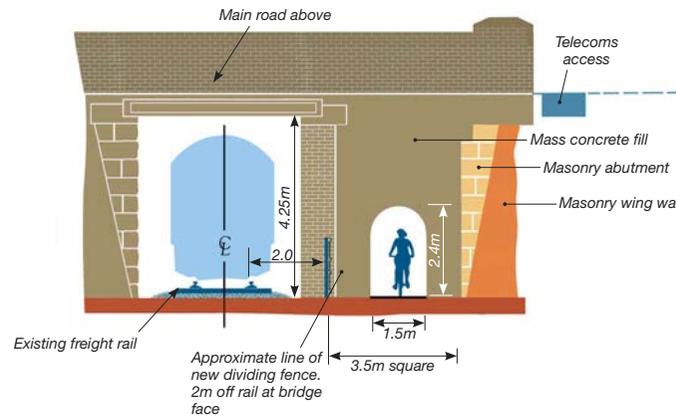


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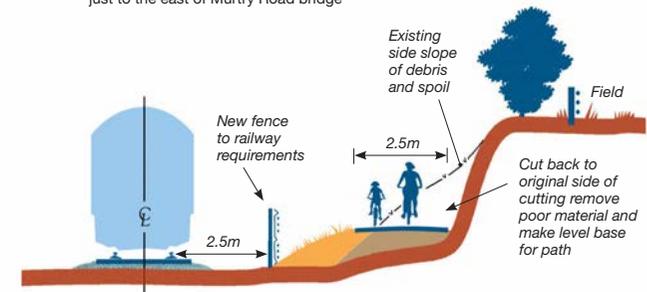
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- 1 Tunnel through the mass concrete filled-in main road bridge abutment. As the visibility is good it is only proposed to make a 1.5m wide and 2.4m high passageway through this 8m long obstruction. Investigation indicates that the fill is mass concrete.
- 2 Clear away the years of old ballast and rubbish to allow the path to gradually rise at a gradient of 1:15 to 1:20. It is not clear if the land was wholly excavated for a future second track in this area so we may find a firm base of original land.
- 3 The path continues on railway land but at this higher level built up using the material cleared away from 2 above. Constructed as close to the boundary fence as possible in order to have open views over the fields.
- 4 Again the existence of this footpath needs to be legally maintained, although there will be no reason for its use.

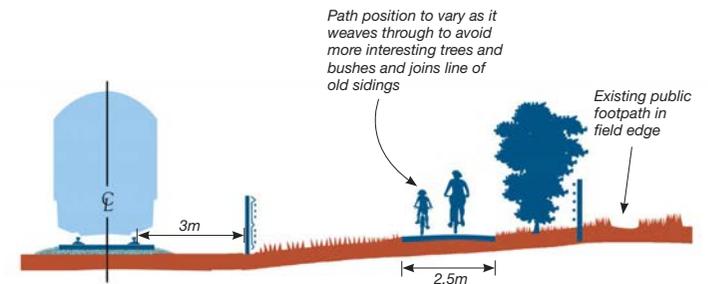
Section A: Cross section through A362 main road bridge showing proposed passage



Section B: sketch through high area just to the east of Murtry Road bridge

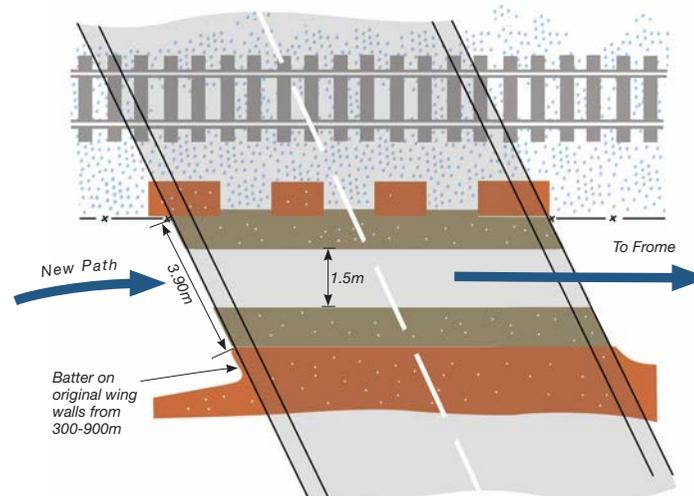


Section C: sketch through route a little beyond the raised area



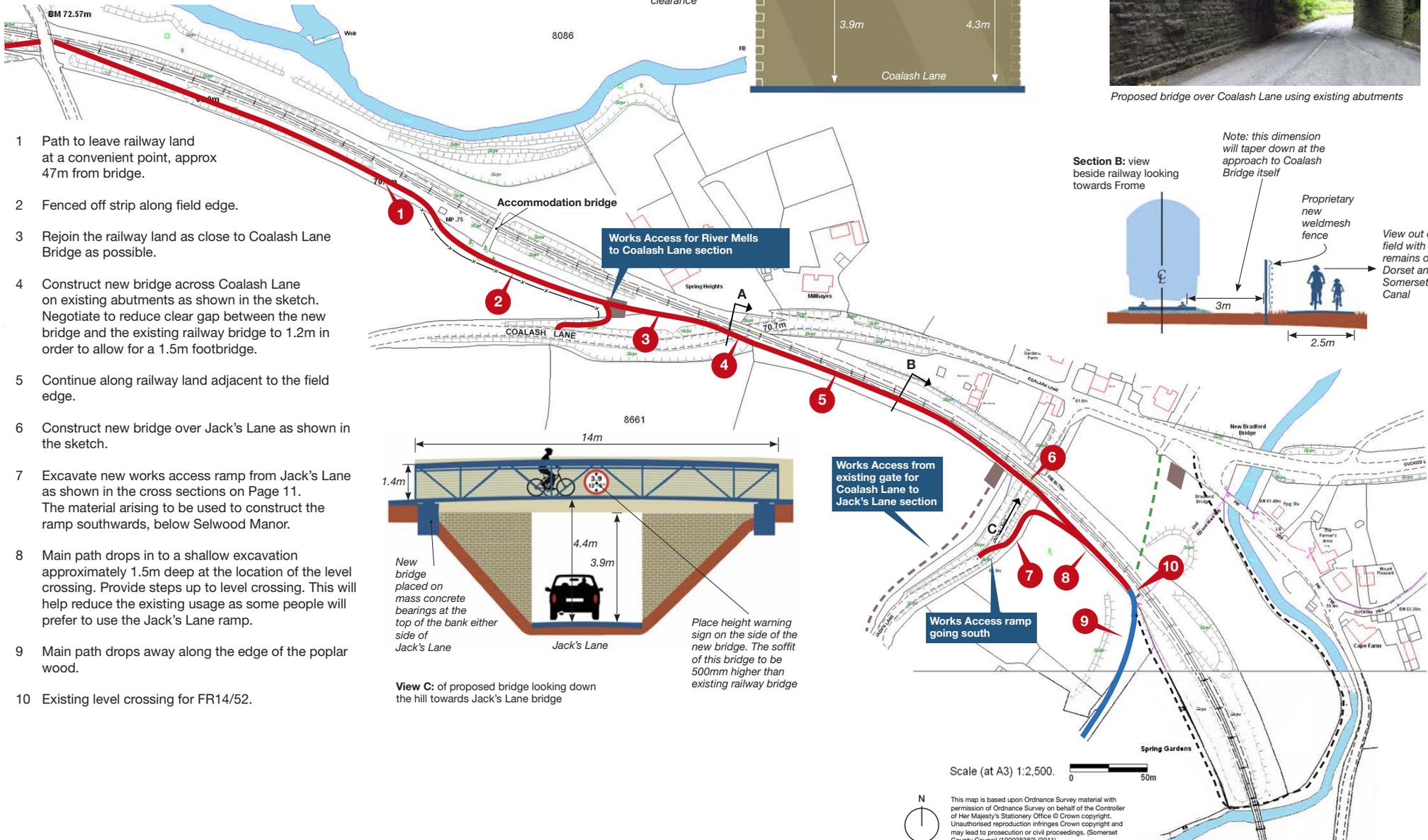
Section D: looking towards accommodation bridge and Coalash Lane

Plan A: Plan of Murtry bridge showing proposed passage



Map 6

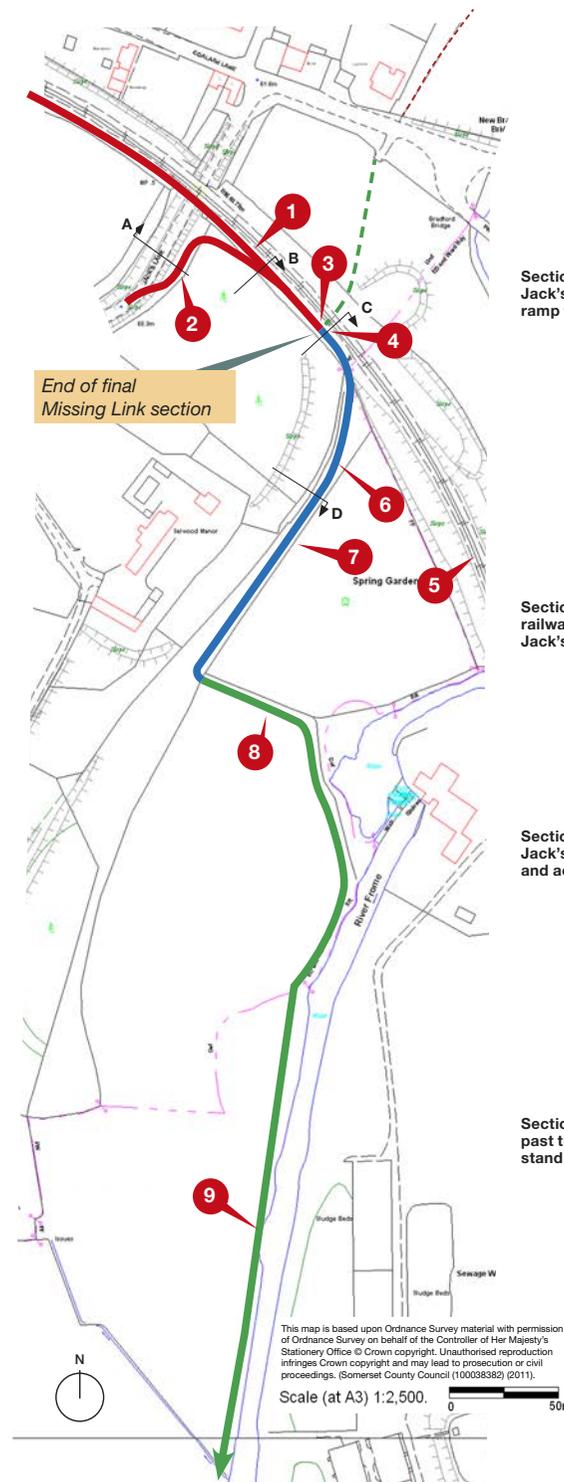
Completes the route running along the southern edge of Network Rail's land, as far as Selwood Manor. This includes the provision of a new bridge over Coalash Lane using the existing abutments and another new bridge over Jack's Lane.



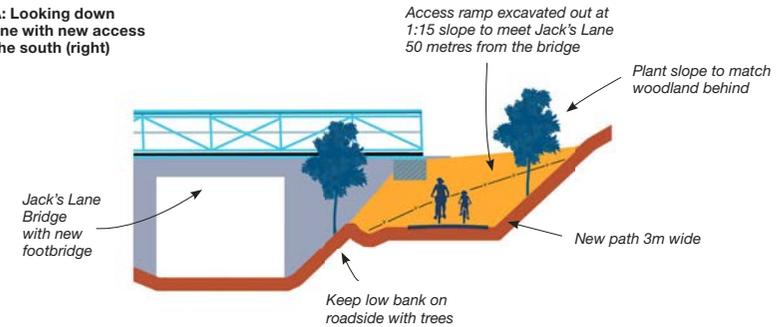
- 1 Path to leave railway land at a convenient point, approx 47m from bridge.
- 2 Fenced off strip along field edge.
- 3 Rejoin the railway land as close to Coalash Lane Bridge as possible.
- 4 Construct new bridge across Coalash Lane on existing abutments as shown in the sketch. Negotiate to reduce clear gap between the new bridge and the existing railway bridge to 1.2m in order to allow for a 1.5m footbridge.
- 5 Continue along railway land adjacent to the field edge.
- 6 Construct new bridge over Jack's Lane as shown in the sketch.
- 7 Excavate new works access ramp from Jack's Lane as shown in the cross sections on Page 11. The material arising to be used to construct the ramp southwards, below Selwood Manor.
- 8 Main path drops in to a shallow excavation approximately 1.5m deep at the location of the level crossing. Provide steps up to level crossing. This will help reduce the existing usage as some people will prefer to use the Jack's Lane ramp.
- 9 Main path drops away along the edge of the poplar wood.
- 10 Existing level crossing for FR14/52.

Map 7

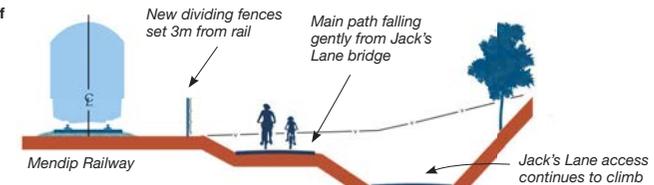
- 1 Main path comes south from Jack's Lane Bridge falling gradually to meet the level of the Jack's Lane access track rising up.
- 2 Jack's Lane access track excavated out of the bank as shown in the cross section.
- 3 If possible the path should drop to a level of approximately 1.5m below ground level at the site of the existing crossing.
- 4 Existing level crossing.
- 5 Railway to Frome.
- 6 Main path to drop down at gradient of 1:20 on new bank constructed with spoil from the Jack's Lane access.
- 7 Reach ground level and continue along line of existing track.
- 8 Completed path to Low Water.
- 9 Riverside path to Frome. This would be a good location for seats overlooking the River Frome. The riverside path could be unfenced or run in a 5m wide fenced corridor as preferred by the farmer.



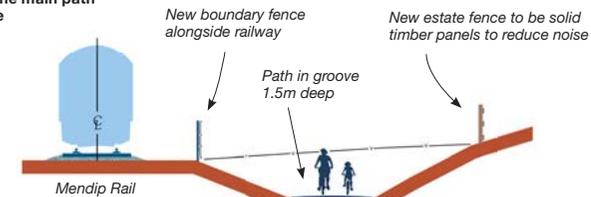
Section A: Looking down Jack's Lane with new access ramp to the south (right)



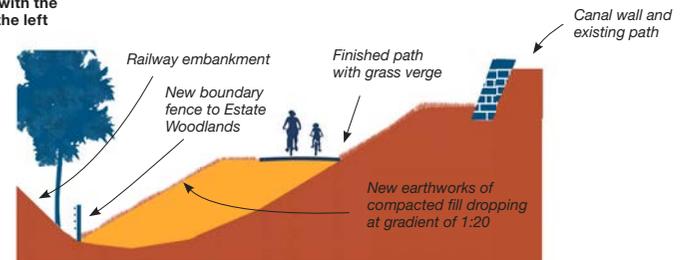
Section B: Opposite railway 30m south of Jack's Lane



Section C: Summit of access from Jack's Lane where the main path and access combine



Section D: Dropping down past the Canal Wall with the stand of poplars to the left



View looking back towards railway with the canal retaining wall to the left of the picture

Map 8 To Welshmill and Frome

Planning permission for this section has been granted and the path is now in place (November 2020).

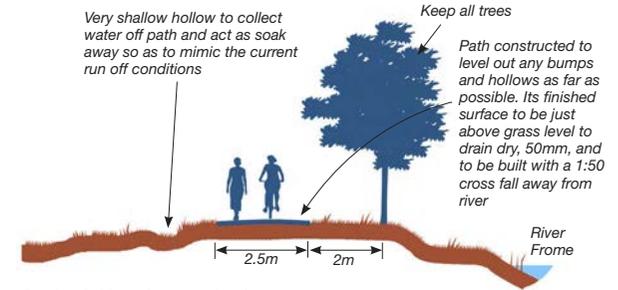
- 1 Proposed riverside path accessible to all.
- 2 Field edge path.
- 3 Leave the lane and drop down to the river level via the existing path. Clear back the west side verge of this to make it feel more spacious, widen to 2.5m and install chicanes to slow the speed of cyclists going down this rather steep slope.
- 4 Widen the existing path running at the bottom of the gardens by adding an additional 1.0m to give 3m total and resurface the whole width.
- 5 Start the new riverside path just before this boundary.
- 6 Build a path across this open space following the riverside.
- 7 Mark out the Wessex Road crossing with "elephants' footprints" or similar just to demark the public route along the riverside.
- 8 Follow the existing footpath under the railway viaduct.
- 9 Create a shared use riverside promenade.
- 10 Ramp up to the road at 1:20 and cross the river via the existing north side footway which can be designated for shared use. Arrange for a defined crossing of the road. Ideally this would be a raised crossing in order to give a real priority to users of Frome's Riverside Promenade.
- 11 Existing path links to the cycling route along the road from Bradford Bridge.
- 12 A link adjacent to the new BMX track would make for a useful way through to the College and Health Centre.
- 13 Follow the existing riverside shared use path towards the town centre.



The riverside path could feature a large seat at this point

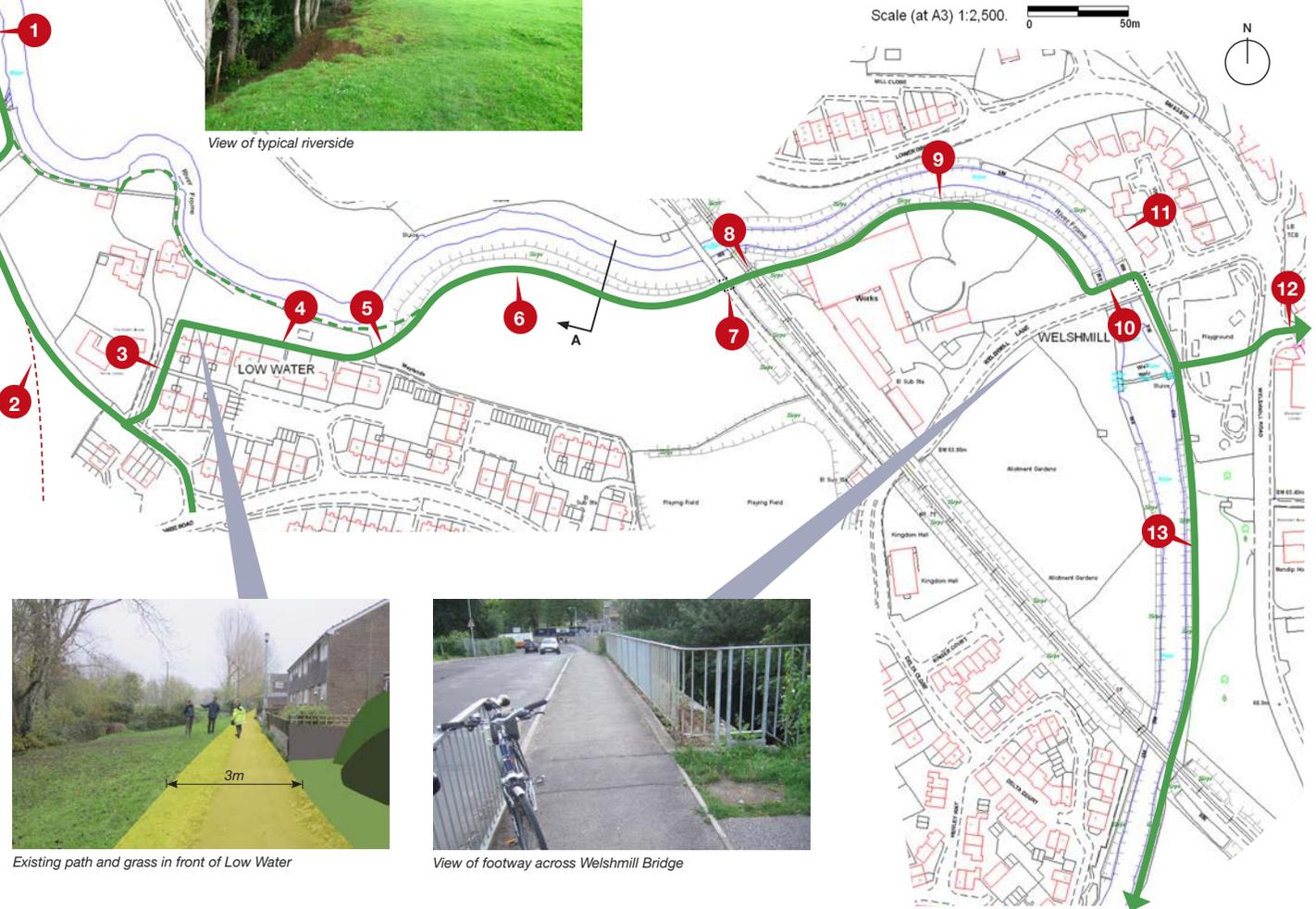


View of typical riverside



Section A: View of proposed path looking downstream

Scale (at A3) 1:2,500. 0 50m



Existing path and grass in front of Low Water



View of footway across Welshmill Bridge

6 Design and Access Statement

The path will be designed as a continuation of the Collier's Way path to the north and the existing riverside paths at Low Water. The path will be continuous without any junctions with public roads between Elliots Lane and Selwood Manor. It will be built with gradients not exceeding 1:15, its width will vary between 2.5 and 3.0m depending upon width of ground available, and it will eventually be finished with a sealed bitmac surface.

Over a few short sections the path will be narrower than standard on account of the restricted area alongside Network Rail. At the Mells River Bridge and the Coalash Lane bridge the width will be between 1.5m and 1.8 metres as there is limited space available on the remaining railway bridge abutments. However the length of bridges are very short – 15 metres – and as the visibility is excellent this is not considered to be an issue. Similarly the heading through under the A362 will be limited to 1.5 metres in width as again its length is very short (9 metres)

The path will not be lit.

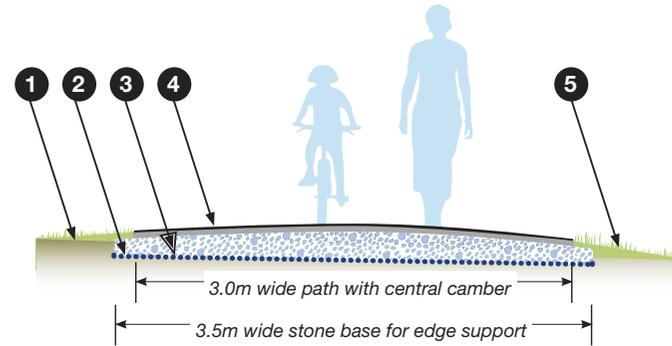
For much of this Final Missing Link section the path will run alongside the operational Mendip Rail line carrying heavy aggregate trains to and from Whatley Quarry. This does constrain the opportunities for landscaping the route and over sections the immediate vista will be the rocky side of the railway cutting and the boundary fence on the other. However, there will be locations where the traveller can stop and look at wider scenery. Between Buckland Brook and the Mells River, the path overlooks a pocket of watery woodland. Just east of the River the path joins in with the bed of the former Dorset and Somerset Canal which runs back to its remaining aqueduct over the river. And once past the A362 bridge the path emerges onto field edges and enjoys open views over farmland.

Although the path will be a permissive route for walkers and cyclists, it will make a real improvement to the existing footpath network.

The new path will connect the existing paths from Buckland Dinham, including the Macmillan Way. It will resolve the most unpleasant crossing of the A362 which FR14/55 & 54 has to negotiate and it will take that path, which currently ends abruptly at Coalash Lane, safely through to Selwood Manor and Frome. The public will migrate to these new sections of path, although the terms of a Licence agreement with Network Rail will

Standard path arrangement on open ground

- 1 Excavate a thin layer of soil, or down to the rocky base, and set this to one side to be used to build up the shoulders at the end of the work.
- 2 If there are any sections of poor soils then lay a layer of polypropylene filter fabric to secure the base.
- 3 Construct a sound stone base 150mm thick and 3.5 metres wide. This extra width is needed to secure the sides of the finished path instead of using kerbs.
- 4 Lay the finished surface layer 3.0 metres wide. This typically will be a machine laid tarmac surface



60mm thick arranged with a central camber. This can then be finished with limestone dust brushed in to give the most natural look possible.

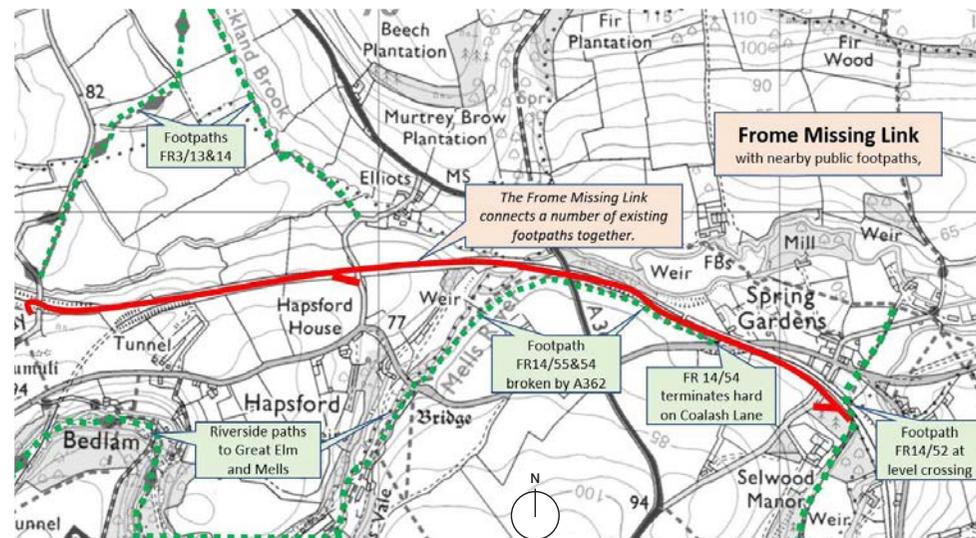
- 5 Build up soil verges either side to reach the edge of the tarmac. These should slope away from the path at 1:5 so as to allow for easy mowing. At the end of all this work the path will run on a slight 'causeway' some 150mm above the general ground level.

preclude the creation of any formal public rights of way. Resolving the obstacles at the A362 and Coalash Lane puts in place a continuous footpath route from Frome to Great Elm and onto Mells along the river valley. This will be an even more valuable resource for Sustainable Frome because the public will be able to walk out onto this part of the countryside without the need to first drive part way along.

Cyclists will have a much safer journey to Great Elm and their avoiding Coalash Lane will enable a much wider segment of the population to cycle. The small community at Spring Gardens will be able to access the path via the works ramp cut down to Jack's Lane.



View of traffic on Coalash Lane



Plan showing footpath network in relationship to the Final Missing Link

Planting opportunities will be extremely limited on this Elliotts Lane to Selwood section simply because of the limited space on railway land. To some extent this shortcoming can be compensated by the intimate weaving of the route with the line of the canal and the opportunities this makes for interpretation and understanding of this feature.

Seating will be installed overlooking the "island" between Buckland Brook and the Frome River, and also looking south over the field between Jack's Lane and Coalash Lane. This latter location looks across to the line of the canal which was cut across the field at this point.

7 Signage and Information Boards

The Collier's Way is signed as Route 24 of the National Cycling Network and its existing signage will be continued through this Final Missing Link.

At the junction with footpath FR14/55, which connects to paths leading through to Fussells Ironworks, and which also corresponds with the Somerset and Dorset Canal, we will install an information board showing the network of paths and exploring the course of the canal.

8 Construction Access

Access to the Final Missing Link requires some careful planning because its narrow footbridges and limited widths against Mendip Rail dictate a number of access points.

The quantities of materials and the movement of vehicles will be limited to no more than 15 lorry loads of stone and aggregate at any one access point. There may be opportunities for some work from the railway, particularly for the installation of the 3 footbridges alongside the line.

The access points are as follows;

- 1 Elliotts Lane off the existing very lightly trafficked road.
- 2 Hapsford link along from access to canal.
- 3 Existing field access off Coalash Lane.
- 4 Field edge track off Jack's Lane via existing field gate.
- 5 New ramp cut up from Jack's Lane to give access to Selwood Manor section.

No general fill materials will be either taken onto site or removed from site as all works will be designed to balance cut and fill on site. Clearance of vegetation will be cut outside the bird nesting and all works will be carried out to the requirements set out in the ecological report.

9 Flood Risk Assessment

The Final Missing Link is generally at a high enough elevation to be well outside the flood plain area. The path does not cross any ditches, drains or watercourse except Buckland Brook and Mells River. Over the former we utilise the remaining railway bridge, whilst over the latter the soffit of the planned footbridge will be at a level well above the soffit of the adjacent railway bridge.

The path will not affect the existing run off on the natural ground along the route. It will be constructed with a central camber which will shed water either side all along the route without causing any concentration or build-up of run off.

10 Maintenance Matters

Provided the path is soundly constructed, annual maintenance will be modest. Verges will need to be cut back so that width is not lost. This winter clearance and minor repairs will be carried out by the FML team.

11 Conclusion

Completion of the Final Missing Link would transform access from Frome to the Collier's Way for Radstock and Bath. It is not easy to achieve and it will utterly rely on the goodwill and support of Network Rail. But once in place it would be as memorable a route as any in the County and an invaluable local resource.

Appendix 4: Ecology Report

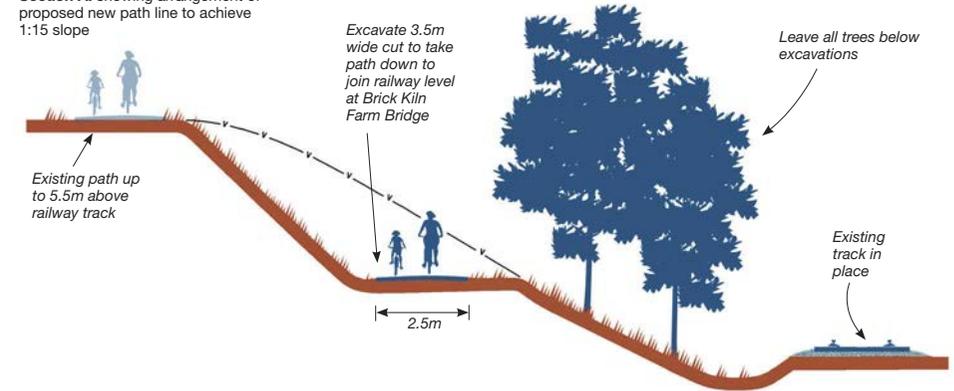
Appendix 1: Map and details at Brick Kiln Farm Bridge

Although the path is well established along this section of the route, the extension to Frome proposes to include some works in this area to improve and enhance the overall route.

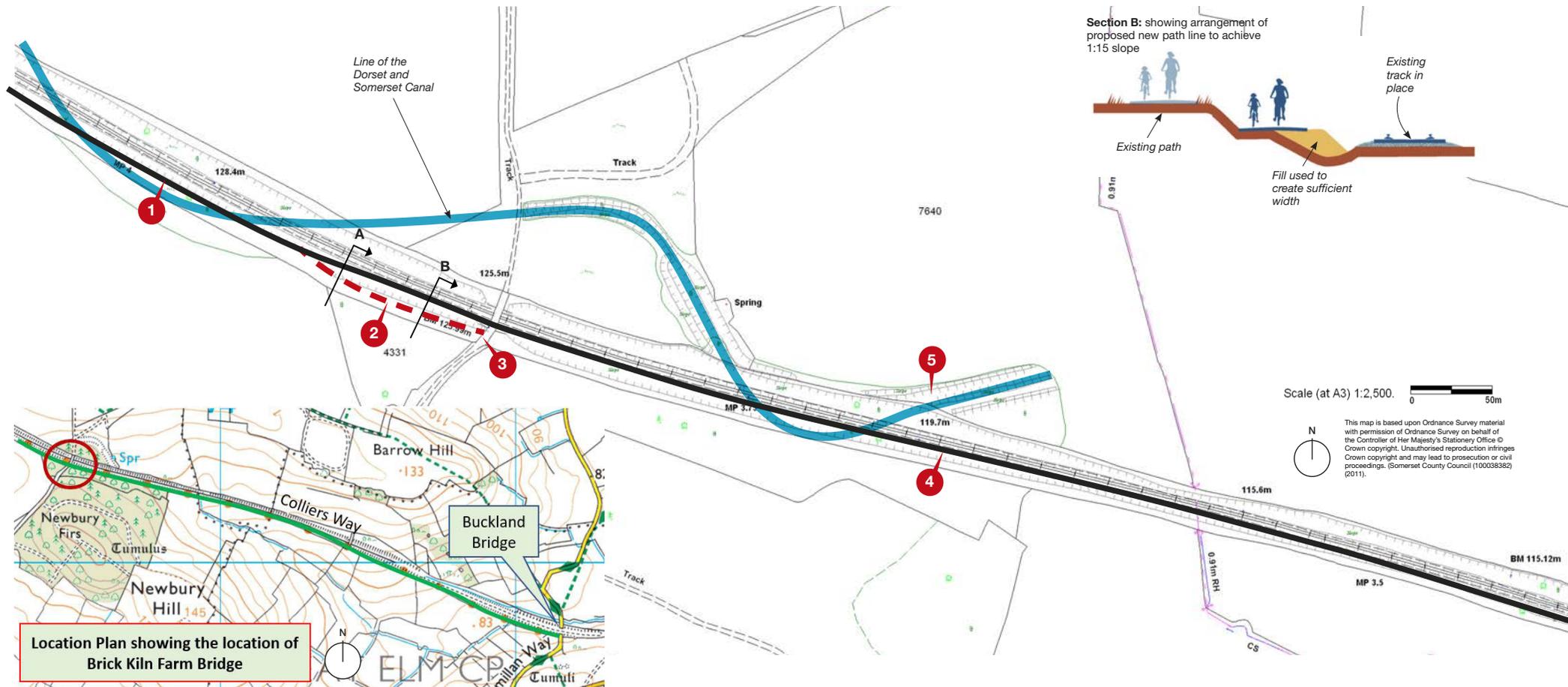
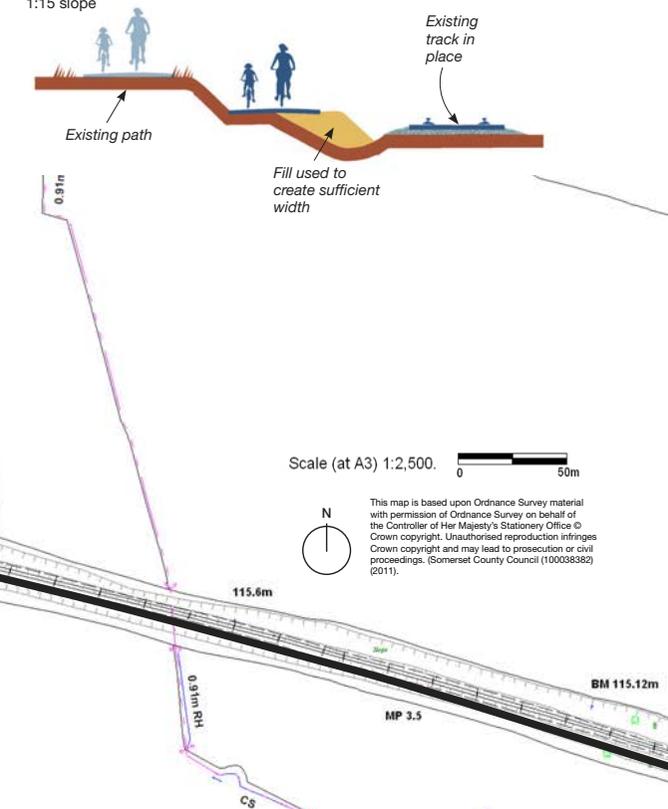
- 1 Follow existing path set well back from the railway tracks.
- 2 This section is very steep (1:8) and leads down to a sharp corner under the bridge. The Frome extension proposes to tackle this by constructing a short section of new path, as shown in the cross sections A and B, in order to achieve a 1:15 gradient (or even 1:20 if possible).
- 3 Brick Kiln Farm Bridge.

- 4 Over this long section the existing path closely follows the railway. If the railway was to reopen then it would have to be re-laid a little to the north in order to achieve a 2.0m distance from a new fence. Alternatively negotiations could be put in hand to reconstruct the path just outside the railway boundary all the way from Buckland Bridge.
- 5 The Dorset and Somerset Canal Vobster Branch remains were cut through by the railway here. If possible clear back the vegetation and dig out the earthworks to show the cross section of the canal as a feature along this route, or place a marker beside the path to show where the bed of the canal would have been.

Section A: showing arrangement of proposed new path line to achieve 1:15 slope



Section B: showing arrangement of proposed new path line to achieve 1:15 slope

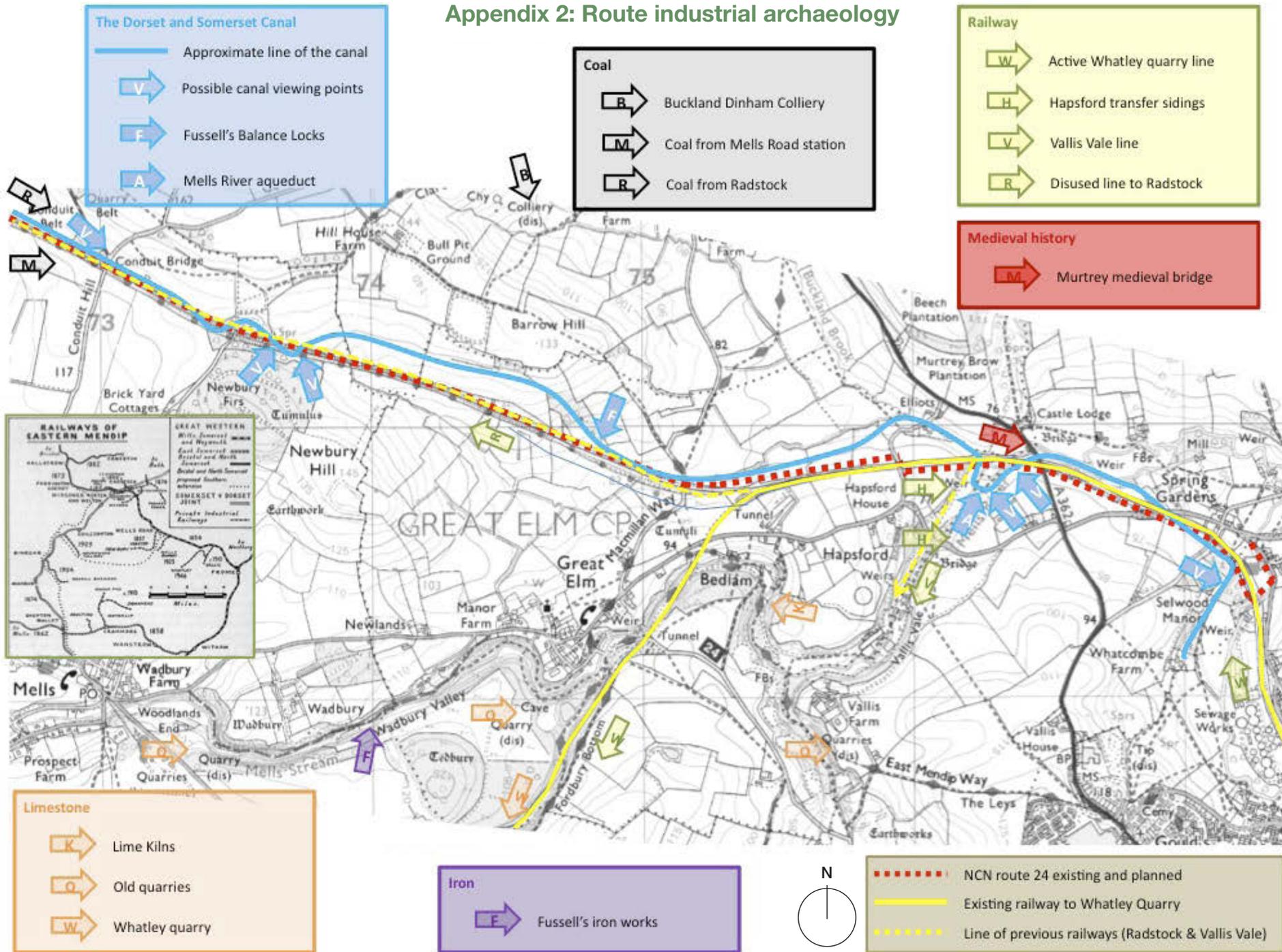


Location Plan showing the location of Brick Kiln Farm Bridge

Scale (at A3) 1:2,500. 0 50m

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Appendix 2: Route industrial archaeology



The Dorset and Somerset Canal

This interesting part of local history is unknown to many and one of the aims of this proposal is to make viewing of the remains easy and accessible to users of the path. The existing cycle path and the proposed extension to Frome follow the canal closely offering viewing opportunities.

Most of the canal is on private land and therefore not accessible without prior permission. However at certain locations the canal and its structures are visible from or near NCN route 24 (existing and planned).

Old photo of canal embankment beneath Selwood Manor, Spring Gardens



This is visible from the Frome – Spring Gardens footpath just before the railway crossing.

Mells River Aqueduct (c 1795)



History

The initial route planning took place in 1793 at Wincanton and the aim was to construct a canal connecting to the Kennet and Avon canal at Widbrook (near Bradford On Avon) to Poole passing Frome and Wincanton on its way south. There was to be a branch canal at Frome serving the Mendip collieries around Nettlebridge.

An Act of Parliament in 1796 allowed finances to be raised with work starting on the Frome – Nettlebridge branch first as required by the Act. About 13km of the canal was built along with a number of structures before funding was exhausted and construction ceasing in 1803.

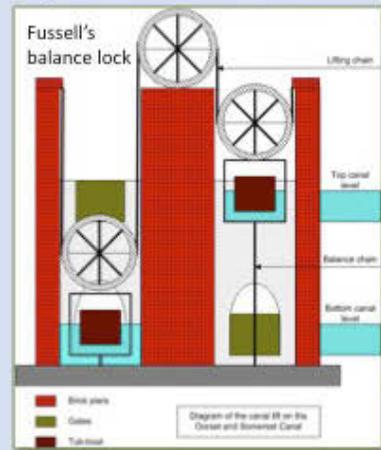
Boat lifts at Barrow Hill (Fussell's balance locks)

The experimental and patented balance lock here was designed by James Fussell IV (of Mells Iron Works fame – see opposite) and successfully tested in Sep 1800. The aim was to raise 10 ton boats efficiently by 6.1 metres per lock.

Five more lifts were to be built on this Barrow Hill section and work continued on four until the money ran out in 1802.



2006 excavation (Derrick Hunt)



References, Acknowledgements & Further reading

R Athill, Old Mendip, 1971, David & Charles
K Clew, The Dorset and Somerset Canal, 1971, David & Charles
K Griffiths & R Gallop, Fussells Ironworks Mells, 2000, Fiducia Press
M Vincent, Through Countryside & Coalfield, 1990, Oxford Publishing Company

Railway

Constructed by the Wilts, Somerset and Weymouth Railway in the late 1840's and taken over by the GWR in 1850, the Bristol – Radstock – Frome line played an important part in handling the coal and stone from Mendip mines and quarries. To this day the eastern end of this line into Frome provides an important rail link (operated by Mendip Rail) into the large Whatley quarry.

The line was dual track between Radstock and Mells Road and single track on to Frome. A second track was planned and the land purchased, but never built.

The line was converted to standard gauge in 1874 and in 1875 the first passenger train ran from Bristol to Frome via Radstock. Passenger traffic ceased in 1959.

The broad gauge 'Newbury Railway' joined the Radstock to Frome line at Mells Road station (opened 1857 and first worked by horses) and served Newbury colliery and Vobster quarry. It remained open until 1960.

Railways/tramways ran through Vallis Vale serving a number of small limestone quarries with a crushing plant at Hapsford. From there a short branch line with transfer sidings connected to the main GWR line. The new tunnel to Bedlam made Hapsford Sidings redundant in the early 1970's.



1959 passenger train at Murtrey

Medieval history

Murtrey Medieval Bridge, carrying the original Frome to Radstock road over the Mells River, is a scheduled monument and thought to date from the 14th Century.

The medieval bridge became obsolete when the railway was built as this required a higher bridge to go over the top of the railway. The medieval bridge has two of its original three arches still standing and is very close to the proposed route.

It is not clear when the 3rd arch collapsed but the 1893/94 railway map shows the arch complete:



Murtrey medieval bridge in 2011



1893 map

Limestone

Vallis Vale contains the remains of several limestone quarries and Grade II listed lime kilns (see opposite).



Today the large Whatley quarry produces a range of materials for the building and construction industries with its connecting railway line to Frome in regular use.

Iron

The Grade II remains of Fussell's iron works are located upstream of the routes crossing the Mells River in the now pleasant and attractive Wadbury gorge.

These iron works used the power of the fast flowing river to produce agricultural edge tools from the mid 1700's to 1895.

Owner James Fussell IV promoted the Dorset and Somerset canal and designed the balance locks (see opposite).

Coal

By 1800 the Somerset coalfield was centred on Radstock. When the Frome to Radstock line was built in the mid 1800's there were 14 collieries in the Radstock area. The last colliery closed in 1973.

Oxley's Colliery near Buckland Dinham, the most easterly of the Somerset mines and closest to the proposed route, operated for a few years in the 1880s. The chimney, which stands to this day, is Grade II listed.

In 1874 an (unsuccessful) petition was sent from Buckland Dinham residents to the GWR directors asking for a station to be built on the Frome to Radstock line to serve the colliery and the village.



Buckland Dinham colliery chimney

Appendix 3: Healthy Living and Sustainable Frome and supporting letter from Mendip Rail

Healthy Living on Route 24

Frome Medical Practice (www.fromemedicalpractice.co.uk) actively supports Frome's Missing Link. With twenty eight thousand registered patients the practice, together with Beckington Family Practice looks after the whole of the town's population. The practice has a strong healthy living agenda promoting healthy eating, weight reduction, smoking cessation and exercise. Currently patients in Frome are reluctant to cycle out of the town, unwilling to risk cycling on narrow lanes with fast moving traffic.

Frome Medical Practice hopes to see the cycle path completed to the centre of the town as a traffic free corridor out into the country on a relatively level path. Plans have been made to work with partners in the town to be able to "prescribe cycling" as a form of exercise. Doctors and nurses in the practice will give a prescription to the patient which can be cashed at a town centre location and a bicycle could be borrowed for up to six one hour sessions. The belief is that this will be enough to encourage the individual to take up cycling long term, promoting exercise and weight reduction as well as producing a more sustainable means of travel in the town.

To encourage the most disadvantaged members of society to access healthy activities, doctors in Frome already have access to healthy living counsellors to whom patients can be referred and who will undertake one to one activities to encourage changes in lifestyle. The Frome Medical Practice are taking this one step further to develop "Fit Frome", an example of "the big society" where individual sports clubs voluntarily provide regular introductory sessions for the population. As part of "Go Frome", a week-long event to promote health and wellbeing in Frome with free activities and events, Black Canon Collective (www.blackcanoncollective.co.uk), the local mountain biking club, started this process.

Frome's Missing Link will be a valuable resource in the fight against obesity and the efforts to promote healthy living throughout the town.

Dr Mark Vose, Saffron Surgery, Berkley Road, Frome



Mendip Rail Limited
Merchard
Last Cranmore
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
BA4 4RA

20th October 2020

To whom it may concern

I am writing in support of a Frome based group who have for a long number of years been trying to gain permission to be allowed access to Network Rail land to complete the very popular cycle path from Radstock via Great Elm to the centre of Frome. This group is part of "Sustainable Frome" a well established body within the town and it is supported by Sustrans the National Body for cycle routes. They have a group of experienced engineers working with them. I have no reason to believe that they will not be able to deliver the proposal that they have submitted to Network Rail.

In the Frome area we are keen to support local community projects, particularly ones like this that improve the quality of the environment, reduce the traffic on our roads and in these times of a pandemic reduce the demands of public transport. I can see no reason why this proposal should have a detrimental effect on our day to day operations and in fact there could be benefits;

1. They propose to divert the footpath at Spring Gardens which will result in the closure of the current level crossing
2. There is evidence of trespass on the line, which is 'hot topic' for the ORR currently. This proposal offers a much safer alternative dedicated crossing.
3. They will install new secure fencing where they run along the edge of Network Rail land, which I believe has been done in other areas without detrimental effect to train operations.
4. They claim that there is evidence nationally that the increased access of the public along formal protected paths provides effective informal surveillance which has the effect of reducing vandalism on the line.

I am happy to support this proposal in its current form and I hope that you progress the necessary Agreements to allow the project to proceed.

Yours Sincerely

Jason Black

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