

Wellington and Taunton Greenway

Along the corridor of the Grand Western Canal



The canal is leading off towards the Nynhead lift close to the planned new railway station

Greenways and Cyclerroutes Limited, with Wellington Wheelers Cycling Club, Wellington Town Council, Friends of the Grand Western Canal

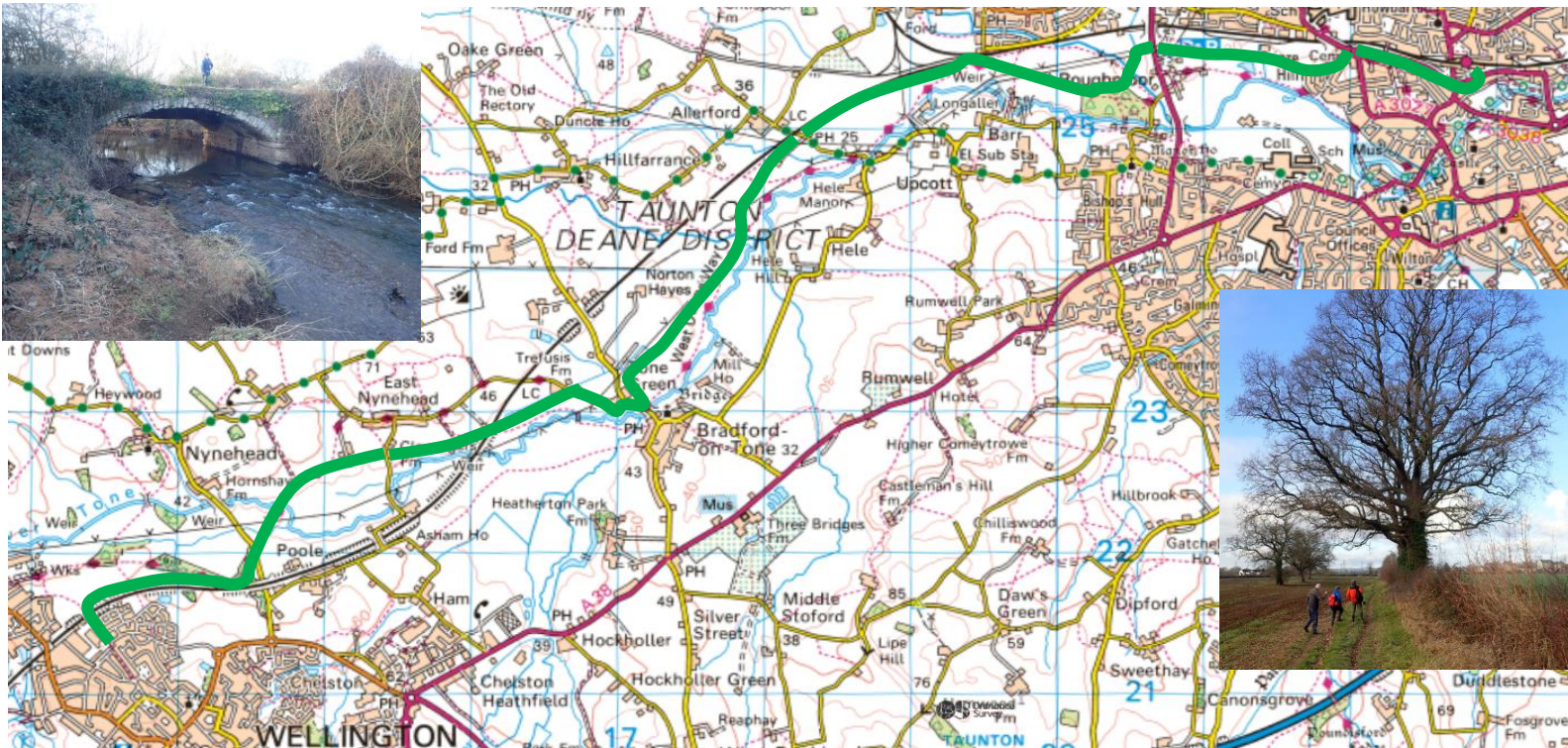
grandwesterngreenway@gmail.com

Outline of proposed Greenway from Wellington to Taunton

Wellington is a substantial town 6 miles from the county town of Taunton. It is proposed to establish a predominantly traffic-free greenway between them along the route of the disused Grand Western Canal. Wellington will have a new railway station by 2025 which would mark the starting point, and it would end at Taunton Railway Station giving access to both town centres

Sustainable transport initiatives in the coming years mean that more will be cycling from Wellington to Taunton,

- the canal corridor provides a level route separated from most traffic,
- its heritage and wildlife assets make it also ideal for recreational use,
- It will provide 6 miles where walkers and cyclists can exercise without traffic noise and fumes,
- it will link Taunton station and the new Wellington station for benefit of visitors
- links with other local community initiatives (Friends of the Grand Western Canal, the Wellington Green Corridor) will provide opportunities for business development along the route.



The necessity for a safe cycling route between Wellington and Taunton.

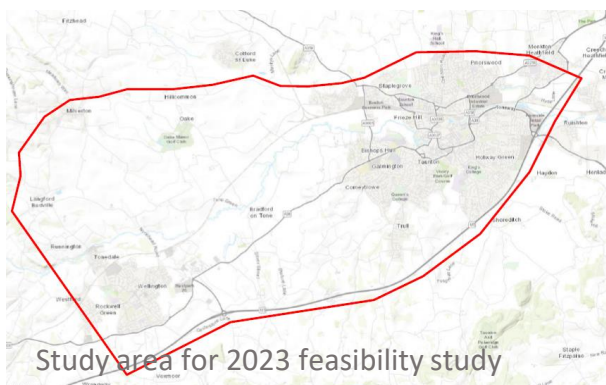
For the last decade, local campaigners have sought to establish an active travel link between these two towns. The Wellington Town Council and the former Taunton Deane Borough Council funded a feasibility study. This leaned heavily towards a route beside the busy A38, and this has gained momentum over the last three years. A protest rally was held in 2022 at which county councillors from all parties pledged to have construction underway by 2024.

The matter is pressing especially as climate change futures demand that we all make real cuts in our CO2 emissions. Without a safe and attractive route between the two towns, residents will have no choice but to drive or use limited public transport.



Since 2022, the County Council funded a £50,000 feasibility study to consider all route options within the corridor bounded by the railway to the north and the M5 to the south. Their consultants will report in July 2023 but, in the meantime, cyclists endure the A38 and all its hazards.

Although the A38 route has been studied intensively, this has only involved the section of the road from the Chelston Roundabout to the Stonegallows roundabout. No discussions have resolved the issues of crossing the A38 westbound, and crossing Taunton. On this short section of road alone, there are very many landowners.



The Grand Western Greenway, by comparison, offers a traffic-free route up to half a mile shorter than the current quickest option along the A38. It would be complete from station to station and at each end will have a number of links into the wider settlements (app 3). Unlike a track beside the A38 which will only be used by people who have no choice, a Greenway will be used by cyclists of every kind including novices, families and for trips of every kind including work and leisure. In addition we have the added bonus of opening up a historical feature through our countryside to much wider public appreciation, as well as creating a project which individuals and local groups can work at and support.



Grand Western Canal and its opportunities

The Somerset section of the Grand Western Canal linked mid-Devon to the River Tone, and opened in 1839 before finally closing in 1867. Much of the complex infrastructure remains along the river valley of the Tone. This includes lifts rather than locks, bridges under roads and an aqueduct over the River Tone. Much of the banking remains in places, although some areas have disappeared back into the landscape. Nevertheless, the canal corridor offers a Greenway route bounded by the Bristol to Exeter railway line to the north and the M5 to the south.

For part of its length the canal bank is already followed by the West Deane Way. This is a popular and well-used long distance footpath in the corridor that meanders away from the canal alignment to follow the river where possible.

From the perspective of a Greenway the terrain is flat, and the canal runs through open arable land passing close to the villages of Bradford on Tone and East Nynehead. The landscape is stunning, tranquil and rich in wildlife until the route enters the north west edge of Taunton from where the canal corridor reaches close to its centre.

The Friends of the Grand Western Canal have an ambition to establish a Heritage Trail on this route to preserve this significant historical travel route from which Wellington and Taunton benefitted, with a further goal to re-water a short section at the Taunton end to create a 'park-and-glide' into the town.

Building a Greenway along this route would be completed in a series of useful stages starting from either Wellington to Bradford on Tone, or Taunton to Allerford.



The canal bed along Chip Lane in Taunton



The canal embankment approaching Nynehead

Phase 1a Taunton Station to Silk Mills bridge under bypass

Phase 1b: Silk Mills to Allerford Inn

The existing cycle track alongside Trenchard Way is a brutal affair. Some effort should be made to soften the harsh boundary and provide local links. This is no place to linger.

The canal towpath starts immediately to the west of the Staplegrove Road crossing, and one is immediately travelling in a quiet corridor. There is room to gain a 2.5 or 3m wide path. This leads through to Roughmoor and the open field to Silk Mills. All the way through here the public footpath follows the line of the canal towpath which sits at a level above the floodplain. At Silk Mills the path crosses the railway access road under the Silk Mills bypass. Phase 1a would end with a short link to the south along the boundary of the main road to connect to the existing cycling track which is on the west side of the new road.

Phase 1B to Allerford requires a new bridge over Norton Brook to join the existing footpath which again follows the towpath route which runs for a considerable way along the field edge boundary. The route crosses the middle of one field which should be defined by an avenue of trees with hardened crossings for farm traffic. Lastly the canal moves to the railway boundary and we follow the field edge all the way to the garden of the Allerford Inn.

Apart from the single bridge over the brook the whole of this 4.1kms section of path would be quite straightforward to construct.



Phase 2 The Longford Farm bridge (Wellington) to the East Nynehead Road – 2.6kms.

This phase of the Greenway could be constructed very early on, possibly at the same time as the work near Taunton. Whilst the route must be integrated with the development of the Station, provision should also be made to link into the existing Longford Farm bridge so that we can make progress even if the station development is delayed.

East of the station the route would remain at ground level crossing the ornamental drive to Nynehead Court so as to reach the canal towpath beyond the impressive remains of the Nynehead Lift. Crossing Nynehead Road will require careful detailing probably best done by reducing the width of the road with traffic giving way. The remaining aqueduct over the River Tone is a particularly remarkable survivor of the canal work where a picnic spot down stream would give a good view of the flat arch and cast iron trough for the water.

The footpath turns north at Perry Farm, away from the line of the canal where the Greenway would seek agreement to continue along the field edge to reach the road to East Nynehead. This is a convenient end to this phase as existing minor roads and footpaths provide for a reasonable route through to Bradford-on-Tone. The most significant settlement between Wellington and Taunton.



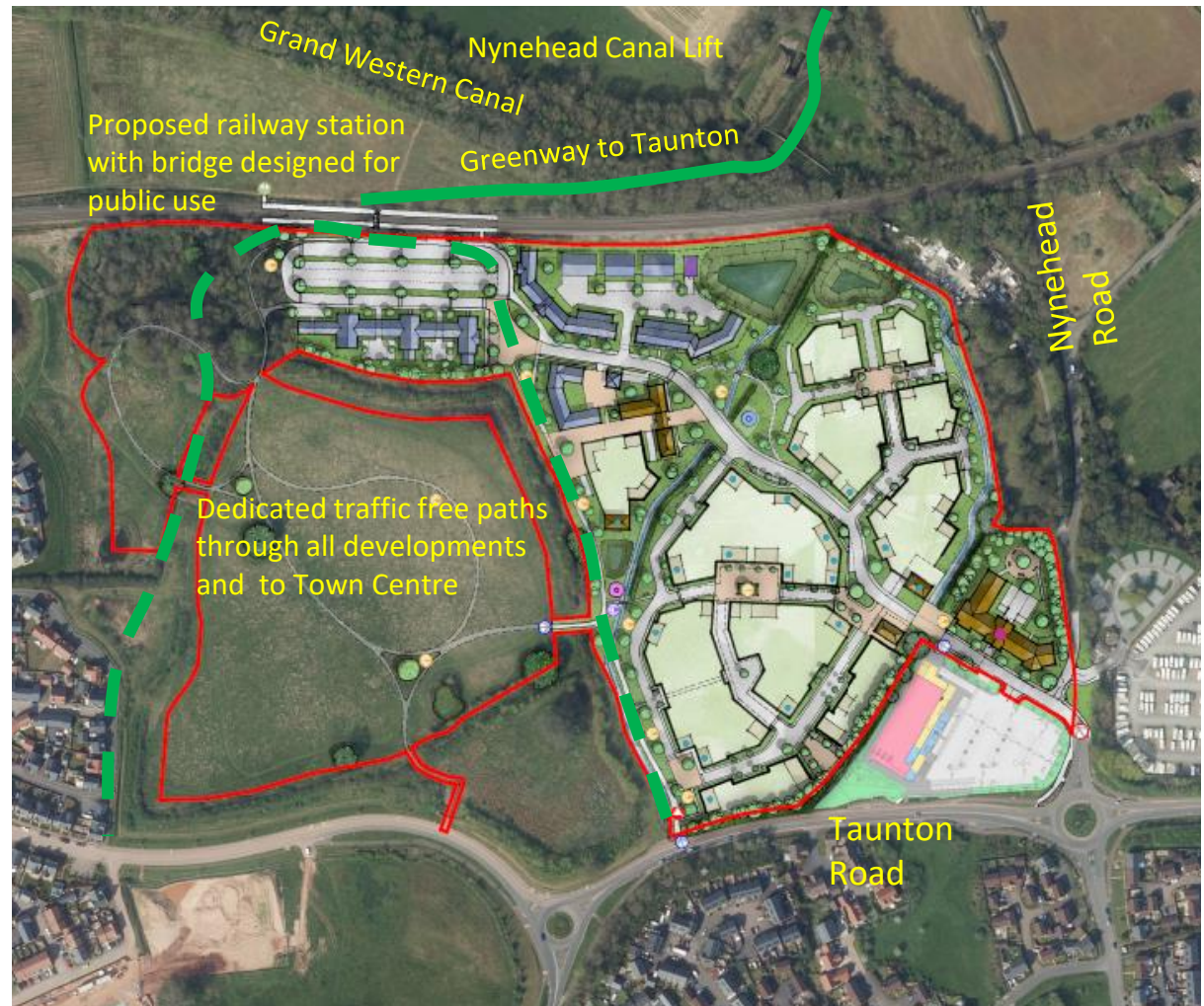
Connections to proposed Wellington Station

On the not unreasonable assumption the Wellington Railway Station will be built, it will be located in the parcel of land shown here. It is proposed a new road will be built on the north side of the railway line to the west to bring traffic from communities to the north of the town. For active travellers, this will give them access to 66 acres of lands acquired by the town which will provide onward travel to Rockwell Green and communities on towards the Devon border.

At this stage the detailed designs of the station are not available, but one way or another provision must be made for walkers and cyclists to easily cross the railway and to have direct and convenient access to the station which will be constructed hard against the Grand Western Canal Greenway.

If the current political climate should change and the station build is delayed, there is a railway overbridge less than 1km along the line to the west which would give access into the town. It would link into existing active travel infrastructure and quiet residential areas.

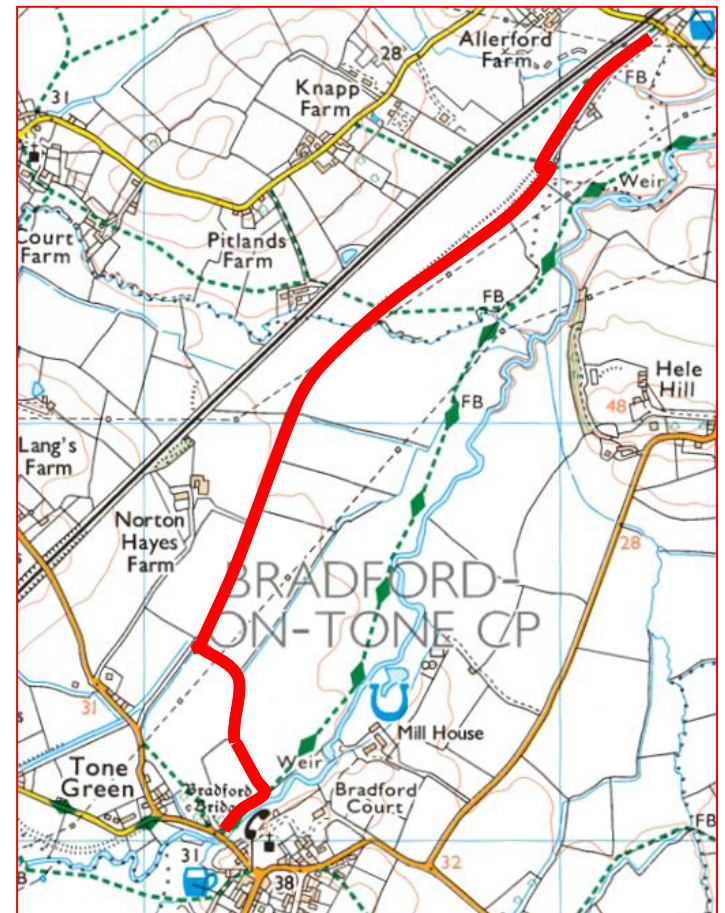
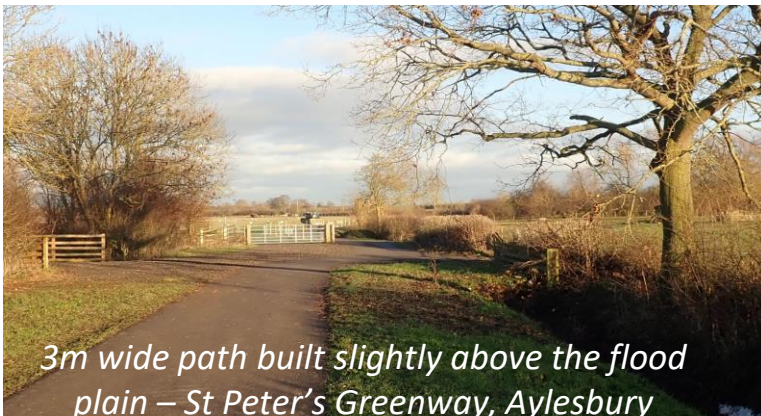
The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan for Wellington is nearing completion, and this identifies these options that capitalise on new transport links.



Phase 3 Bradford bridge to the Allerford Inn -2.4kms

After opening up sections of the Greenway at either end, where they can be of particular use for local trips. The next task is to reach Bradford-on-Tone which would be a very attractive stopping off point.. To start with there is a most substantial section of canal embankment after its rise at the 19 foot high Allerford Lift. The West Dean Way follows closer to the riverside and is prone to flooding so if it is possible to negotiate a route along the hedge line of the canal we could build a path above most flood levels,. Greenways and Cycleroutes has recently completed just such a path across the flood plain of the River Thames at Aylesbury and we envisage something similar here.

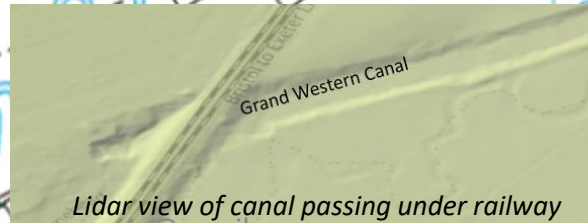
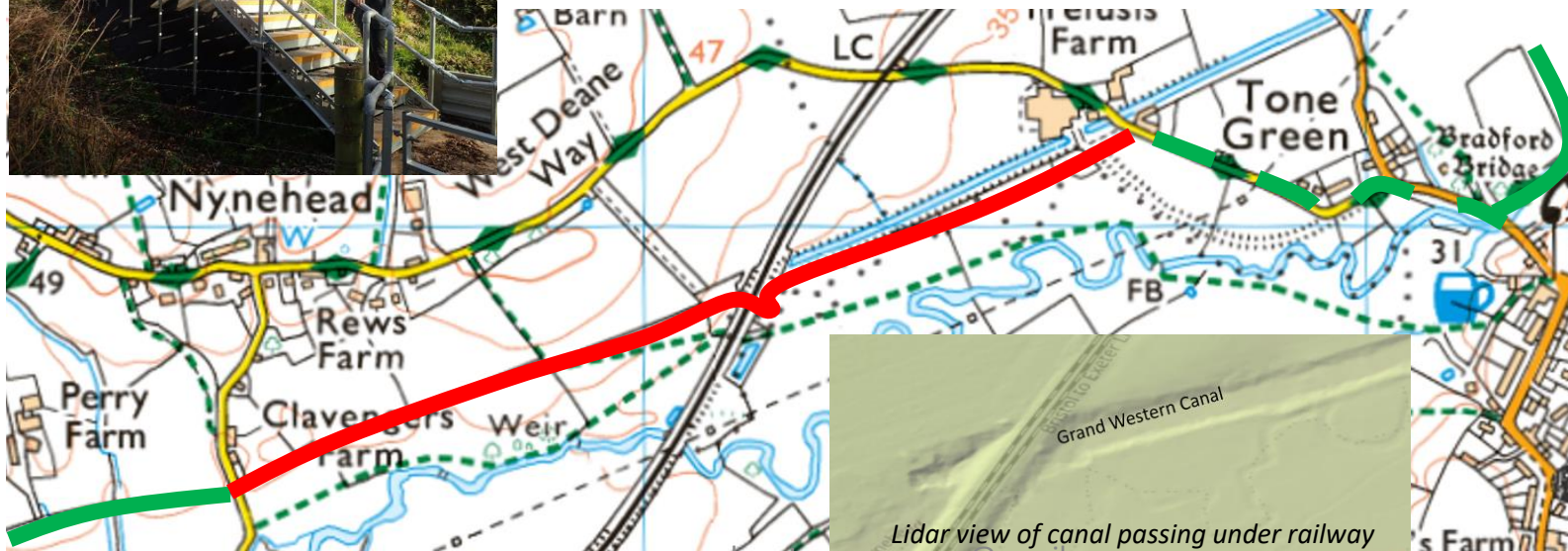
At its southern end a crossing of the open field would give a direct access to the medieval bridge over the river and the village



Phase 4 East Nynehead to Bradford-on-Tone -1.9kms including a new bridge under the mainline railway to replace existing footpath crossing

This last phase will be the most costly because of the need to make a safe crossing of the mainline railway. The existing crossing has recently been refurbished to a strangely high standard and it is unfortunate that we could not all have set down to work out something similar to the Stroudwater Canal bridge further up the same railway line.

The last section of path should follow the very minor road to Bradford-on-Tone rather than bypassing this central settlement along the Greenway. This same road is currently used by the West Deane Way which would reroute onto the Greenway here if the railway crossing could be secured.



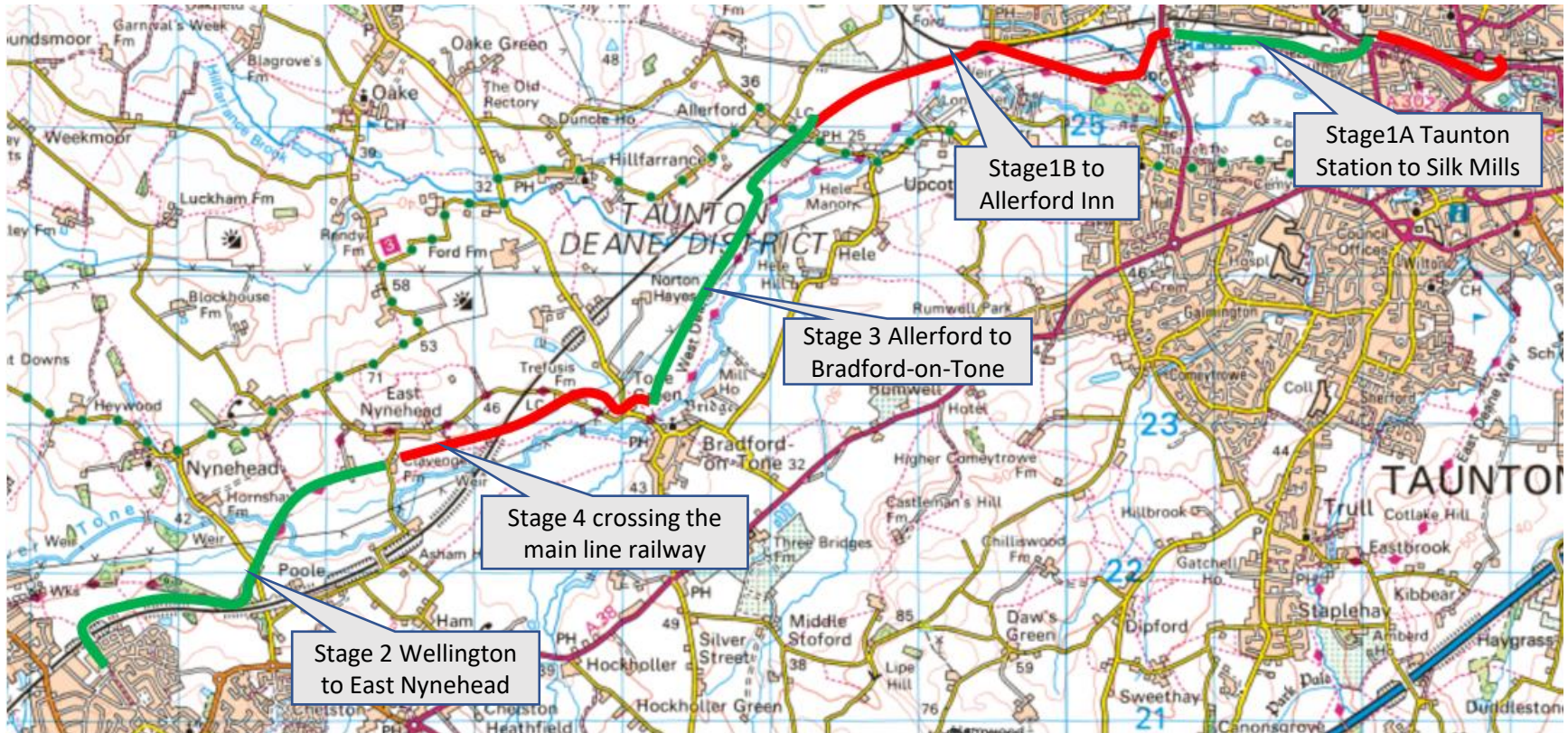
Summary and recommendations

The development of a Greenway route between Wellington and Taunton is probably the premier example of such a route in Somerset. Its likely usage and popularity would cement the value of creating new routes which prioritise walking and cycling and would make a significant contribution to the County's carbon reduction targets.

We recommend the early start on this project opening up the available sections as more detailed work is done on the others. The phased development of the Grand Western Greenway along the lines proposed could see the completion of a flagship active travel route that appeals to many parts of the community and local and national policy aspirations.

Previous estimates using Health Economic Assessment Tools (WHO) have suggested a potential increase of daily cycling trips between Taunton in the hundreds, but the potential to open up active travel for leisure, for commuting, for recreation and for the good of positive mental health is large.

This plan attracts many interested parties, each with a special interest in the heritage and history that formed our two towns, whilst others welcome the chance to improve their own health and well being getting to work and everyday destinations



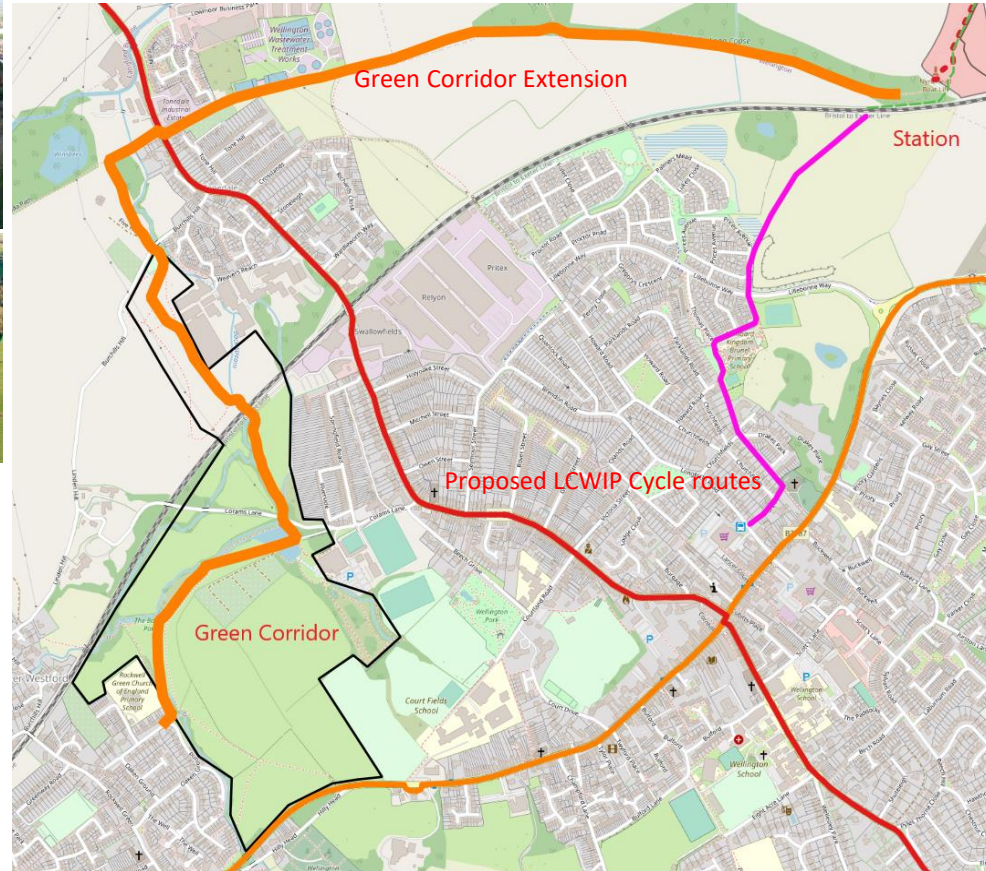
Appendix 1 Wellington Green Corridor



Wellington Town Council has acquired a 150 year lease on 62.5 acres of land along with another 4.5 acres donated to the community

A later phase of the greenway development would see a continuation of the path along the bed of the canal in Long Copse (bold orange) and on to the north end of the Green Corridor. This important recent acquisition by the town will provide access to the secondary school and two primary schools.

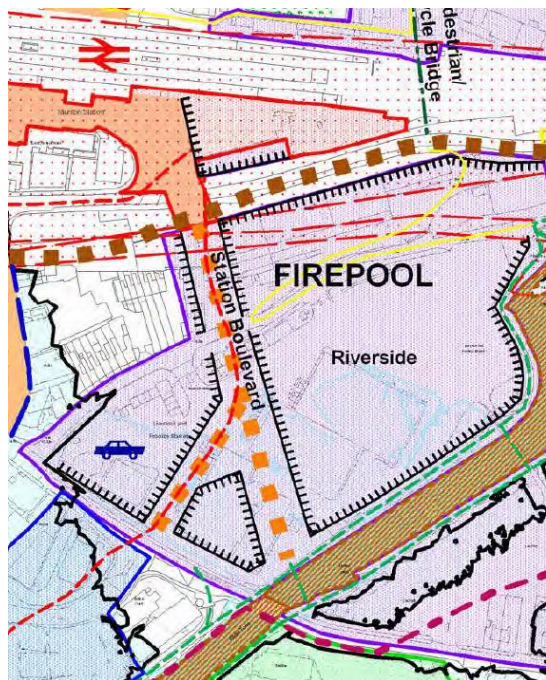
Plans for its configuration and use are the subject of a community consultation but it is likely to include allotments, leisure space as well as being an accessible green space close to the centre of the community. It will also link the two communities of Rockwell Green and Wellington



Appendix 2: Connections and links in Taunton

Bringing the Wellington to Taunton active travel route to the railway station in Taunton will align it with existing links across the Firepool to a proposed new bridge across the River Tone. The NCN 3 runs adjacent to the river, and leads into the centre of the town on Bridge Street by a largely traffic-free route.

This Grand Western Greenway also links directly to the Bridgwater to Taunton canal which is a towpath along the watered canal. Apart from a short section at North Newton, the off-road route between Bridgwater and Taunton is complete.



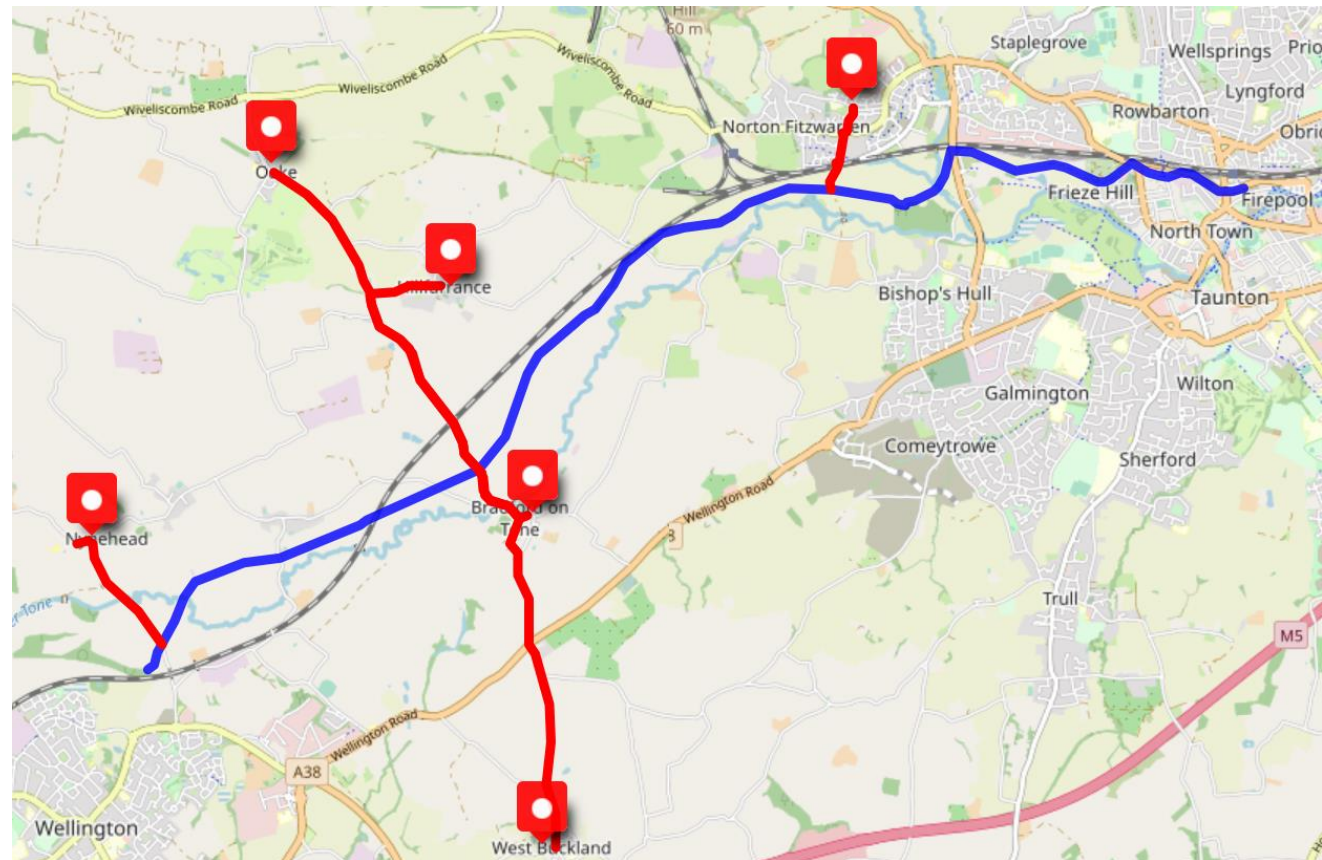
Appendix 3: Community Links

The Grand Western Greenway runs centrally through the Vale of the Tone in which many medium size communities have flourished, and which in turn look to Taunton and Wellington for employment, services and entertainment. A key requisite of this route is that there should be easy links to the route so that the residents of these places can take advantage of traffic-free travel into each of the main towns in their vicinity.

Those to the north of the A38 have access along quiet lanes, and Norton Fitzwarren has the advantage of its own pedestrian bridge over the railway line. The population of West Buckland would need to have some safe means of crossing the busy A38.

Communities linked

Nynehead
Oake
Hillfarrance
Bradford on
Tone
West Buckland
North Fitzwarren



Contact us:

Charles Biscoe

Wellington Wheelers Cycling Club

grandwesterngreenway@gmail.com