

# The Strawberry Line Society

## Trustees Annual Report 2023-24

This is the first annual report since the SLS was established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and covers the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. In future years the AGM will be held earlier, and reports align with the calendar year which is also the financial year for the Society.

After a very lengthy process your trustees, who also form the management committee of the Society, have concluded all the arrangements necessary to establish the CIO, transfer the assets of the former unincorporated organisation to it and formally close the original charity. We can now devote our energies fully towards our charitable objects - promoting the use of the line “as a safe walking and cycling route and nature reserve”.

The previous 15 months have seen major steps forward in the development of a continuous off-road route between Clevedon and Shepton. In Sandford we were delighted to see the opening of a new link that avoids the need to travel down Nye Road. It was funded by National Grid who also generously funded a well-attended opening ceremony. Our partners, Greenways and Cyclerroutes, completed a link connecting the villages of Westbury sub-Mendip and Easton allowing for the first time a realistic walking and cycling route between those communities. A short section of path leading from Yatton station was created as a first step to providing a safe route connecting the existing path to Clevedon and the Pier-to-Pier way.

Less spectacular, but just as important as building new sections is the work of maintaining the existing path, preventing encroachment by brambles, repairing the surface and attending to signage. It was good to see the work of our Winscombe team rewarded by a “Highly Commended” in the BBC ‘make a difference’ awards in a ceremony at Weston. At Dulcote and on the Ridge Road towards Shepton, volunteers have made dramatic progress possible by clearing and fencing new sections of path which we expect to open in the next year. Elsewhere teams at Axbridge-Cheddar and Westbury – Easton, volunteers have been out regularly, seeking to keep the path in good condition.

We are also grateful for work by our partners – Sustrans, the Millenium Green volunteers and YACWAG, the latter group having carried out substantial clearance works at the former Congresbury Station. The Cheddar-Axbridge group were able to take advantage of an external funding opportunity to install bike racks at several points along the line.

In 2023 we formally established a branch committee for the stretch of path between the A38 and Yatton, the original section from which the path has grown. This enables those who are close to that area to focus on the practical issues associated with its

maintenance and development and work directly with the path owners – North Somerset Council.

We are fortunate in having good relationships with members and officers of both Somerset and North Somerset Councils, though the role played by the two counties is very different. North Somerset have a detailed management plan for their path and invest in maintenance, though are increasingly constrained by financial pressures. In Somerset maintenance and some development work falls mainly to volunteers to undertake and finance. Both councils however have committed to linking the Strawberry Line into the Somerset Circle by seeking funding to complete the missing links.

In 2023 we undertook a complete revamp of both our website and our membership management system. The former has been simplified and will focus on information that is relatively unchanging and of use to path users. News items will be issued via social media where our presence has increased markedly. The membership system makes it easy to contact all members or those with a particular interest. It also produces automatic reminders when subscriptions are due saving considerable work. We are piloting the use of QR codes to make it easy for potential supporters to join, donate or volunteer with the Society.

Although we can look back with pride on our achievements over the past 15 months, I am very conscious that we face major issues ahead. The financial situation for local authorities is getting more difficult and we may need to take on more responsibility for funding and delivering essential works ourselves. We have still not achieved our goal of a continuous safe route from Clevedon to Shepton and will need to work and lobby hard to make it a reality. Finally, our excellent team of trustees has worked wonders in recent years but none of us is getting any younger. Growing our membership and recruiting new and active members is perhaps the key challenge for the years ahead.

Mick Fletcher

Chair, SLS.

**THE STRAWBERRY LINE SOCIETY - CIO - CC 1201543**

**Income & Expenditure for Period 11/01/23 - 31/12/23**

		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Main - Winscombe</b>	<b>Axbridge - Cheddar</b>	<b>Clevedon - Yatton</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>SLA</b>
<b>Receipts</b>							
	Subscriptions	1,066.03	1,024.03	42.00			
	Donations	18,011.65	8,173.90	3,085.00	20.00		6,732.75
	Grants	1,900.00	1,000.00			350.00	550.00
	Interest	2.21		2.21			
	Other	75.00					75.00
		<b>21,054.89</b>	<b>10,197.93</b>	<b>3,129.21</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>350.00</b>	<b>7,357.75</b>
<b>Payments</b>							
	Maintenance	2,876.58	157.36	460.00		663.52	1,595.70
	Insurance	256.15	256.15				
	Professional Charges	725.40	725.40				
	Adminstration	609.35	609.35				
	Sundry Expenses	409.48		117.98			291.50
	Other	25.00		25.00			
		<b>4,901.96</b>	<b>1,748.26</b>	<b>602.98</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>663.52</b>	<b>1,887.20</b>
<b>Excess of Income over Expenditure</b>		<b>16,152.93</b>	<b>8,449.67</b>	<b>2,526.23</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>-313.52</b>	<b>5,470.55</b>
Accumulated Fund brought forward		24,719.95	17,577.79	2,419.22	1,333.22	1,506.00	1,883.72
<b>Accumulated Fund carried forward</b>		<b>40,872.88</b>	<b>26,027.46</b>	<b>4,945.45</b>	<b>1,353.22</b>	<b>1,192.48</b>	<b>7,354.27</b>

**THE STRAWBERRY LINE SOCIETY - CIO - CC 1201543**

**Balance Sheet as at 31/12/23**

<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
	Bank Accounts -		
	- Santander (Main)	25,613.86	
	- NatWest (Axbridge)	5,282.19	
	- NatWest (Axbridge)	241.24	
	- Lloyds (Clevedon)	1,353.22	
	- Lloyds (East)	1,192.48	
	- Lloyds (SLA)	7,354.27	
			41,037.26
	Petty Cash (Main)		200.00
	Debtors (Main)		213.60
			<b>41,450.86</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
	Accruals (Axbridge)		577.98
<b>NET ASSETS</b>			<b>40,872.88</b>
<b>ACCUMALATED FUND</b>			
	<b>Balance brought forward</b>	<b>24,719.95</b>	
	Net surplus for Period	16,152.93	
	<b>Balance carried forward</b>		<b>40,872.88</b>
<b>The Net Assets of the Strawberry Line Society - Trust - CC 284005</b>			
<b>as at 10/01/23 were transferred to this Charity.</b>			