



Environmental Planning for Recreation

Project

Cheddar Valley Railway Recreational Route. A Feasibility Study

Client

North Somerset Council

Background

The Cheddar Valley Railway was opened in 1869 and ran from Wells to Clevedon. The railway was abandoned in 1968. Parts of the line were bought by local farmers, but most was retained by British Rail. In 1983 the newly formed Cheddar Valley Railway Walk Society persuaded the local council to buy lengths of the old line for reinstatement as an informal walkway.

The Walk was maintained by volunteers, but their efforts were hampered by lack of resources, the continued inaccessibility of parts of the route still in private ownership and loss of key bridges. In 1995 the local authority recognised the unfulfilled potential of the route in its District-wide Countryside Strategy. Landmark was commissioned to prepare a feasibility study to identify opportunities for recreational use of the abandoned railway line.

Description

A detailed audit of the condition of the route was undertaken in consultation with all interested parties. Access points, ownership breaks and major obstacles were identified and the industrial archaeology, ecology and safety aspects of the line assessed. The need to overcome potential conflicts between user groups was emphasised. A preferred route was then identified, options for avoiding obstacles presented and technical specifications for the Walk, including for surfacing, barriers and access points costed. Plans are now underway to develop the line

Client benefits

The feasibility study required careful public consultation between a range of disparate groups, backed up with accurate site survey work; Landmark's regular dialogue with potential users paved the way for an enormously successful project.