

**BEGINS**

## **County Hall hampering progress on healthier, cleaner, cheaper journeys**

**“Time to dust off reports and let progress take its course” says Somerset MP, Tessa Munt**

Long overdue improvements to the A303 were announced in Parliament this week, including the construction of a tunnel to protect the area around Stonehenge from damage caused by traffic on its way to and from Somerset, well-known destination for tourists, visitors and holidaymakers.

But, it's not just big road projects that are important locally. The proposed ‘Strawberry Line’ extension between Wells and Cheddar - an ‘off-road’ path for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and disabled vehicles - needs a helping hand too.

With the support of Sustrans, a leading charity supporting healthier, cleaner, cheaper journeys, local campaigners have spent years trying to give school children, locals and holidaymakers – and a growing number of cyclists - a safe green alternative to using the dangerous, narrow A371 route between Wells and Cheddar, both popular tourist destinations. Rural roads are recognised as the most dangerous, especially with the increasing popularity of cycling.

After over a decade of meetings, lobbying and funding various reports and studies, the Strawberry Line Planning Application has been languishing in the dust on a shelf at County Hall for the last 4 years.

In a ridiculous merry-go-round of bureaucratic barriers, Somerset County Council refuses to allow the Planning Application to be ‘dusted off’ and submitted, saying it will allow this only when funding for the project is certain. However, individuals and organisations are, naturally, waiting for the Strawberry Line project to have Planning Permission before they agree to fund it.

Tessa said:

*“This project is ‘shovel ready’ and I really don’t understand why the leadership at Somerset County Council won’t do their bit and take this exciting project forward.”*

*“It’s a disgrace that Somerset County Council has been sitting on this Planning Application for years, especially when taxpayers’ money has been used to do all the preparation work in readiness for submitting the Application. It’s a scandal that the Council refuses to respond to a local, practical and green alternative to the dangerous A371.”*

*“I really hope a way can be found to break this ludicrous impasse and the already very successful Strawberry Line path through North Somerset can be extended to Wells and beyond.”*

**ENDS**

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