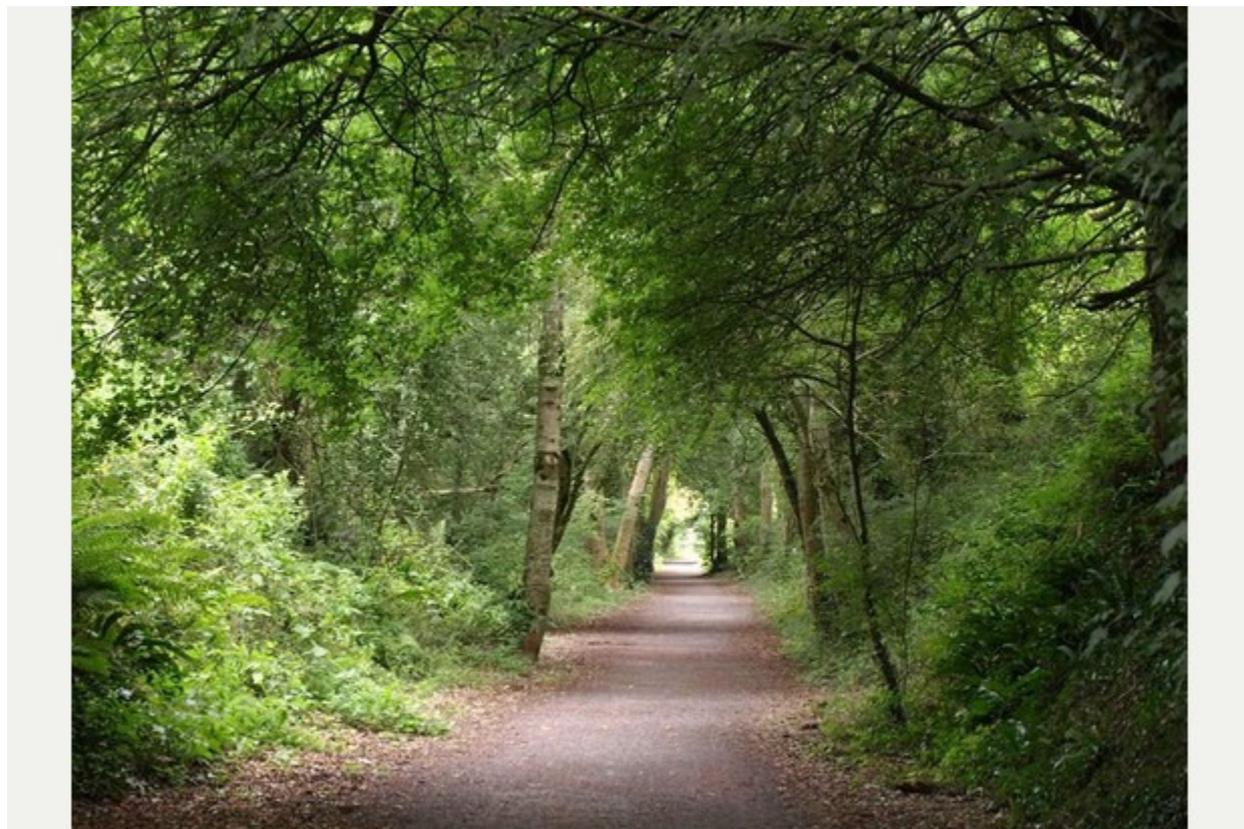


Campaigners ask council to back Strawberry Line Project

By [Wells Journal](#) | Posted: December 24, 2014



CAMPAIGNERS are asking Somerset County Council to reconsider its stance on a proposed safe footpath and cycle route from Cheddar to Wells.

The Strawberry Line project is backed by local community groups, councillors and politicians with the aim of converting the old railway line from Clevedon to Cranmore into a network of safe paths for walkers, cyclists, families and residents to enjoy.

Paul Harley, from the Strawberry Line Society Association, is positive the project would be able to find the funds needed to pay for work to extend it from Cheddar to Wells, but only once the council gives the plans the green light.

Mr Harley said: "We will be able to raise the money for the extension work but we are in a Catch 22 position; unless the county council give planning permission we can't raise the funds, so the whole project seems to be resting on that."

Wells MP Tessa Munt raised the topic for discussion in the House of Commons, asking that the Leader of the House encourage the council to "dust the application off, as it is shovel-ready and funding is available, but it is dependent on planning permission."

However William Hague, first secretary of state and leader of the House of Commons, said that he did not think that "we in this House would be able to tell the county council what to do".

Ms Munt said later: "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."

A spokeswoman for Somerset County Council said: "We progressed the scheme as far as we could through the planning process in 2009 on behalf of the Strawberry Line Association. The association submitted a business plan with a list of potential funding sources in August 2010 with no clear guarantee that this funding could be delivered to secure, build and maintain the scheme.

"Without the funds in place, it would not be appropriate for the county council to progress this planning application while its delivery remains so uncertain. No renewed proposals to carry the scheme forward have been submitted since, and therefore the situation remains unchanged."

While Mr Harley and Ms Munt are unimpressed with county council's position as they believe the project would help supply a safe, green alternative to using the narrow A371 route between Wells and Cheddar, cycling organisations have recently praised councillors for their political commitment to cycling.

The local authority became the first shire county council with more than 30 per cent of councillors backing a national [campaign](#) for improved cycling conditions.

The national Space for Cycling campaign coordinated by CTC, the national cycling charity, and Cycle Somerset called on councillors to make cycling a safe, convenient and enjoyable option for day-to-day journeys for people of all ages and abilities.

Read more: <http://www.wellsjournal.co.uk/Campaigners-ask-council-Strawberry-Line-Project/story-25756285-detail/story.html#ixzz3NPRVPHj>