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15 June 2020

Dear All,

The Parish Council has supported the principle of more safe walking and cycling routes for many years. Now as we come out of the initial Covid 19 lock down Mendip District Council is taking advantage of central government’s new understanding of the importance of sustainable travel alternatives to private cars and the recognition that many will be reluctant to use public transport until a vaccine is found.

Here is an extract from their recent press release –

*Mendip's 'active travel' plans put cycling and walking at its heart. Mendip District Council plans to transform travel across its villages, towns and city by making it easier and safer for residents to get about by bike and on foot.*

*It aims to connect people and places by enabling the formation of an extensive network of cycle and walking paths along commuter routes, improving access, safety and creating connections with urban areas and towns, and between its villages.The ambitious project delivers on the Council's priorities for a greener, fairer, more vibrant Mendip - and its aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.*

*Leader of Mendip District Council, Cllr Ros Wyke, said: "There is a new-found appreciation of our environment and countryside since the COVID-19 crisis.*

*"People no longer just****imagine*** *a time without car journeys, less pollution, congestion and noise - they've actually* ***experienced*** *it. And they don't want to go back to how things were.*

*"We've a once-in-a-lifetime chance to act on this behaviour change for the good of our health, our environment, and for future generations."*

*Mendip's sustainable travel project has been further-boosted by the announcement from Government of emergency funding for pop-up cycle-lanes, pavement widening, and pedestrianised streets. The Department for Transport (DfT) has set aside a £250m for Local Authorities to develop highly localised solutions to help reopen and rebuild their areas, following the health emergency.The first tranche of funding will be released this week, which means work on Mendip's sustainable travel project can begin immediately.*

*Cllr Wyke concluded: "We will be working in partnership with Mendip's city, town and parish councils, Somerset County Council, our local Chambers of Commerce, landowners, voluntary clubs and sports groups, to make the most of this opportunity and the funding available. A joint approach is the one way we can truly transform travel for residents, for good.”*

Of particular interest to many of our residents will be the proposed extension of the Strawberry Line from where it currently ends in Cheddar through to Wells and Shepton Mallet using as far as possible the old railway line. There has been a local group campaigning for this for 20 years. Now is the time to dust off the various plans and proposals that have been created over this period and start again. Do look at the Strawberry Line website <https://tinyurl.com/yc2z478d> and see what you think and let me know if you would like to support this endeavour now and into the future.

Keep safe and well.

Sue Isherwood, Chair Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council 01749 870457