

Council Executive 07-Mar-2007

Statement by Frank Tompson of "Two Tunnels Group"

Council Executive members will undoubtedly be aware of one of the most exciting projects being considered for the Bath and North East Somerset area, ie the 'Two Tunnels Greenway'. This virtually flat four mile path will join the Bath to Bristol cycleway and Western Riverside Development to Midford, and communities in between, along the route of the old Somerset and Dorset Railway, benefiting all types of walkers, and cyclists, both for commuting and for leisure. Two lighted tunnels and the opening of the magnificent Tucking Mill Viaduct will help to provide an inspiring yet highly practical and much needed link between town and country, with its unique blend of industrial heritage, wildlife and geology.

Having completed a Feasibility Study on behalf of the Council, Sustrans has advised that, if successful in its bid for Big Lottery funding, it will contribute £1M - yes £1M, towards the project. The rules of Big Lottery funding, however, require that an element of 'matched funding' must be contributed from partner organisations, the primary organisation in this case being Bath and North East Somerset Council.

On Monday of this week the Two Tunnels Working Group, chaired by Cllr Gitte Dawson, and with representation from the Two Tunnels Group, Bath and North East Somerset Council and Sustrans, held its fourth meeting to continue discussing how we take the project forward. As part of this meeting, Sir Elgar Jenkins, the Executive Member for Transport, joined us, to explain his position regarding the project, particularly concerning the Council's ability to assist in its funding. The Group wishes to express its thanks to Sir Elgar for giving his time to speak with us on the matter. We fully appreciate the financial realities of life and the difficult job that Sir Elgar has to do in balancing the Transport Budget books.

It is not every day that £1M potentially becomes available to the people of Bath to enhance their health, leisure, access, economy, and education, all in a manner fully sustainable to the environment, and to miss the opportunity would be a tragedy. The Two Tunnels Working Group therefore requests that the Council Executive extends whatever assistance Sir Elgar and his officials require so that a realistic financial contribution can be made by the Council to ensure that the Two Tunnels Project becomes a reality.