

Mark Jerzak statement

I'm speaking tonight as both a local business owner and a daily user of the existing northern section of the Chew Valley Lake community path.

I run a consultancy business based in Bishop Sutton, where sustainable transport is a core part of our environmental policy. We actively encourage our staff to choose active travel options for their commute. As a consultant on the Bath & NES framework, we work extensively with the council on renewable energy projects across the county – including this very building I was surveying earlier today.

This path project aligns perfectly with the council's own climate commitments. When Bath & NES declared a climate emergency in 2019, you committed to achieving carbon neutrality across the district by 2030. Your key strategies include improving energy efficiency and crucially, shifting to active travel. The southern section of this path is essential to delivering on that commitment.

I cycle the existing northern section daily as part of my commute, and I can tell you it has been transformational. Every morning and evening, I see the path buzzing with activity – joggers, dog walkers, cyclists, families with children, women's running groups. It's become a vital community asset that brings people together while promoting healthy, sustainable transport.

I also use the path regularly with my young children for family cycling trips. But here's the problem: families and residents living south of the lake are effectively cut off from this resource. They face the daunting prospect of cycling on the A368 – the main arterial route between Bath and Weston-super-Mare. This road carries heavy traffic and frankly, it's not safe for community cycling, especially with children.

The northern section proved the concept works. Now we need to complete the circuit so the entire Chew Valley community can benefit equally. This isn't just about recreation – it's about delivering on your climate commitments, promoting public health, and ensuring equitable access to sustainable transport options for all residents.

I urge you to approve the southern section tonight. Complete what you started, and give the whole community the safe, sustainable transport link they deserve.