



Department
for Transport

Sonia Kundu
Director
Transforming Somerset & Dorset Rail Links CIC

From the Minister of State
Chris Heaton-Harris MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: chris.heatonharris@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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Dear Sonia,

Thank you for your letter of 27 July to the Prime Minister, about transforming the disused railways of the South West of England into cycle and walking paths. Your letter has been transferred to this Department and I am replying as the Minister responsible for this area.

On 9 May the Secretary of State for Transport announced a £2billion package of funding for active travel over the next five years. The announcement can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking

This is the largest ever boost for cycling and walking and will deliver transformational change. £250million will be available this year for pop-up bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle and bus-only corridors as well as vouchers for cycle repairs and greater provision for bike fixing facilities. I would encourage local organisations to look at how they can access this funding to progress your ambitions.

Your letter also mentions reopening some of the disused railway lines that were closed in the Beeching cuts. The Department for Transport has launched a £500million Restoring Your Railway fund to build or reopen lines and stations, reconnecting smaller communities, regenerating local economies and improving access to jobs, homes and education. We are inviting MPs, local councils and community groups across England and Wales to propose how they could use funding to reinstate axed local rail services and restore stations. We will be opening a third round of applications for the Fund in November and more information can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/restoring-your-railway-fund

The Department for Transport encourages the best use of transport infrastructure as possible. Any permanent changes made, for example, to a disused railway line, need to consider that the possibility of any change could impact on restoring the route back to rail use in the future. Another important consideration to note is that including multi-access routes alongside rail-tracks must be reviewed against health and safety for all users.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Chris Heaton-Harris MP

Minister of State for Transport