

**Public speech – Guildhall – June 13 2012**

**SNOW HILL SKILLS AND ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE**  
**(supported by BANES Racial Equality Council)**

**LAWRENCE BUABENG MA(RCA)**

I have attended this cabinet meeting, with the support of members of the community, in order to appeal on behalf of Snow Hill residents, with regard to the proposed regeneration of the London Rd.

I presented a speech to the cabinet on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008 entitled – “**An Alternative Vision for the London Rd and Snow Hill Area**”- a community led regeneration scheme, the main thrust of which, was to bring back into use, a number of disused shop fronts on the London Rd. The idea was to bring physical, as well as ,social regeneration together in order to create real and sustainable opportunities for disadvantaged local people. The overall objective was to provide, in due course, cost effective community amenities, through the development of social enterprises.

We have worked with various organisations in recent years, including the **Bath Preservation Trust**, where we assisted with a public survey at **No. 1 Royal Crescent**, prior to its refurbishment. They have also won a **national RTPI award** for their **London Rd and Snow Hill Energy Efficiency Strategy**, which is a by-product of the **SHSEI / BPT Heritage and Regeneration Strategy**, developed in conjunction with their Education and Outreach officer Tom Boden, and presented to trustees in 2009

In spite of all our efforts to improve the locality, the **SHSEI** members have been marginalised and excluded from the whole process. The **SHSEI committee** has now been usurped by **The London Rd Gateway Action Group**, and to add insult to injury, Snow Hill residents have been excluded from the **Draft Area of Focus: London Rd Regeneration**. Before there was any money on the table, it was the initial petition and campaigning of Snow Hill residents, that has brought us to where we are today. It is, therefore, a minor travesty to find that, yet again, they have been forgotten about, despite recent and costly consultations.

**The Snow Hill Community Consultation** back in 2002 was not followed through because of lack of funding; whilst the **SHSEI Community Survey(2010)**, conducted on the advice of **Joan Geany (Local Improvement Advisor)**, has been completely ignored.

The sincerity of the BANES vision statement is questionable. What does the Council actually mean when it claims that it is a local authority “**where everyone fulfils their potential... with citizens that actively engage**”?

Bath Council aspires to be a “**listening Council, with active citizens that reaches every community and culture...where people actively lead the delivery of improvements in their community**”, and try to “**reduce inequality between communities**”.

The Council also claims to support the creation of “**activities and opportunities to help young people make a positive difference to their lives and communities... where people have developed their skills and use them to improve their community**”, and where “**everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities**”.

**The 2010 SHSEI Community survey revealed the fact that:**

45% of residents interviewed described themselves as unemployed.  
16% said that they were in full time employment.  
9% were self employed.

**When asked what would make it easier for them to find employment or return to education:**

56% stated that acquisition of skills and experience and qualifications would help.  
51% said easier access to education and training.  
30% wanted help to start their own business.

**When asked if they would be interested in the various listed activities or services:**

74% were keen on opening, reconstructing and maintaining the community garden behind Caroline House.  
77% liked the idea of a local heritage and regeneration centre for exhibitions about the areas past, present, and future.  
73% supported film making workshops for local residents.  
68% wanted work or training opportunities in stone, metal, and wood.  
60% opted for art and design.  
55% ticked the furniture restoration box.

We have attended this Cabinet meeting in order to put forward two requests:

Firstly, that the Council lives up to its oft mentioned mantra of social inclusion, bringing Snow Hill within the boundary of the Draft Area of Focus. No additional cost need be incurred, because to Somers credit, it has already provided new kitchens, bathrooms, and front doors. To be included, would be a symbolic gesture indicating that we are all in this together, as opposed to the all too familiar 'us and them' scenario.

Secondly, given the 5 years work in the development of the **SHSEI** with Council officers, we are formally requesting that out of the 750K budget, at least 50K be made available to the **SHSEI** social regeneration projects for disadvantaged locals (7.5% of budget)

.The intended schemes would help to enhance, as well as, animate physical regeneration efforts. The funds would be used to deliver two lead projects:

1. **SKILLS/CRAFT GALLERY**- exhibitions, IT access, skills tutorials
2. **BOXING CLUB** - fitness training for all

The new Council controlled regeneration group on the London Rd (LRGAG) constitutes 'community empowerment by proxy'- a contradiction in terms, and as such tantamount to 'disempowerment by the back door. We may have been 'hoodwinked' and dealt a 'slight of hand, but we have by no means, been 'taken in' by this semblance of people power. It has to be noted that Snow Hill residents, at this moment in time, feel **used, betrayed and neglected**. I am hoping ,that with the rekindled support of Cabinet members present, we are able to reverse this unfortunate state of affairs.