

Bath Plus What? A Statement by Cllr Dr Jackson (Lab, Radstock)**In a nutshell, this is a hybrid plan, the worst of both worlds.**

First, I would like to say that as with the other directors of Bath Tourism Plus, I am not denying the need to clean up the centre of Bath. Last Monday I had to wade through ankle deep garbage to get into the Guildhall, and the general outlook from the Guildhall steps made me think of Calcutta – except that food is never wasted there. However, any solution should embrace the whole of Bath and North East Somerset. What we have here is another Bath centric plan, yet Bath will always draw people in because of the Roman Baths, the Jane Austen legacy, the cultural events and the shops. It is out in Norton Radstock and villages with a very different tradition, but great tourism and commercial potential, that help is really needed, litter removed etc. I dread what Radstock Memorial Park will look like when I conduct the Remembrance Day commemoration there on Sunday.

Secondly, it is particularly frustrating because I was just beginning to create links with Bath Tourism Plus for potential tourist venues in Radstock, an organisation is going to be created based on the Bath Chamber of Commerce, not Norton Radstock or Keynsham . – and why should they fund us? I deplore the way this body is going to be dominated by Tories instead of being cross-party like Bath Tourism Plus. Of course it is obvious why – the Labour seats are all outside Bath, and our MP does not like the Bath Spa project. But that does not mean that we could not contribute usefully because of our trade union links and so on.

Thirdly, we see another layer of bureaucracy being created – yet another quango – and this from the administration which promised us a leaner, cleaner Council. Of course you will say that it is being done this way to enable funding to be received from businesses and so on. But there is going to be an accountability deficit for what is essentially a public service. And this is the root of it all. Keeping the centre of Bath clean and attractive ‘Making Bath and N E Somerset a better place to live, work and visit’, is the Council’s responsibility and should not be semi-privatized.

Therefore I beg you to go back to the drawing board and think again. Locate the ‘litter tsar’ in the Highways Department, and amend the constitution of Bath Tourism Plus, which has a proven track record, and ought not to be undermined in this way.

