

**STATEMENT ON SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAYS****Cllr John Bull**

It is apparent that many small businesses (especially retail businesses) are facing tough times. This was highlighted by an appeal by retailers in the Bath Chronicle last month to work together, in order to survive, underlining that in Bath especially, but also elsewhere in the area, small businesses give town centres a distinctive feel and should attract shoppers interested in something other than the multiples and supermarkets. The winter weather sometimes demonstrates this – unable to use their cars in the snow people often discover their local shops, maybe for the first time.

An idea from President Obama which we might adopt is a designated Saturday or Saturdays on which efforts are made by national and local authorities to encourage people to use local small businesses. (In America, this is a Saturday in early December). This is done through publicity, celebrity endorsements and other means to raise the profile of these firms and to get more customers through their doors. This will then, it is hoped, induce people to visit these shops and other establishments at other times.

The Labour Party nationally has taken this idea to the coalition Government who are considering it. In the meantime there is no reason why BANES should not launch a similar scheme off its own bat, and the Labour Group here would be happy to pass on details. In Paulton, my ward, many, many shops have closed in recent years as a result of supermarkets opening and customers travelling elsewhere. This may produce lower prices in some cases but is hard on the infirm, elderly and those without cars, who have less and less choice locally. It also creates a sad appearance with empty and boarded up shops and a deserted High Street. Let us hope we can prevent this happening elsewhere.