

Statement to B&NES Cabinet
- *Transport Strategy* -
12th November 2014 – Steve Bradley

I first moved to Bath in 1991. At that time our city's buses were expensive, its railways over-crowded, its roads congested at peak times, and cycling on our roads was an extreme sport. Twenty three years on little has changed.

But Bath's transport issues have been around for much longer than that.

In the 1940s the Abercrombie Report acknowledged this, and made the first major attempt to analyse the problem. It was followed in the '60s by the controversial Buchanan Plan.

The creation of Bath & North East Somerset council in 1996 saw responsibility for unlocking our transport problems return again to this building. Yet council administrations of all shades did little over the following fifteen years to genuinely get to grips with our city's transport issues.

I would therefore like to prelude my statement by giving credit to the current council administration and officer team for calling a halt to over fifty years of inertia by ensuring that, for the first time since Buchanan, Bath finally has a comprehensive strategy to keep our city moving.

Now - Buchanan's plan for dealing with Bath's transport focused entirely on motor vehicles and would have wreaked havoc on the fabric of our city. I'm pleased that the transport strategy before us today takes a much more enlightened, holistic and multi-modal approach. I believe that big solutions are needed to properly improve transport here, and I'm pleased that this document doesn't shy away from ambitious plans.

Three particular elements stand out for me as potential game changers :

The first is the Park and Rail Proposal for the east of Bath as part of the new MetroWest scheme. I believe the appeal of a short 4 minute shuttle train journey from Bathampton Junction to Bath Spa will enable thousands of vehicles to be removed from our streets every week. The fact that it would also serve as a new local train station for Batheaston, Bathampton and Bathford would be a huge bonus, and one which would facilitate even further reductions in traffic. I would urge the council to continue pursuing this proposal vigorously. Our World Heritage City deserves good quality, attractive, mass transport alternatives to entice people out of their cars.

The second potential game changer is the commitment to a relief road for the east of Bath. Until recently I lived on London Road for two years, and I heard, felt and breathed the problems caused by large articulated lorries cutting

through our city. 10% of all vehicles there are HGVs, yet they account for 45% of its air pollution. A solution is desperately needed to alleviate the misery inflicted on residents of London Road, Warminster Road and Bathwick Street. I remember well the controversy and protests over the Batheaston bypass in the early 1990s, and the removal of the link road element then. I believe there is an urgent need to reassess the viability of finally creating a link between the A46 and A36, but it must be done in an appropriate location and a sensitive manner. But I'm glad that this strategy recognises this isn't the only possible solution. I'm pleased that discussions continue with Wiltshire on the prospect of dualling the A350 as an appropriate alternative route for these lorries. It is prudent for the council to keep both options on the table at this stage, and I would urge you to progress whichever proves to be the most deliverable within an appropriate timescale.

Thirdly – I would like to wholeheartedly encourage the council's continuing commitment to the excellent Metrowest project. A regular shuttle rail service east and west from Bath has the potential to increase capacity on the network, and provide a feasible alternative to many people who feel they have no choice but to drive to and from Bath every day.

There are other elements of the report worthy of note, and there are other aspects I would like to encourage the council to place more emphasis on. Such as cycling, and addressing the disruptive presence of quick-trip tourist coaches in Terrace Walk.

But to conclude, I commend this council administration and its officers for drawing to a close the fifty year period in which our city has had to make do without the guidance of a comprehensive transport strategy. But the real work begins now - to ensure that this document isn't consigned to the same dusty shelf as the Abercrombie Report and Buchanan Plan before it. Key to ensuring its implementation will be our ability to attract outside funding for major game-changing infrastructure such as the three schemes I have just highlighted. If I am fortunate to be selected as our city's next MP by the people of Bath, you can be assured of my tireless assistance in securing the external funding and support we need to turn this strategy into a reality, and to make our city an even better place.