

Statement to cabinet on East of Bath P&R

Alison Millar

The residents of Bathavon North ward are waiting with bated breath to hear the new administration's plans to alleviate the immense traffic problems to the east of Bath. I can tell you that from the number of emails and calls I am already receiving.

Traffic is an issue which affects people to the east on a daily basis and it's time for a solution. Since 1945 a number of schemes have been put forward by Bath to try to resolve the traffic and transport problems of the city. These have nearly always been plans benefitting Bath at the expense of the surrounding countryside; with little regard for its value and with a huge potential for the countryside to the east to be utterly spoilt.

In advance of any announcement by the new administration there are few simple requests which I must make on local residents' behalf. I feel justified in doing so as I am the first Liberal Democrat councillor ever to be elected in that ward and votes for me were mostly cast on the basis of my stance on ensuring that the issues of congestion and pollution in this area do not continue to plague us over the next decades – they are simply ruining the City.

- Think outside the box. Bath is a very special city and it deserves the best solution. Not a bargain bucket or off the shelf scheme – and not one which is rushed through for quick political gain. To bring in a scheme which defaces the green approaches to Bath, but which results in traffic being just as bad in 4 years' time, is a legacy that I doubt any politician would want to leave.
- Don't be swayed by agendas – listen to the people who live here – and love it here. Simply paving over a comparatively small green space (such as the field to the west of Mill Lane) is not a solution, particularly if it has insufficient capacity and no ability to grow.

- Provide a long term solution. It might be more complicated but we live in a World Heritage Site and we have a responsibility to protect it for future generations.
- Employ joined up thinking – the whole of the picture needs to be looked at. For example, as the Authority boundary falls so close to Bath’s eastern boundary, we must work closely with colleagues in Wiltshire Council.

The rail and ride scheme package proposed by the previous administration fulfilled these criteria and met with high levels of approval from residents.

It would be more complicated than a bus-based scheme, yes – but it would be concealed, situated on disused railway land, and would accommodate high volumes of cars. It would deliver good value for money and a high cost-benefit ratio. In addition the use of the railway would mean that people are brought into the City in a fast, efficient and environmentally-friendly way. The fact that private companies, who are keen to build the scheme, are still getting in touch, testifies to the validity of the scheme. With so many residents favouring this scheme, any decision not to consult on it would be unjustified in my view.

I do hope the schemes put forward this time will be sensible but, most of all, impactful. Adequate and meaningful consultation must be built into the timetable so that the people most affected will be able to give their views.

Thank you