

Statement to the 4.5.16 Cabinet meeting of Bath and North East Somerset Council

Thank you chair.

Both professionally and as a South Bath resident, I care deeply about the enduring economic and environmental wellbeing of our diverse communities, and have since the 2014 launch of the Bath Transport Strategy been vocal about the importance of getting the right transport infrastructure in place to support this.

So last November I was shocked to see the questionable rationale, thin evidence, and deeply flawed consultative process, with which the newly elected Conservative administration, in its haste to address the daunting transport challenges Bath faces, seemed intent on intruding into the globally cherished East of Bath landscape.

However I applaud the more informed and consensus-building approach implicit in these item 12 reports and that you, the Cabinet, are taking more time to deliberate before deciding whether and where to build Park & Ride East.

Whilst there is serious weakness in the scrutiny process, overall I believe the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations are well founded and persuasive. Here's why:

1. By exposing the key assumptions, improving the data and highlighting the uncertainties, the Alliance has done an excellent job in challenging the need for a 1600 space Park & Ride. Similarly, albeit from a wider geographic and longer time perspective, Professor Parkhurst cautioned against reliance on Park & Ride usage projections derived from the Treasury's transport modelling approach.
2. Although an up to date evaluation of the risks associated with building on the flood plain is still lacking, the LDF report, as supplemented by the Alliance's work on air quality, evidences the major costs, difficulties and adverse environmental impacts associated with potential Park & Ride East sites.
3. The complex, changing and controversial nature of this decision and the consequent scope for unintended consequences and/or irreversible environmental damage, demands a more piecemeal approach, where incremental changes in accordance with the vision and range of measures identified in the Transport Strategy, are holistically planned and rigorously monitored.

So I implore you, the Cabinet, to build on the emerging consensus, and whilst being honest about what you don't know, further develop the policy coherence and evidence base before making any decision that will shape the economic and environmental wellbeing of our diverse communities for decades to come.