

## **SOS Statement in support of a road level pedestrian crossing instead of the Claverton Street subway - for the March 13th 2017 CTE Panel**

### **A. Our Heritage City is let down by the subway**

1. **Claverton Street subway** provides the **key entry to, and exit from, our World Heritage City** for people who live, or are staying, in the south west of Bath. **Hundreds of people** use it each day. The subway is a **dirty, unpleasant and unsafe** legacy of 1960s planning {see photo annex 1}. It is **unfit for purpose** and would **not be contemplated today**. It would be wrong to retain it simply because it still exists.

### **B. Residents want a road level pedestrian crossing not a subway. Mr Peacock's paper does not reflect residents' views or our work with the Council on this issue.**

1. The **SOS group** is made up of key people from **Bear Flat, Greenway Lane, Widcombe and Widcombe West Residents' Associations and Art in the Arch** . It has sought the **views of local residents** (survey [see annex 2], meetings, petition) and the **overwhelming majority want a crossing** instead of the **subway**.

2. A **crossing** would either a) go **over the gyratory** or b) cross **39 metres to the east of gyratory**, in a similar position and distance to the crossing on the west (Lower Bristol Road) side of the gyratory or c) cross **44 metres to the east of the subway** as **identified in 16/1/17 report Mr Peacock commissioned\***

3. **SOS** has **worked with Councillor Clarke and Mr Peacock** for almost a year. **Mr Peacock's paper** does **not reflect our views**. **Nor** does it reflect **our work together**, where the **concerns raised by Mr Peacock** in his paper have **already been largely addressed**. It was in fact **Mr Peacock** who **suggested option c) above \***

### **C. Capital & revenue costs for a subway are very high compared to a foot crossing**

1. The **costed options** to ensure that the **subway is safe and fit for purpose** are **high**. The **capital cost** for the suggested **subway option** is **£315,000**. There will be **ongoing maintenance costs** to address further **flooding, cleaning, graffiti CCTV**.

2. The Council's consultant, Atkins, indicated that **renovations to meet Government Design Manual for Roads and Bridges safety standards** would be **even higher - £460,000**, with a **further £65 K** for **CCTV, a communication link and pumped drainage system**

3. A **pedestrian crossing** is estimated to cost **between £60 and £80 k**. If a pedestrian crossing were established, the underpass would be closed and the subway and ramps filled in. This would **save the Council** considerable **capital and revenue expenditure**.

4. Councillor Clarke himself has said that **repairing and maintaining the subway** would be a **very expensive option**, that he **did not want to pour 'good money down a hole in the road'**. and that **'overall I support, in principal, a crossing as opposed to the subway' (April 2016)** .

5. At a time when **Council budgets are stretched and reducing**, to choose the **much more expensive option** of an underpass **does not make financial sense**.

#### **D. The subway does not address current road safety issues and standards**

1. The **subway does not address the danger** caused by **vehicles entering the gyratory too quickly** from the east (Widcombe). This causes **frequent damage to railings and vehicles** {see photo - annex 1}. A **crossing would calm traffic, preventing accidents.**

2. **At present the parapet does not meet DMRB road safety standards** so might not **withstand being hit by large vehicle and causing potential danger to subway users**

3. **Mr Peacock cites a technical note Atkins (May 2016) suggesting** that a surface crossing would raise issues of **congestion, site lines and location.** The **SOS group working with Mr Peacock has addressed and resolved** each of these arguments.

4. **Two microsimulations** have shown there is **little impact on congestion in off peak hours.** Traffic down **Wellsway moves more smoothly** with a crossing in place. When **pedestrian wait times** were increased to **60 and 90 seconds in rush hour** there was a **very slight increase in travel time (10 seconds)** for those coming from **Churchill Bridge** and a **max 58 seconds additional delay** for those coming from the **A36 East.**

5. The **site lines 'blind spot'** under the eastern railway arch could be **mitigated by a) directing traffic over the existing hatched area to the east of the gyratory,** making vehicles take a **wider, slower route** and **b) installing improved sight railings.**

6. In relation to **location,** it is worth noting that **there is a crossing on the west side of the gyratory sited approximately 39 metres from the roundabout** with a **similar 'blind spot'** under the **western arch of the gyratory.** To the knowledge of the SOS group its placement has caused **no damage to people in cars, on foot or on cycles.**

#### **E The subway does not address equal opportunities and personal safety**

1. **Many people, particularly women, avoid using the subway especially at night** as they feel **their personal safety is at risk.** There have been **unpleasant incidents** in the underpass. **Rough sleepers (though probably harmless) cause additional concern.**

2. **To avoid using the underpass some people climb over the railings and run across the road between moving vehicles.** There is therefore an additional **safety hazard** as people **create an unofficial 'pedestrian crossing'** {see photo, Annex 1}.

3. The SOS group considers the **subway to be antisocial and discriminatory against people on foot and those with disabilities over those in vehicles.**

**In summary it is a question of balance. The focus in Mr Peacock's paper is primarily on vehicles.** It scarcely refers to or shows people. **The SOS group's focus is on the needs of people in vehicles, on foot and on cycles.** **SOS therefore urges the Panel to support a road level pedestrian crossing as it:**

- Would provide an **attractive entrance to our Heritage City of which we can be proud**
- Is the **residents desired option**
- Is the **financially viable capital and revenue option**
- Will be the **safer option, calming traffic and easing traffic flow** down **Wells Road**
- Will **safeguard personal safety** by providing a **road level route to and from the city**
- Will help **fulfil Bath's own 2014 Transport Strategy 'Getting around in Bath'.**

## Annexes

### 1 Photos showing:

- the state of the subway



- people running across the road to avoid the subway





- broken railings resulting from traffic shunts on the gyratory as people enter it too quickly from the East (Widcombe side)



- I would use at 7.30 pm but not after 9.00
- Urine smell / non working lights
- I have three teenaged / early 20s children who don't use it at night. Instead they jump the railings
- I am nervous of underpass (don't use)
- The state of underpass is appalling, has been for many years
- I avoid it at night, dirty, feels unsafe.
- People are often begging, sleeping, rolled blankets left. never use at night
- Better if cars went underground instead of people
- As a senior I am rather nervous about using the underpass
- The underpass is a disgrace and does not give a good impression to tourists and visitors in a Heritage City
- Get a crossing
- The overall quality of the underpass (safety, aesthetics, construction) is well below what I expect from the City of Bath (World Heritage site and all that). As an entrance to the City or perhaps a scary late night exit from it, it is well under par, reflecting poorly on the Council.
- The underpass is the main route (by foot) into the City from Bear Flat and is unattractive to both residents and visitors. At night it feels unsafe even to reasonably fit male such as me
- What a shame Bath lets itself down with this embarrassing entrance to the City
- I would take a taxi or bus at night rather than go through the underpass
- I wouldn't go through the underpass at night - not a good introduction to a beautiful city
- I visit Bath regularly because it's such a lovely city. I stay in Bear Flat when in Bath and unfortunately find that this underpass reduces the quality of my experience
- We need a safe crossing
- I feel very unsafe in the current underpass and I want a crossing
- It's my only route into town (from Holloway) and it doesn't feel safe - make a crossing
- Fill it in and make a crossing
- Out of sight is always a problem - crossing at street level much more defensible
- It's horrible. Been down there once and never again

### **Annex 3 - Question and Answers relating to SOS proposals**

## **A. Entrance to world heritage city**

**A (1) Question: Will a surface crossing at Claverton Street improve the entrance to our World Heritage City?**

**Answer: Yes**

The subway is regarded as unsafe by a large majority of pedestrians who responded to SOS questionnaires (2015). Many female respondents simply will not use it because of actual or perceived danger. It is badly lit, dirty and liable to flooding and pedestrians have no sight lines which would enable them to see into and through the subway before entering it. Many pedestrians climb over the railings to cross the dual carriageway to the east of the gyratory, particularly when the subway is flooded.

A surface crossing will alleviate all of these problems and will offer residents, students and visitors a safe route into the city from the south. Pedestrians who were interviewed felt that the waiting time for a surface level crossing (90 seconds absolute maximum) would be a small price to pay for this.

**A (2) Question: Will a surface level crossing at Claverton Street contribute to any other improvements to our world heritage city?**

**Answer: Yes**

The Art in the Arches project is working to improve the visual, commercial and artistic aspects of the Brunel designed railway bridge across the gyratory. A surface crossing over the gyratory will allow pedestrians to access the arches from both north and south of the bridge. The south side of the city can and should be an attractive and thriving hub rather than a dowdy, dirty sector to avoided or walked through at a brisk pace.

## **B. Traffic Flow**

**B Question: Will the introduction of a surface crossing on the Churchill gyratory or the A36 Claverton Street approach have any impact on traffic flow?**

**Answer: Yes**

If the crossing were on the gyratory and the traffic lights were set at 90 second waiting times for pedestrians during the afternoon rush hour, travel times down Wellsway and on the A36 from Bristol would be improved. Travel times across Churchill Bridge would be slightly increased (by 10 seconds) and by 58 seconds for traffic on the A36 from Widcombe. There would be an even smaller impact on traffic flow during the morning rush hour and no measurable impact at any other time.

No microsimulations have been undertaken to measure the impact on traffic flow of a crossing on the A36 Claverton Street with pedestrian waiting times of 60 or 90 seconds. At waiting times of 30 seconds the impact on traffic flows is significantly (60%) less than for a crossing on the gyratory.

Extrapolation of this data to 60 and 90 seconds pedestrian waiting times suggests that a surface crossing on Claverton Street would have a minimal impact on overall traffic flows into and out of the gyratory.

### **C. Capital and Revenue Costs**

**C. Question: Would a surface crossing be cheaper to install and maintain than the existing subway?**

**Answer: Yes**

The estimated cost of carrying out the structural repair to the subway in order to alleviate flooding is £250k, to which has been added a further £65k to allow for the installation of a CCTV link and a pumped drainage system. (Total £315k). Revenue costs for ongoing maintenance (cleaning, flooding, CCTV repairs to lights, mirrors surfaces) have not been factored in

The cost of a surface crossing was estimated by Mr Peacock, at an SOS meeting on 1st June 2016 to be in the order of £60k. Ongoing maintenance costs for a surface crossing are likely to be much lower than for the subway.

### **D. Safety**

**D (1) Question: Would a surface crossing be safer for pedestrians wishing to access the city centre from the south of Bath?**

**Answer: Yes**

Pedestrians would be able to see and be seen by other road and foot users and would both feel and be safer as a consequence.

In addition pedestrians would be able to use the crossing in all weathers. The subway is impassable after heavy rain and people often choose to climb the protective railings and cross the dual carriageway, at considerable risk to themselves.

**D (2) Question: Would a surface level crossing be safer for road users (vehicles and bicycles) compared to the existing subway?**

**Answer: Yes**

The traffic lights at a surface level crossing would slow traffic and encourage drivers to enter and leave the gyratory more carefully. Currently shunts regularly occur as the traffic travels onto the gyratory too quickly from the A36 East (Widcombe direction). A crossing would calm this area.

**D (3) Question: If the surface level crossing were sited on the gyratory, would the road system be safe for drivers?**

**Answer:** Whilst recognising that there currently are, and would continue to be, potential dangers to traffic moving round a busy gyratory, there is no evidence that the dangers would be exacerbated by the introduction of a surface crossing. Drivers would be warned that they were approaching traffic lights and would react accordingly.

A number of safety precautions could be added to the road system through the gyratory including enhanced lighting, warning signals, a speed reduction to 20 MPH, directing traffic over the existing hatched area to the east of the gyratory to make vehicles to take a wider, and slower route round the gyratory. All of these would contribute to a safer environment for both pedestrians and road users.

**D (4) Question: If the surface crossing were sited on the A36, 39 metres to the east of the gyratory, would it be safe for road users?**

**Answer: Yes**

There has long been a surface level crossing for pedestrians 39 metres to the west of the gyratory. The exit to the west of the gyratory is similar to that to the east, though with a more acute bend in the road and poorer sight lines. As far as we know, there have been no reported accidents in over 30 years as a result of the functioning of this surface crossing. The inescapable conclusion is that a surface crossing at an identical distance on the opposite side of the gyratory would be as safe as the existing one to the west.

This is supported by the comment in a report from CH2M, carried out on behalf of BANES in June 2016, which stated that a surface crossing at 44 metres from the gyratory '*could be acceptable*' with regard to safety and stopping distances.

## **E. Equality and Personal Safety**

**E Question: Would a surface crossing address any issues of equality for women and people with disabilities?**

**Answer : Yes**

In a survey of 82 people and a petition of almost 300 people collected (in approximately 6 hours) by SOS members a significant majority of female respondents of all ages expressed concerns about using the subway during the day (58%) and at night (95%). These residents, students and visitors stated a strong preference for a surface crossing, which would make them feel safer and enable them to walk from their homes to town.

People with disabilities are simply unable to use the subway when it floods and have been forced to make a lengthy detour via the Widcombe crossing in order to access the city centre. A surface crossing would deal with this issue.