

Council Coach Strategy (Consultation dated 18th Sept 17) – Speaking Note

I want to speak to you about the Council's proposed Coach Strategy. It is totally flawed. It fails to recognise the severe adverse impact of coach traffic on the city, or analyse the contribution that coaches make to the economy. The approach seems to have been to ask what the coach operators, drivers and passengers want, and accommodate them without regard to the impact on the city or its residents.

2. In the view of many residents (and some businesses), coaches are a plague. They park illegally. They leave their engines running. They are visually intrusive and generate high levels of congestion and air pollution. Yet they are currently permitted to come into the very heart of the city and drop off just metres from some of the Key Elements of the World Heritage Site. Some just drive twice round The Circus before departing for Stonehenge. Coach demand is forecast to increase 24% by 2026.

3. One of the places worst affected is Terrace Walk, where at least 50 coaches arrive each day, creating enormous congestion there and on the approach roads. Air pollution at the nearest measuring point, is significantly over the legal limit, and analysis shows that 80% is due to buses & coaches. Yet the strategy proposes to increase coach parking in Terrace Walk, and to formalise coach parking at Royal Avenue.

4. All B&NES's higher level plans call for reduction of traffic in Bath: the Core Strategy, the Placemaking Plan, the Public Realm and Movement Strategy, and the Bath Transport Strategy, with the overall vision of reducing the intrusion of traffic especially in the historic core. In addition, B&NES has an obligation to bring air pollution in the city within legal limits in the shortest possible time. The proposals in this Coach strategy are quite incompatible with these policies, and a wasted opportunity to improve our city.

5. There is little analysis of the actual contribution to the economy made by various types of coach visitors. Most visitors make a very limited contribution to the economy, with 50% spending less than £30. Arguably short-stay, low-spending visitors contribute less to the city than the harm they cause.

6. A coach park at Odd Down is good, but the drop-offs should be provided at less congested locations outside the city centre and away from the iconic places that form the essence of the Bath experience, but within a reasonable walking distance of the attractions. Special arrangements could be made for disabled passengers. York provides an example: there coaches are not allowed into the historic city centre. That might affect the operators' schedules, and some customers might dislike the idea of walking a little distance, but this is normal in other historic locations.

7. The Council should reject this document and direct that a revised strategy for coach parking and coach movement is prepared which is consistent with the traffic reduction aims of its various adopted policies, and the requirement to bring air pollution within the legal limit. The revised strategy should include a full analysis of the economic benefits of the various types of coach visits. Coaches must be managed, not simply accommodated.