

Beech Avenue Residents' Association (BARA)

Statement to B&NES Special Cabinet Meeting – 5th March 2019

A Clean Air Zone for Bath

There is no question that air pollution should be kept within safe limits across Bath.

BARA commends B&NES for carefully reconsidering the facts and the exceptional level of feedback received since putting forward the initial proposal to introduce a CAZ D, which was estimated to have cost the local economy £133m.

Bath sits at lowly 27th position in the list of 28 local authorities targeted by Government in 2017 to improve nitrogen dioxide levels. It is debatable whether any form of charging CAZ is appropriate for a city the size of Bath. Nevertheless, BARA believes that the recommendation to adopt the less-punitive CAZ C option, combined with mitigating measures that will reinforce it, represents a pragmatic and balanced solution that will deliver the required air quality to Bath - and, unlike the originally proposed CAZ D, does so in a manner that minimises the detrimental effect on residents and businesses.

To put this into context, the only other authority known to be contemplating CAZ D is Birmingham which is top of the list, with the highest pollution problem outside London. Of the next four most-polluted cities, Leeds proposes CAZ B (cars and vans exempt), while Nottingham, Derby & Southampton intend to achieve compliance through non-charging measures only, such as requiring all buses, taxis and council vehicles to be low-emission.

The top-of-the-range CAZ D option is akin to central London's Ultra Low Emission Zone and would represent a highly disproportionate solution for Bath. It would also breach the following Government guidance:

- "If measures other than charging zones can be identified those should be preferred;
- Measures should be carefully targeted to minimise their impact on local residents and businesses";
- "Local authorities should consider a wide range of innovative options";
- "Delivery of obligations on air quality must be done in a way that does not unfairly penalise people who bought diesel vehicles in good faith following tax changes made by previous governments".

In Bath the arguments appear polarised. On the one hand there are those who understand the need to bring NO₂ levels within legal limits and wish it to be done by using pragmatic and proportionate measures. CAZ C plus traffic management is more likely to do so than CAZ D. On the other hand are those who appear to view any level of NO₂ as unacceptable and for whom only the most restrictive measures are acceptable. There is scant evidence that this latter group place the economic well-being of Bath very high on their list of considerations.

In the absence of a non-charging solution such as that recently approved for Nottingham, BARA wishes B&NES every success in securing Government approval and funding necessary to introduce CAZ C plus traffic management as recommended, representing a key element of the long-awaited wider Transport Strategy for Bath.

Chris Beezley - Chairman, Beech Avenue Residents' Association, Bath