

Panic, shock, worry about my financial future, fear of losing my first home, these were some of the things going through my mind when I found my boat grounded during the Twerton disaster, but this changed to anger, frustration and disbelief in the days and now weeks that followed when a Multi-Agency response to this disaster has failed to meet the welfare and safety needs of a vulnerable community with any sense of urgency.

Cllrs, I am unapologetic in my tone considering the recent events! I vacated Mead Lane on the 2nd September in order to make way for the structural survey and Twerton was the next available 'so-called' safe place to moor.

The lack of accountability when it came to this multi-agency approach was self-evident, such that a formal review will now take place. The Twerton incident highlights the impact on my community when that lack of authority is felt.

The parallel that can be drawn to Mead Lane: it is a long, drawn out, lackluster response involving a great many agencies, with conflicting communications being circulated. This is escalating tensions between communities and having a devastating impact on boater's lives. You need to take a lead.

Let's look at an example; during the recent COVID-19 lockdown, it was stated that Bath Council was doing everything in its power to protect housing provision for the boating community at Mead Lane. But despite my pleas to B&NES officers for information to be more straightforward for boaters, it said on the B&NES website "The council has not reopened Mead Lane moorings and boats are requested not to moor there until further notice". This same site encouraged locals to officially report people overstaying at that time. I was shouted at by a local resident insisting, incorrectly, that I was breaking the law during the pandemic, further to that, I have a police email dated July 21st 2020 stating that after taking advice from Duncan Hounsell the police were informing boaters that mooring at Mead Lane was banned, and suggested that this information superseded any guidance to the contrary, despite the legislation still being in force. This sort of miscommunication is indicative of the poor treatment of a marginalized community who historically struggle to engage with systems and processes. Yet when we have the impetus to do so we are not listened to.

Further examples include the underreporting of harassment at Mead Lane to the police as I can qualify that we have been declined the right to make police reports despite that being the correct and advised action, and now, what appears to be very little correlation between the recommendations in front of you and the recommendations in the commissioned report.

Cabinet members I only have three minutes, this is only the tip of the iceberg.

I am aware that in the two weeks prior to the January meeting, Cabinet members went to visit all of the residents of Mead Lane in order to hear their views. But at no point has anyone offered us that opportunity or engaged with the boating community in order to get a richer understanding of our lives. To date the only consultation we have had was through the Lemon Gazelle report and the Community Trigger which was weighted equally with local residents. I do not get the luxury of speaking to a local ward or parish councilor because I am a traveling boater. We have so much to do to educate you about our way of life, and the impact that your decision can have on our future.

Unfortunately, it takes an incident like Twerton to bring this to the fore.

Councilors don't let there be another disaster, vote today to retain Mead Lane moorings and draw a line under this.