

Cabinet. I thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I am, as of last Saturday a B&NES resident. I am also leader of Bradford on Avon Town Council.

I have worked extensively over the last three years with the Boater community, and can speak with some authority on the challenges they face, but also on the challenges that can come about due to a perception of conflict – a potential clash of cultures - between the settled communities on the river and canal banks, and the liveaboard community that is asked to cruise continuously over its existence. I feel for Members tonight as they seek to balance what can, at a glance, appear to be differing interests.

A great deal of the conflict is born of pre-conception and, honestly, the need for the two communities to get to know each other a bit more, overcoming some of those barriers, and understanding viewpoints. As a Councillor I have actively played a role in that in the Bradford on Avon area, and have seen the positive outcomes for all.

Bradford on Avon is at the centre of a hub, which starts at Saltford and ends at Devizes – and many of the boaters that moor at Mead Lane spend a significant proportion of their time in Bradford on Avon and the community area that surrounds it. I'm proud to say that they are part of our community – our schools, our arts, our culture, and our businesses.

You have heard/or will hear from others of the impacts on their access to education, to healthcare and to be able to get to work. These are real impacts that will affect lives of families who live on the canal, and the removal of the Mead Lane moorings, would make what can be a tough existence even harder.

Fellow Councillors, given what is, in my experience, a hugely positive addition to the community I serve, I have to ask on what lawful and legitimate basis it is proposed tonight to deny them mooring rights at Mead Lane?

We know, now, that there is no scientific basis for the removal of the moorings – there is no impact on the stability of the riverbank, according to the Atkins report.

In terms of impact on biodiversity or ecology, the river and the Kennet and Avon Canal passes through the Bradford on Avon SSSI, and, as a regular user of the towpath and walker through the habitats alongside the canal, which is usually busy with moorings, there appear to be little or no impact; Boaters are, on my experience among the most respectful of the natural environment.

Please - act on the science in front of you, which tells you that there is no reasonable basis on which to relocate these moorings; and on the basis of building relationships between the settled and liveaboard communities which I have seen to benefit both, social, culturally and economically.