

Statement by S Mackerness regarding BATH TRANSPORT PACKAGE - BEST & FINAL BID TO DFT (Agenda Pages 15 - 22)

In discussions with representatives of the east of Bath Parish Councils and community organisations, it was noted that the proposals for the 'best and final' 9th September BTP will no longer include the BRT system and the Bathampton Meadows P&R. We very much welcome this amendment to earlier plans.

We firmly believe that this is the right course of action; underpinned by the following key considerations -

- **Impact of removing the BRT**

The removal of the BRT - the backbone of the original BTP - means that the linkage of Bathampton Meadows P&R to the BRT is lost - they no longer form a complete package or enhance each other. And that means that the "very special circumstances" have been stripped away. It was these 'very special circumstances' which overrode what officers concluded to be "inappropriate development in Green Belt and harmful to openness, landscape, including the setting of the Cotswolds AONB, the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and the setting of listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments".

It is very likely that, had Bathampton Meadows P&R been evaluated on a stand-alone basis (i.e. not part of the whole BTP), it could not have properly been approved, since it would not have been possible to claim that 'very special circumstances' existed.

In fact, this gives rise to considerable doubt surrounding the validity of the planning permission granted for the P&R. This situation is being closely monitored and a legal challenge is possible should the Bathampton Meadows P&R be advanced (also refer 25th May 2010 Court Order).

- **Bath Environs**

The linkage between the Bathampton Meadows P&R and the BRT may be lost but the inextricable link between the City of Bath WHS and its high quality landscape setting is not. Bath is unique - there is no doubt that the City's landscape setting was an important consideration in UNESCO's decision to inscribe the city on the World Heritage list. UNESCO, DCLG and the B&NES Core Strategy have all recently highlighted the need to protect the landscape setting of the City. It is clear - we must not rush to abandon the City's environs!

- **Ineffectiveness of A4 P&R Proposal**

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the Bathampton Meadows P&R is that, contrary to widely held perceptions, it would have no significant impact on traffic congestion or air pollution along the London road, where residents have cried out for improvements over many years. I believe that some Councillors have, even now, not understood this. Quoting from the Planning Applications, your Officers concluded that the effect on congestion was "Neutral; No material change". On pollution, your Officers stated that the impact was "very small" to "extremely small"- changes of less than 1% were predicted - London Road air pollution levels unchanged. And "the large majority of Bath and the surrounding area is unaffected by the introduction of the proposed BTP of which the A4 Eastern Park and Ride is an important element".

Outside the BTP, an HGV ban on Cleveland Bridge is, of course, the key to tackling London Road traffic congestion and air pollution.

- **Joined-up Planning**

Time is needed to undertake a rigorous strategic review of traffic management for the east of Bath. Other possible P&R options exist which have arisen since the original work or which were wrongly overlooked. These and other traffic management options include new split-P&R sites (e.g. one to accommodate predominantly A46 patronage, another for relatively low residual patronage expected from the east and south), park and rail, previously discarded P&R site options, consideration of the Wiltshire dimension (missing from previous evaluations), a thorough assessment of the opportunities which rail electrification may yield, the potential for re-opening of stations such as Corsham (included in the JLTP3) and improved bus services.

- **Removal of these 2 elements is not Irreversible**

There will be another opportunity to bid for DfT funding in 4 years time.

- **Electoral Pledges** The decision to drop the Bathampton Meadows P&R fulfils the pledge made by prospective Bathavon North Lib Dem candidates at the recent Local Elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to emphasise these points and I look forward to the present administration continuing to work vigorously towards relieving Bath of its traffic problems. The removal of the costly BRT white elephant and the ineffective A4 P&R are a good start.