

Good evening Cabinet.

Tonight I am speaking on behalf of numerous residents who are exasperated by the ongoing Cleveland Bridge renovation works.

First, let me be clear that I recognise just how important this project is. Cleveland Bridge is one of our city's most treasured heritage assets and this conservation effort is essential if it is to survive for future generations.

I also welcome the fact that HGVs are currently unable to cross the bridge. Cleveland Bridge was not designed to transport such heavy loads and we need to do as much as we possibly can to find a long-term solution that directs HGVs elsewhere.

Despite this, serious questions need to be asked of the way in which this administration has handled the project.

Work began on 4 May last year. According to the timeline currently displayed on the council's website, the project should have been completed in November 2021. It's April next month. A six month project, then, looks like it may end up taking a whole year.

The disruption caused by the project, and its subsequent delays, has been, and remains, severe. Congestion has increased, journey times are up, tourists have been put off from visiting and popular events have been postponed.

Communications have also been poor, with residents and, indeed, councillors, kept in the dark. Updates from the cabinet member have only been provided after they have been requested, and even then engagement only goes as far as issuing a press release. Why hasn't the cabinet member hosted regular webinars to keep members up to date? Why hasn't she offered site visits so we can get a better understanding of how the work is progressing? The approach to communications taken by the administration – 'keep quiet and wait for an occasional press release' – simply isn't good enough for a project of such importance.

Earlier this month, the cabinet member gave a guarantee that the Bath Half Marathon will not need to be postponed again due to the project being incomplete. Last week, the event organisers announced that, due to the ongoing Cleveland Bridge works, the Half marathon would again be postponed.

Therefore, will the cabinet member resign?