

CLLR VIC PRITCHARD

STATEMENT TO CABINET MEETING – 5 MAY 2022

Good evening, Cabinet.

I note that you will tonight be asked formally to adopt the Journey to Net Zero strategy.

I'm pleased to see work progressing towards reaching carbon neutrality by 2030. Journey to Net Zero contains some good ideas and I hope these will help to reduce transport emissions in BANES.

I do feel that some aspects of the strategy are slightly confusing, however, and I note that many of these were identified by members of the public during the consultation exercises.

The strategy places significant focus on improving walking and cycling provision, which is welcome, but little attempt is made to understand why people currently make the decisions they make. What data do we have to help us better understand peoples' travel choices and the motivations behind their behaviours? Perhaps Cabinet could point me towards it?

The wisdom of splitting Bath city centre into 'traffic cells' and restricting access between them was questioned in the local press when Journey to Net Zero was first published. I note that tonight's report states that, henceforth, traffic cells will be renamed 'city centre liveable neighbourhoods' – I do hope this isn't a bit of spin to redirect potential criticism.

The direct comparison with Bath to Ghent in Belgium was, residents have said, perhaps a little frivolous, and I note that the report we have in front of us tonight seeks to put that comparison into context. I would urge the administration to remember that a one-size-fits-all approach to reducing transport emissions cannot work. What is successful in one place will not necessarily be successful in another. Bath, and the wider area, is topographically like nowhere else – and I urge Cabinet to bear that in mind when shaping future transport policy, including when rolling out Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods.

I note that research is currently being undertaken into building a Bath Mass Transit system. As the report states, there are several constraints to delivering mass transit in Bath – the historic nature of the city being a key factor. Nevertheless, this may be a game changer if it's deliverable, so I welcome further study.

I appreciate that the Cleveland Bridge renovation work has been a difficult project. But last week, on a normal weekday afternoon, it took me an hour and a half to drive from the Guildhall to the A46 junction, only getting out of second gear a few times. With this amount of congestion on a normal day of the week, people may start to think that efforts to reduce transport emissions are actually going backwards. I do hope this is not the case.