

Statement at Cabinet meeting on Thu 10 Nov 2022

Good evening, my name is Saskia Heijltjes. About a year ago I gave a statement at full council and my message at the time was one of hope and a call to be bold. I asked the Council to stick to their mandate and to deliver the safe cycling routes they had promised to school children.

As Bicycle Mayor of Bath, and as a mum, I am very disappointed about the outcome of the Citizens Panel. Actually, I am disappointed about the fact you called for a Citizens Panel in the first place. It is your duty as elected representatives to make decisions in everyone's best interests. The Citizens Panel didn't have the same expertise and knowledge as you do.

From the Panel's report, it seems that members of the panel were not educated about government's guidelines including cycle infrastructure design guidance LTN 1/20 and Gear Change, for example. I believe this knowledge was essential to be able to make an informed decision about active travel schemes.

As an aside, I also believe it was the wrong decision to exclude secondary school children to take part in the Citizens Panel.

A 16-year-old could have taken part in the process and would have offered a different viewpoint from older participants. This is especially important because this Citizens Panel was about an active travel route to secondary schools.

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Prioritising active travel infrastructure on flat routes only doesn't make any sense because as we all know, many places can't be reached without going up a hill in Bath. For example, most of Bath's secondary schools are located on hills.

The Citizens Panel was supposed to be about guiding principles for active travel design AND about deciding which route would be best for an active travel route to Claverton Down. I won't be commenting on the guiding principles, but there was no recommendation on which route would be best.

Instead, one of the recommendations discussed tonight is for a future project to revisit all options for traffic reduction from the Valley Floor to Claverton Down.

This will set us back years. We don't have time for this.

This will set us back even further than we were after the bus gate on North Road wasn't installed as a TRIAL.

Children are unsafe cycling up that hill now.

Parents are not letting their children cycle to school now because they believe it is unsafe for them to cycle.

Children are being driven to school now.

Children will still be driven to school in 2 years' time, in 5 years' time, in 8 years' time, when it is 2030.

The year when the Council wants to see a 24% reduction in road miles driven (and the year my 7-year-old will be sitting her GCSEs exams).

To reach this reduction in driving, we will have to ENABLE people to change the way they travel for short journeys. We need to make it as inviting as we can for people to take this step.

I welcome the Council introducing 20mph speed limits on all three routes up to Claverton Down.

The only way to create a safe active travel route between the city centre and Claverton Down is to introduce a modal filter on one of the roads going up the hill.

Please don't postpone this any longer.