

Good evening. I'm here tonight to talk about the former King Edward's School building on Broad Street, The Fashion Museum and use of vacant shops throughout the city.

I am broadly in support of the Council taking back ownership of the KES building if CPO is the route they choose to go down. Bringing it back into public use could be massively beneficial to the city, as long as all of the proper building inspections, financial plans and risk management procedures are properly observed, and safeguards put in place. It has remained empty for the last 37 years (which to put into context is as long as I've been alive).

Samuel Smith Brewery also own two sites in Bristol, both of which they have also let fall into decline. The Old Seaman's Mission and a plot of land by the Arnolfini. After the efforts of Cllr Nicola Beech, a Labour cabinet member from Bristol, the Old Seaman's Mission was finally put on the market for £550,000 in February this year. So, there is hope.

The Bath Preservation Trust have made numerous pleas over the years for something to be done to safeguard the future of this building. One idea they had was to re-locate the records office and collections there and make them more accessible to members of the public.

A few years back I had a conversation with local historian Kirsten Swift, and we both noted that there isn't currently a museum dedicated solely to the history of Bath. An all-encompassing, museum of Bath. So perhaps taking back this building could present the opportunity to finally rectify that.

The Fashion Museum

Firstly, I would like to offer a note of welcome to Sophie McKinlay as the new leader of the Fashion Museum. For Bath to snag such a powerful and inspirational female leader shows the real ambition and drive behind the project to relocate the Fashion Museum. Bath needs more strong cultural leadership and I, for one, am massively excited that someone of her calibre will be taking the reigns here in Bath. Sophie will be a massive asset to the cultural sector in Bath and will help to guide us safely into the future.

The Council have said they have the ambition to temporarily use the Old Post Office for other short-term lets. I think this is a really positive idea. I personally would like to see you hold pop-up fashion or culture exhibitions in the space so that our brilliant collections are not just locked away until 2027. I think a temporary use of the space may provide an opportunity to do this and perhaps tie it in with one of the many festivals that happen throughout the city?

In the past few years vacant shops have been taken over for several different projects. The brilliant video posted by Cleo and the regeneration team this week shows how these vacant units can be transformed, and beneficial to the community. I would love to see more of this happening.

Another project which caught my eye was shared by Jason Dorley-Brown on Instagram and showed how vacant shop fronts had been taken over by artists who created gorgeous artistic views of Bath to brighten up the shop windows. This project shows tons of promise and I'd like to see the Council pledge to support this and build upon the brilliant work that has already been done. Thank you for your time.