

Statement to 9.3.23 Cabinet meeting, B&NES Council

Thankyou chair

I speak as a citizen of Bath whose twin passions are creating thriving resilient places, and regenerating social and economic systems. Whilst there is much in the climate and ecological emergency reports that I applaud, that is not why I'm here. I'm here because our planet is burning and nature is dying around us, and because these reports suggest that we are not on track to turn this around,

However it seems to me there are 3 underutilised keys to unlocking change at the pace and scale we require.

1. Innovative governance, business models and funding approaches for collaborative ventures

The flexible holistic contextual approach of the Waterscape, Bathscape, Somer & Chew Valley partnerships are already delivering desired ecological outcomes, and the aspiration to build and develop more such purposeful & focussed land recovery partnerships in the in Ecological Action Plan is admirable. But are appropriate collaborative governance, not for profit business models and funding mechanisms in place to attract "external investment" that will enable and empower this? For mainstream market driven approaches can't be relied on to do so.

2. Better embody the 2019 commitment to "just transition" in emergency actions

For if net zero emissions are achieved across the district by 2030 but health, wealth & power¹ inequalities have continued to increase, the Council will have failed in its mission. In this regard its disturbing that so few of the Initiatives in the Climate Progress report are labelled as addressing Equity, and of those that that are so labelled, the depth & extent of their 'equity' commitment is variable. Similarly rigour in ensuring poorer and less well connected citizens are represented in land improvement actions seems to be lacking. And notwithstanding 'Giving People a Bigger Say' being an overarching priority alongside that of 'Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergencies' in the Council's Corporate Strategy, there is little in the report to persuade me that this is happening.

3. Better strategic framing, with supporting narratives and metrics

However I'm glad to see that Council officers are exploring Doughnut approaches to operationalising equity as well as ecological goals in its next Corporate strategy, and I hope that this will lead swiftly to a wide and diverse array of communities as well as local businesses and anchor institutions being included in its definition, portrayal and development at a formative stage – vital to not only dissipating power and wealth disparities, but also nurturing life affirming uplifting place rooted narratives that lead to the much needed behaviour change for addressing scope 3 emissions and nurturing nature and countering the extractive degenerative narratives that abound around us. As well as improved strategic framing, supporting narratives, a holistic approach to evaluating outcomes is much needed. Rather than resting on its laurels by the invitation to participate with Ashden in developing cobenefit concepts, develop or rather co-develop appropriate dashboards for these, and preferably well ahead of the 2025 update of the Climate Strategy

Nicolette Boater,

*Creating thriving resilient places, regenerating economics & governance,
and unfolding potential in the Bristol Avon Bioregion*



¹ For example, despite, whilst it is reported that “over half of BANES parishes were actively engaged through dedicated workshops on renewables, transport and local nature action planning” the reports are silent about the Bath democratic deficit highlighted as a weakness in a local authority peer review early on in the current administration.