

Statement to B&NES Council 13th July 2023 Cabinet meeting

Thankyou chair

I speak as a citizen of Bath whose triple passions are creating thriving resilient places, regenerating socioeconomic systems and empowering collaboration. I'm delighted to be speaking to this ambitious, strongly mandated administration on a visionary corporate strategy to tackle the increasing ecological, social and economic challenges coming our way. But I'm here because, as in my statements¹ to the previous administration, **I want to ensure this Corporate Strategy delivers,**

and especially in regard to what I see as its Achilles' heels - community engagement, which though improving is not commensurate with the ambitions of this strategy, and a lack of effective and empowering ways for citizens to "work with [the Council] in addressing their concerns²". For the themes and action priorities supporting the 'giving people a bigger say' core policy are less refined as well as less in number than those underpinning the 'tackling the climate and ecological emergency' core policy. (For example, the "equality and respect³" theme needs to go beyond statutory equality compliance and rigorously ensure disadvantaged and less well connected citizens are in practice able to participate in decision making and actions.) This concerns me, for given the interdependence⁴ between the Strategy's two core policies, this deficiency could undermine the delivery of the Corporate Strategy as a whole.

I am also impatient with the linear mechanistic presentation of policies, themes and priorities, for **the problems besetting us are complex, contextual and interconnected, and so they need to be co-considered, co-adressed and outcomes multiply and diversely evaluated.** Were the themes and action priorities to be presented more holistically, your manifesto promises⁵ around, for example, "regeneration and localisation in food production and farming", community access to land for food growing, and "low impact agricultural dwellings to support the long term viability of urban agriculture" might have had more prominence, and in co-addressing several corporate themes and priorities, would have had a better chance of catalysing⁶ the change citizens, and the poli-crises we face, demand.

Not only can a good picture speak louder than words, it can also broaden the locus for collaboration, behaviour change, and wider systemic change.

- So why do we citizens have to wait to the penultimate page of this corporate strategy for a reference to the Doughnut when officers and its partners have been talking about it amongst themselves for 2 or so years?
- Why have the ideas and perspectives of less connected or affiliated citizens and communities been excluded from your "work with partners to identify key challenges for our area and shared outcomes" ?
- And whose ambition (or lack of it) is being furthered in the new Economic Development Strategy "currently being worked on" by a Board comprising "anchor" institutions?

So bring on D.E.A.L (Doughnut Economic Action Lab)'s regenerative and distributive "decision wheel" indeed! And let all of us join the party in the "space for local communities and organisations to collaborate and innovate⁷" for **the more people that are connecting and collaborating, the better "our shared future"⁸ will be.**

Nicolette Boater,
Founder & Regenerative Economic Consultant, Emergent Enterprise

Also:

Chair, B&NES Council's Bath Area 'Connecting Communities' Forum
Board Member, Bathscape Landscape Partnership
Trustee, Promoting Economic Pluralism



¹ This statement builds on

- [my statement to 3.2.20 Corporate PDS](#) on the new “mould-breaking“ Corporate Strategy & delivery framework
- [my statement to 22.7.20 Cabinet](#) where I highlight how in practice the Corporate Strategy is rather exclusive
- [my statement to 9.3.23 Cabinet](#) on “three underutilised keys to unlocking change at the pace and scale we require”,

for although I am pleased that much of what I implored the last administration to do around strategic decision-making frameworks, narratives and metrics is reflected in this draft Corporate Strategy, I am still left wanting.

² The new commitment under the core policy of “giving people a bigger say” proposed on page 5 of the draft 2023 -2027 Corporate Strategy

³ “Equality and respect” is one of 3 themes supporting the new commitment of ‘listen to and work with residents to act on their concerns included on page 5 of the draft 2023 -2027 Corporate Strategy under the core policy of “giving people a bigger say”

⁴ See [my statement to 9.3.23 Cabinet](#) for a deeper insight into this systemic interdependence

⁵ For as the [Land Gap report](#) concludes

- “Food system transformation based on agroecological principles is critical for achieving socioecological resilience to climate change, as well as the promotion and realization of human rights, and in particular the right to food”

and with a key message to policymakers

- “Agroecological principles contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation by restoring and enhancing ecosystem functions and services, while respecting and strengthening livelihoods (particularly of IPs and LCs), providing enough healthy and diverse food, and fostering human rights promotion and realization.”

⁶ See page 24 of [Liberal Democrats’ manifesto](#)

⁷ See page 9 of the draft 2023 -2027 Corporate Strategy

⁸ For as I was cited in the subtitle on page 3 the [June 2021 “One Shared Vision”](#) report:

- **“Strong and resilient societies, economies and ecosystems evolve and thrive on diversity, inclusion and connectivity.”**