

Thank you for inviting me to come and speak about the Council's new Economic strategy.

I am here representing Bath Business Improvement District (BID). We work with over 650 businesses in the city centre who collectively invest in our work which seeks to create a successful business environment.

You will have seen our team out and about, we deliver cleansing, security, partnership and promotional services to the city centre businesses of Bath.

It is clear that this economic strategy is tackling some wicked problems and bringing businesses with you will be essential for progress to be made.

The challenge is to build on what we have, to create sustainable new businesses and to provide opportunities for people to work and study locally. How do we build on a 2000+ year history of hospitality and manage the imminent challenges of flooding, increased temperatures, an ageing demographic and new technology which will change the world of work forever?

The BID works with the businesses who are already here, so I have picked out the issues which come up most often in our conversations with our members:

1. Infrastructure. We welcome the proposed focus on infrastructure improvements. Good internet and even more fundamentally actual phone signal is having an impact on the city's reputation as a place to do business. The need for new business spaces is likely to be driven by new technology – hybrid working and new last mile delivery warehousing for example.
2. Transport and access is a pressing issue often raised by our business members. It links to the wider issue of recruitment and skills, the cost of housing in the city centre where the average house price is significantly higher than the B&NES average of £356,000, and also to the challenge of adapting to new logistical arrangements for delivery and trade waste collection.

Housing affordability is covered by this strategy alongside the acknowledgement that 78% of rural residents travel to work by car. Both these factors contribute to the recruitment challenges for city centre businesses, where key workers and people playing important operational roles are financially obliged to live beyond walking and

cycling distance and are unable to identify viable public transport options.

With regards to the high street and the wider tourism economy, it is great to see the importance of this part of Bath's commercial profile highlighted. The impact of the visitor economy in Bath is felt across the entire region, well beyond both the boundaries of B&NES and the scope of our local high street businesses and it merits attention.

Focussing on the city centre user experience (resident, worker or visitor), making the right choice also the most enjoyable one is a good place to start, and businesses will be pleased that a time and movement study has been committed to.

Moving forward, the BID would be pleased to support the inclusive and positive engagement of existing businesses. The strategy's stated aim to work with businesses more closely is welcome and I am here today to express Bath BID's enthusiasm for collaborative strategic partnership work.