

STATEMENT FROM ROBBIE BENTLEY – SPECIAL CABINET MEETING 1ST
FEBRUARY 2024

I am speaking with regard to the lack of easily accessible public transport in, across and through B&NES' area.

This is a very serious issue, one that has been well documented recently. On many occasions it has been difficult to see how we can put meaningful provision in place but too often the people have gotten in the way. In addition, it is abundantly clear that the current, privately owned and operated, public transport model we have to use is simply incapable of providing the service we seek. This has resulted in the waste of Public Funds to try and ensure that socially necessary services are preserved. This is clearly unsustainable.

What we need is a new mindset.

This is mine. I am an academic, studying a Social Sciences Degree (Politics, Philosophy & Economic BA) at the Open University, an institution with a Global reputation for this field of study. What I see is the lack of our political leadership to provide the clear alternative of ensuring we are responsible, not just for ensuring that services, whether privately or publicly owned (and operated), are able to be operated in such a fashion that they require little to no input of scarce financial resources other than those they are capable of generating themselves. We need to ensure that communities are connected, but also that they are designed for interconnectivity. Only when we get both of these can we be satisfied that people moving to these areas will have the infrastructure THEY need to be able to live in comfort.

Far too many instances of doing the opposite to this exist across our region. I could point out what was widely regarded as the first great example of this, but I will decline as it is well known. But I will ask for you to think about *that* example when asking whether the decision you are taking is the right one, or whether it is not right to rush to this decision in this manner. I therefore ask you to strongly consider that if it is merely due to the posture others are taking, whether or not another way might exist.

If it does, please do. Consider all your options carefully.