

I'm Mary Allan. I live in New Sydney Place and I am a Friend of Sydney Gardens.

This is very much a personal statement, which I hope you'll agree is appropriate. When we are talking about a Liveable Neighbourhood it is more important to hear from those who actually live in that neighbourhood than it is from those who just drive through it.

Liveable Neighbourhoods look, amongst other things, to encourage active travel and improve the public realm. I would like to talk this evening about the importance of protecting Sydney Gardens as a public space at the heart of our neighbourhood.

We are still in the early days of the ETRO trial but I'd already like to declare it a success. Others will be monitoring footfall, traffic flows and pollution levels, perhaps identifying issues and suggesting improvements. The evidence of my own eyes shows that Sydney Gardens has been triumphantly restored to the community in which it sits.

The gardens and the surrounding built landscape were designed to work together. This connection had been eroded by dangerous 'rat running', creating a hazardous divide between the gardens, local residents and visitors. Now, it is a pleasure to see parents with young children on bikes, scooters and in buggies have easy, stress-free access to the gardens and the wonderful playground, as well as the elderly and less able moving freely about in this reclaimed safe space.

If there isn't space on the rather narrow pavement for buggy, bike, scooter or wheelchair or walking aid, then walking or riding on the road is an option. Dog walkers like myself are no longer forced to dodge speeding traffic. People can linger on the pavement without fear of losing their head to debris bouncing off a speeding flat bed truck (this so nearly happened). Cyclists now have a safe through-route. Distressingly, we have seen too many of them injured on our doorstep.

We have been freed from the tyranny of the Motor Vehicle.

Restricting through traffic has proved the only way to achieve this. The 20 mph speed limit was ignored routinely and flagrantly. Motorists who were using Sydney Road and New Sydney Place to avoid a red traffic light and save 10 to 30 seconds on their journey time are the very least likely to observe a 20 mph speed limit. Our brave SpeedWatch volunteers have witnessed cars racing through at twice or even three times the speed limit.

Sydney Gardens is entering its third century. It's a glorious asset to the city of Bath. It's an historic Pleasure Garden, now, after major investment and the efforts of volunteers, offering the new pleasures of a fabulous playground, tennis and petanque courts as well as open green spaces, imaginative planting, restored pavilions and of course the Holborne Museum.

Thank you, BANES for putting this space at the heart of the community, where it belongs.