

FOBRA Chairman's statement on East of Bath Park-and-ride

Where is the political leadership to tackle Bath's transport problems?

The Federation of Bath Residents' Associations (FOBRA) consistently supported the case for an east of Bath Park-and-Ride (P&R), *as part of a comprehensive transport strategy for Bath*. Successive Councils have followed a highly successful policy of expanding P&R capacity, in conjunction with reducing visitor parking capacity in the city through the creation of resident parking zones, to reduce the volume of traffic entering the city.

The Bath Transport Strategy called for an Eastern P&R in conjunction with reduced visitor parking in the city centre and reducing vehicle access through traffic management. Unfortunately the present Council chose not to pursue these complementary traffic reduction measures or to link them with the case for an Eastern P&R, and thereby undermined the case for an Eastern P&R.

FOBRA regrets the decision to cancel plans for an Eastern P&R, which means that in effect there has been no action to implement the Bath Transport Strategy since the strategy was approved, with all-party support, in 2014.

To make it worse, it appears that the Council actually intends to increase short-term parking in the city, contrary to one of the main tenets of the Bath Transport Strategy. FOBRA is strongly against such a move, which would simply generate more traffic coming into the city. This Council has effectively abandoned the Bath Transport Strategy in favour of increasing visitor access to Bath.

The need for action to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution in the city remains as urgent as ever. As a World Heritage Site, the historic core of Bath is a joke: clogged with traffic, a shortcut for through traffic, its iconic spaces spoiled, its air foul with traffic exhaust fumes. Action on this has never depended on an Eastern P&R (although without one access from the east would become more difficult).

The irony is that B&NES Council's own policy documents recognise the need for change. The top-level policy, the Core Strategy, calls for a car-free city centre. The emerging Placemaking Plan calls for a city centre free of all but essential traffic, while the excellent Bath Public Realm and Movement Strategy (PRMS) sets out a compelling vision for its beautiful public spaces free of traffic. But without the will and action to implement these policies they are no more than hollow words and pretty pictures. Meanwhile Bath fails to realise its potential as a world-class city.

Bath residents and businesses alike have called for urgent action to reduce traffic and air pollution in the city, implement the PRMS, and transform Bath into a city worthy of its World Heritage Site status. Where is the political leadership with the vision and the will to take action?