

## FoBRA Notes for Transport & Pollution Conference: 9 June 2018 [as delivered]

Good afternoon...[Slide 1]

This is who we are [Slide 2]

Here are our members' priorities [Slide3]

So what's the problem? [Slide 4]

This is a thoroughly unsatisfactory situation for a city like Bath. As the Council's own PRMS says, 'few would argue that Bath is worthy of its WHS status'.

For 10 years or more FOBRA has been urging B&NES Council to take action on traffic congestion and air pollution. Progress has been glacial, whichever Party has been in office.

There has been *some* progress. The 3 existing P&Rs have been expanded in capacity, although their operating hours remain far too limited. In parallel there has been an expansion of Controlled Parking Zones in residential areas round the centre. Together these have helped reduce the growth of traffic in the city.

However, we lack a P&R to the east of Bath. We still need one to provide good access to the city from the east, [although clearly not on Bathampton meadows].

Another positive development was the creation of the Bath Transport Commission, which helped bring forward the Bath Transport Strategy in 2014. The Strategy was approved unanimously (with one abstention) with the support of all Parties in the Council. This set out a good road map for improving transport in Bath and reducing traffic congestion and air pollution.

But having a fine strategy sitting on the shelf achieves nothing. And unfortunately nothing has been done since 2014 actually to implement the Strategy **until now, thanks to Client Earth.**

~~The most positive development in the past year is that the High Court forced the Government to implement its own air quality laws, and the Government mandated B&NES to bring air pollution below the legal limit 'as soon as possible'. Without this, nothing would be happening now to reduce pollution in Bath.~~

~~As we all know, B&NES Council is now in the process of bringing forward its Clean Air Plan, so I won't bang on too much about Bath's air quality problems. [Slide 9] But we need to remember that we still have excessive levels of NO2 right across Bath, with little sign that they are reducing. So the Clean Air Plan will not come a moment too soon.~~

Let me now turn to the wider issue of transport and what FOBRA wants for Bath.

The key is to create an agreed *Vision* for the city. By this we mean a vision that is specific and concrete in terms of such things as transport, pollution and the public realm – how the city should actually look, feel and function in five or ten years' time. This is in contrast to the traditional approach of thinking first about how to get people to, from, through and around the city centre and then trying to solve the problems that this causes.

The Vision should start with the city centre, since the centre contains most of the city's economic and social activity as well as the cultural and historic places that most visitors come for. The centre should be designed to create a world class urban environment for people who live, work and play there. This is what we want for Bath city centre [Slide 10].

Of course it's not just about the centre. We must address transport needs and access throughout Bath and the surrounding area. Here are some of the wider issues that need to be addressed [Slide 11].

To summarise, FOBRA wants B&NES to *implement* a transport *plan* based on a clear vision for the city and its public realm, for example [Slide 13]:

~~'A beautiful city in a green setting, with vibrant public spaces, a historic centre free of all but essential traffic<sup>\*</sup>, clean air, good mobility and excellent transport infrastructure'~~

~~This may sound familiar to some of you. It is the Vision of the Bath Alliance for Transport and Public Realm, of which FOBRA is a member, along with 20 other key Bath stakeholders.~~

Let me offer some specific examples of good practice from elsewhere, compared to our own poor city [Slides 14-21].

None of this should be controversial; it is basically a synthesis of the objectives set out in B&NES's Core Strategy, Transport Strategy and the PRMS [Slides 22, 23, 24].

The PRMS Pattern Book is actually replete with examples of good practice from elsewhere and of how spaces in Bath could be transformed [Slide 25].

This seems entirely in line with the conclusions of the two previous discussions that Wera promoted: that Bath needs less traffic and pollution; better provision for pedestrians and cyclists; and better public transport to provide mobility and access to the city as an alternative to the private car.

Lucy Simon has told us how Bath needs more parking, but frankly that will just generate more traffic and more congestion and pollution, and is no answer. Historic cities throughout UK and the Continent have shown that business thrives in a low-traffic environment [York, Burgos, Pontevedra, Beaune, Zurich, La Rochelle, Bruges, Baden Baden, Copenhagen, Santiago de Compostella, Perugia, Syracuse]. With a better environment, footfall ~~will~~ increases and business does well. Pedestrianising New York's Times Square led to an enormous upsurge in retail businesses. Cars don't shop, people do. The question is, how do we provide good access for *people*?

B&NES has a golden opportunity to implement these strategies in conjunction with the Clean Air Plan which it has been mandated to produce. 92% of NO<sub>2</sub> in Bath is from motor vehicles. Virtually every measure in the Clean Air Plan will be transport related, and it makes no sense to pursue it in isolation from these wider strategic objectives. [At the very least, furtherance of the Bath Transport Strategy and PRMS should be added to the Evaluation Criteria for the Clean Air Plan [~~H2M Report paragraph 3.3.3, page 43~~]].

FOBRA supports a central Bath CAZ, but it is not the only way of cutting emissions and improving air quality by 2021. Vehicle movement and hence air pollution in the city

centre could also be reduced quickly, effectively and cheaply by means of parking control and traffic management.

It would require some TROs, produced by Council staff who are already being paid; some signage (cheap); and possibly some modest infrastructure such as bus gate cameras and rising bollards, **but it is of overriding importance to limit pollution by having traffic management or a Class D CAZ; and, importantly, traffic management would be both less regressive and more egalitarian.**

We would like to see restrictions on coach access to the city centre and freight delivery management including freight consolidation, which has been proven elsewhere [Slide 26].

We should also be looking at expanding and making full use of the P&Rs; and at innovative public transport solutions [Slide 27].

The real questions I want to leave you with are, why have these strategies not been implemented; and what are the obstacles to this?

Two that stand out are Fear of Motorists, and Lack of Funding for public transport improvements.

On the first, the politicians must provide leadership. An all-Party approach is absolutely essential, since 4 year electoral terms are not long enough to get things done. Above all, transport must not be allowed to be a political football.

On the second, how, for example, can we tap revenue from parking and the CAZ? How can WECA help? WECA is the strategic transport authority, with access to funding. WECA is required to produce a bus strategy in 2018, which will be crucial to improving bus services. So we need to be working closely with WECA.

We must move on from reinventing the wheel. The policies B&NES already has in place [Slide 28] cover probably 95% of what is required<sup>†</sup>. What is desperately needed is the vision and the courage to implement them. FoBRA stands ready to support this, and calls on all decision-makers to come together to implement it, AND NOW!

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\* eg Deliveries, cleansing, buses, taxis, key business needs, disabled, and access for residents to their homes and nearby on-street parking

<sup>†</sup> But not everything, eg restricting coach access to the city centre, removing *on-street* visitor parking in the central area