

Bath needs better public transport, not more cars

Like Lucy Simon (Letters, 22 March), I attended the transport meeting chaired by Wera Hobhouse MP recently. A clear consensus emerged that Bath needs less traffic and air pollution, more pedestrianisation, more Park and Ride (P&R) and better public transport.

All of these feature in the Bath Transport Strategy, which was approved with all-Party support in 2014. However, nothing has actually been delivered since then. What is needed now is action to implement the Transport Strategy and the excellent Bath Public Realm and Movement Strategy.

The good news is that the Government has mandated B&NES to bring down pollution, after years of inaction. That must involve measures to reduce traffic, since 92% of the air pollution in Bath is caused by motor vehicles. Air pollution is above the legal limit throughout the road network in Bath, with some of the worst in the city centre. But traffic congestion is also an issue, blighting what is supposed to be a World Heritage Site.

Lucy Simon makes some excellent points about the need to remove HGV through traffic from London Road; 24-hour operation of the P&R; and a freight consolidation centre. However she also calls for more car parking in the city centre.

Here's the thing: parking creates traffic. Cars aren't beamed down to parking spaces, they are driven there. That is traffic. The more parking in the city, the more traffic, and the more pollution.

Reducing traffic and air pollution will add to the vitality and viability of Bath, not detract from it, as the many historic cities that have removed traffic from their centres have shown, to the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors.

As our MP pointed out at the meeting, cars don't shop, people do. What we actually need is better arrangements for people to get into the city by public transport. Trams might ultimately be an option, but in the short term it has to be better train and bus services, including better P&R. A serious conversation is needed on the scope for improving public transport and sources of finance to enable this.

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