

Camden Residents' Association

Notes from the Transport and Pollution Seminar Organised and Chaired by Wera Hobhouse MP in Bath 9th June 2018

As yet there do not seem to be any formal reports from the day in question but we do have these lightly edited notes from by Nigel Sherwen, probably our longest serving CRA Committee Member.

He attended this seminar which was very well supported by locals and some from a little further away. The Chair regrets not being able to attend as it coincided with a vacation abroad. As Nigel is now away this edit has been made by the Chair in Nigel's absence.

There were many speakers including:

Councillor Mark Shelford
Rosie Rogers - Green Peace
Dr. Ian Walker- Bath University
Adam Reynolds -Transport advisor & chair CycleBath
David Andrews - Trams for Bath
Prof. Graham Parkhurst - UWE
Joanna Wright - Transition Larkhall
Robin Kerr – FoBRA
Caroline Kay - Bath Preservation Trust
A lady from Bath Business organisation
An engineer ex. Buro Happold

Introduction

Bath council is compelled to act to reduce NOx pollution in parts of the city by 2020. A Clean Air Zone (CAZ) is proposed whereby high emitting vehicles will be charged to enter the zone and thereby deterred.

This will affect residents on Camden Road owning, or being served by, chargeable vehicles. This seminar painted a very broad picture and then focussed on the challenges for Bath.

Broad Context, Imperative and Constraints

1. 1st April 2017 was the first UK day no fossil fuels were used for power generation.
2. The government proposal to ban all diesel and petrol cars by 2040 (22 years away) in cities is much less ambitious than many cities and countries, and not just in Europe, but does show the type of change that will have to occur in urban environments, Bath included.
3. RK showed many examples of historic cities where traffic has been removed from central area and contrasted this with Bath the UK's only World Heritage City! CK also spoke about this and the effect on people walking in such areas. Councillor MS would also like to see more removal of cars in public realm.
4. It was shown graphically by GP that NOx pollution from even Euro 6 diesels is many times greater than stated figures. In fact worse than that of petrol cars of several car generations ago. There is a lot to understand regarding:

- which emissions fossil fuelled motor manufacturers are being asked to minimise (greenhouse gases, NOx, particulates et al)
 - 'real world' driving versus standard test cycles (the current set up of Camden Road make it very difficult to drive in a low emissions way
5. Electric cars appear not to be a long term solution as electrical demand would be equivalent to the output of five Hinckley Point power stations (I'm not sure of the take up that implies).
 6. The recent drive for change from central government has come from legal action (by Client Earth) to combat vehicle pollution across a number of towns and cities in the UK.
 - Bath is in top 50 worst polluting towns & cities;
 - Bristol is in top 40 in UK.
 7. IW showed the difficulty of changing behaviour e.g. to use cars less often. Behaviour is governed by the maxim "Easy, Normal and Safe". In general the method of travelling to work does not involve rational decision making, one just picks up the car keys and heads out.
 8. Both locally and nationally a very high percentage of a council's finances goes on social care therefore there is little left of the 'cake' for major transport improvements and initiatives.

For Bath

1. Concern was raised by many that restrictions on driving needed to provide suitable alternatives, so that the less well-off and those that have to work unsociable hours needed to be catered for.
2. JW spoke passionately about the adverse effects on young people particularly junior school children. She also explained the difficulty of walking, cycling and public transport for their school journeys.
3. Bath school runs accounts for 30% of traffic. Providing free buses for all school pupils would cost £3.6m p.a.
4. B&NES aims to increase cycling in Bath by 22% (from a very low base)
5. AR showed that on-street car parking is preventing improvements to make cycling and walking safer.
6. DA, naturally, made the case for trams, as being more comfortable and could carry more people. The capital cost of their introduction and running cost was felt by another speaker (the engineer) as being uneconomic for a city the size and nature as Bath.
7. It was shown on a map that most bus journeys involve going into the centre of Bath, changing to another bus to get to their destination. One example was to get from Larkhall to the RUH involved this type of journey. Apart from London, where buses are regulated, elsewhere it is difficult for Councils to direct routes etc.
8. The one speaker who seemed to be out of step with the rest was the lady from the Bath Business organisation who felt that people still need to drive into Bath for its economic vitality. This was disputed by others with examples of improved trading where vehicles have been removed or severely restricted. She did criticise that coach operators are able to drive around Bath without the passengers getting out and spending any time and money here.
9. A small tourist tax has been shown elsewhere to be beneficial to the relevant city.

10. A Tax on private car parks in central Bath would cut down vehicle commuting and could be ploughed into public transport.
11. Most Park and Ride car parks are only partially full most of the time. It was felt they should operate ideally 24 hours a day and the charging structure should make it cheaper than using central car parks.
12. Park & Link (small car parks much further out from city centre at local population centres) was felt to be a much better idea than P&R as it would reduce driving to P&R and encourage use of bus services.
13. We should be tapping into WECA (west of England Combined Authority) and our mayor for support and funding.
14. Shared autonomous vehicles was not felt to be a practical solution to pollution and congestion problems.

Jeremy Labram, Chair of Camden Residents' Association. 18/06/18. Very much on behalf of Nigel Sherwen.