

BANES Council 20 January 2011
Statement by Radstock Action Group on Agenda Item 7

The good news is that 'The JLTP3 is a living document and will be reviewed and updated throughout its life' (JLTP3 p.7:1.5.4). Regardless of what happens today, Radstock Action Group hopes that BANES will continue to input into the plan.

Unfortunately, comparing this with the Core Strategy Transport Modelling Technical Note, it is clear that BANES is prepared to take a less imaginative and active role in planning transport than is required. This is connected with the Bath-centric principles which are apparent in all aspects of BANES response. This package has to last till 2026 and includes working with other partners frequently referred to in the plan, not to mention the point made that we should remember 'that transport doesn't just stop at the border' (JLTP3 p.14:1.2.2).

We are very disappointed that BANES in the paper presented to this meeting has paid virtually no attention to the thrust of the RAG submission to the consultations on the JLTP, having failed to mention that rail must be part of the equation for the future and our suggestions on dealing with the current transport crisis in the area.

The BANES approach refers predominantly to impending higher levels of traffic congestion in Bath, and problems between Bath and Bristol. There is virtually no mention anywhere of the Somer Valley area, or rural areas, and we fail to understand how this can be justified, given the stated JLTP3 Corporate Priorities in the BANES Agenda paper – priorities which BANES hasn't challenged. The JLTP3 will not make 'Bath and North East Somerset a better place to live, work and visit' (Agenda Item 7, p.1:4.1) without the active commitment of the authority to promoting sustainable solutions for the entire area it covers.

BANES planning obsession with increased car use is not matched by any solutions which could encourage alternative means of transport. This is reflected in the Core Strategy Transport Modelling Technical Note which makes it clear that proposals considered by BANES had, in the view of the tests and modelling, in most cases only marginal impact on the central problems. Unfortunately, there has been very limited modelling and testing for Radstock and the wider Somer Valley area. The key driver for policy has been transformed to a drop in the number of homes built and jobs created. This fails to address the fact that the transport and road infrastructure in Radstock and the surrounding area is no longer able to cope. Talk of change in highway delay and network speeds (Page 5 of unnumbered Technical Note document) is already hopelessly out of date and irrelevant as far as our area is concerned. Assertions suggesting that bus services are improving are untrue, they are getting worse. There simply has to be an imaginative leap forward to adopting rail as the most efficient and sustainable mass transit system available. BANES must include the reinstatement of the line between Radstock and Frome, at the very least as an aspiration, and encourage the inclusion of a more detailed statement in the JLTP3.

Radstock Action Group recently spoke to the West of England Partnership and was encouraged that they recognise that the support from local people for the rail reinstatement is a good starting point for further discussions that we have requested. They identified such 'localism initiatives' as congruent with the objectives of the WEP and we hope that our discussions with them will continue to be received positively. We want BANES to add its voice to this dialogue, in support of our aims in connection with public transport.

Amanda Leon