

Community Infrastructure Levy

From: Michael Brett [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 September 2014 08:42
To: Community Infrastructure Levy
Subject: CONSULTATION COMMENTS BY THE ABBEY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION (TARA)

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

These comments are made by and on behalf of The Abbey Residents Association (TARA) which has about 250 members throughout the city centre and has been promoting the interests of city centre residents since 2000.

TARA strongly supports the council's intention to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy from 2015. We are aware of the very wide ranging commitments the council has to infrastructure spending and the need for new revenue sources to bridge the on-going gap between aspirations and available funding.

Our primary concern is, of course, the city centre where the council has a variety of infrastructure commitments both above and below ground. In this context the main concern of TARA members is, and has been, the state of our roads and public spaces. Given the rare status of the entire city of Bath as a World Heritage Site and the presence in the city centre of almost all of the historic sites that contribute to that status and account for the city's world wide reputation the current state of many of our streets and public spaces falls far below the level that ought to be expected and was achieved years ago by many peer cities both in this country and abroad. Road surfaces are patchy, uneven and even potholed in some places, railings are missing or broken, pavements are often cracked and unstable and made up of a patchwork of inferior quality materials in poor condition combined with temporary tarmac infill. While signage has certainly improved throughout the city centre the quality of seating and lighting is variable at best and the provision of public toilets shameful.

It was for these reasons that the Public Realm and Movement Strategy (PRMS) adopted by the council in 2010 was greeted with enthusiasm by our members and many others. Here was an initiative prepared with exemplary care and professional expertise which held out the hope that Bath would, however belatedly, soon raise the standard of its public spaces to a level commonplace in peer cities throughout Europe, many of them with advantages and resources far below the level enjoyed by Bath. True, we were puzzled by the apparent omission from the programme of Milsom Street, Bath's premier shopping street currently in a quite shocking state, together with New Bond Street, Upper Borough Walls and York Street and the perplexing 20 year horizon for completion of the programme but we were encouraged by the prompt and effective start made on Stage 1, the High Street area and Northumberland Place. Since then, however, progress seems to have slowed to a halt. There seem to be no plans for commencing Stage 2 of the six stages included in the first five year programme culminating in 2015 and it is galling to find in Table 1 of the council's infrastructure Funding Gap Evidence Paper, July 2014, that no funding source has been identified to cover the estimated £14m cost of the PRMS for the period to 2029. It is our understanding that the aspirations of the much heralded and welcomed PRMS now go no further than acting as a template for

public space improvements associated with projects funded from other sources such as Stall Street and Lower Borough Walls, Seven Dials and Saw Close.

We recognize that there are extensive demands for infrastructure improvements throughout the District and that there are many claims on the limited resources available but we urge the council to recognize that only the highest standards are acceptable in the historic heart of the city which attracts increasing numbers of visitors from all over the world, that an effective process for achieving these standards exists in the council's own Public Realm and Movement Strategy and that, rather than being side-lined or forgotten, the programme urgently needs to be given a higher priority in infrastructure spending.