

Councillor Tim Warren
Council Leader
Guildhall
Bath
BA1 4AW

15th Dec 16

Dear

Tim,

Air Pollution in Bath

I met our MP, Ben Howlett, recently to discuss traffic and pollution in Bath, among other things. Ben has sent me a copy of the 14th November letter to you on this subject from Thérèse Coffey MP, a Minister at the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (copy attached).

As you know, air pollution in Bath, along with traffic congestion, has consistently been the top concern of residents represented in the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations (FOBRA). DEFRA identifies B&NES as currently having nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels over the legal limit, with the possibility that NO₂ will still be over the limit in 2020.

In our view, it is a certainty that NO₂ in Bath will be over the legal limit in 2020, unless B&NES takes urgent action to reduce traffic volumes in the city. The B&NES Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) 2011 highlighted excessive NO₂ levels throughout Bath. The AQAP forecast that pollution levels in the city would generally be in compliance by 2016. That was based on the expectation that newer vehicles with lower emission levels would lead to reduced pollution.

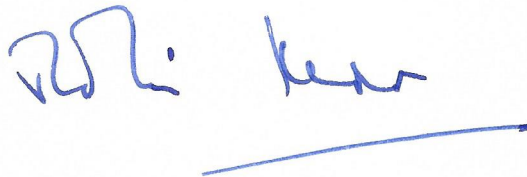
As we now know, that has not happened; air pollution in Bath has not reduced at all since 2011, or indeed since 2000. That is because, as the DEFRA letter recognises, emissions from diesel vehicles have turned out to be much higher than forecast. The next Bath AQAP will have to be based on the new more realistic emission factors. Technology, in short, is not coming to the rescue this time. Nor can we expect any great reduction in the use of diesels, which would lead to lower NO₂ emissions, since the Government appears to have decided not to take action on this.

Given that 92% of NO₂ in Bath is generated by motor vehicles, the only thing that can possibly bring down air pollution is concerted action to reduce the amount of traffic. At the moment B&NES has no measures in place that would achieve this. The Bath Transport Strategy contains a range of measures that would help, but the

Strategy lacks timescales, costs or resources. In brief, the Strategy needs to be turned into a fully resourced Bath Transport Plan, as the Bath Alliance for Transport and the Public Realm has recently proposed. This could include measures such as traffic management, reduced visitor parking in the city centre, congestion charging or Clean Air Zones, all of which could be introduced fairly quickly and without major capital expenditure.

Dr Coffey asks about specific local challenges that are proving hard to resolve. One of the key challenges here is to reduce the amount of traffic using Bath as a through route, in particular, the A36-A46 route. Removal of the A36-A46 through traffic is key to reducing congestion and air pollution throughout the city. A link road will clearly take some years to achieve, so it would be helpful if DEFRA would lend its support to the current efforts to take this forward. Can I suggest that you include this in your reply to her, as well as mentioning the Bath Transport Plan?

Yours sincerely,



Robin Kerr, Chairman

CC: Cllr Anthony Clarke, Cabinet Member for Transport

Mr Ashley Ayre, Council Chief Executive

Ben Howlett MP