



an independent force for a **better Bristol**

25 January 2021

Dear Sir,

I am writing, on behalf of the Bristol Civic Society, in response to the engagement surveys on Tranche 2 Active Travel Fund schemes.

The Bristol Civic Society (BCS) welcomes street changes that seek to make places more welcoming for people on foot and on bike, and therefore encourage active travel. BCS applauds the city council's commitment to improve people's ability to move around the city, aiming to improve the environment, particularly with regard to air quality and climate change as well as promoting public health. It is commendable that the city council is taking views on the issues that concern people in particular neighbourhoods and seeking local opinion on specific suggestions for pavement widening and traffic restrictions (Princess Victoria St, Park Row, Rosemary Lane, Leyton Court Rd and Overton Rd). However, we need more information to fully assess the impact of the schemes

#### Strategic vision/ network effects

However, it is not clear to BCS how, precisely, the proposed and specific interventions contribute to delivering the Bristol Transport Strategy (BTS) or what particular improvements they aim to deliver. The BTS is clear: "new developments" are "to be innovative in their approach, to prioritise sustainable transport options and address the impact on the existing network". It would be useful to explain each specific suggestion in terms of its impact on the existing network, in particular how it reduces air pollution and promotes public health.

We await with interest the strategic vision to bring these proposals together, demonstrating how the changes taken together or individually will affect the wider transport network as well as the environment. Some of the temporary cycle lanes and traffic restrictions already in place represent an improvement over the previous state of affairs. yet some of our members report longer trips by car as well as congestion occurring on roads and at times, which was not previously experienced.

#### Lack of data/information

While the Council provides air pollution data on a user-friendly platform, these data and information sources are not explicitly linked to the transport changes. Such links could underpin more widespread support for these changes,

In particular, although the first-round ATF schemes have been in place since Summer 2020, it is not clear how experience with those schemes has been used to inform choices on the second-round proposals. How successful were they at increasing walking and cycling, reducing travel by car and improving air quality? Were there any unintended consequences? All of this information would be useful for an informed public debate, particularly in light of changes in travel mode and patterns due to Covid-19 and the associated lockdowns.

In addition, we are concerned that the answers to the engagement surveys have been constrained by the selection of issues provided. By guiding respondents towards certain issues, the outcome of any consultation will contain a degree of bias and may miss issues of real concern or potential adverse effects



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### Impacts and Consequences

It would have made for a more rounded consultation on the specific suggestions involving traffic restrictions if the impacts and consequences of the individual and cumulative changes had been set out. The most contentious effects of traffic restrictions are that traffic can be displaced onto neighbouring streets. Nobody would want to see pollution displaced from one street to another, particularly onto residential streets. It would be useful to address any such concerns upfront with data and solutions where possible and/or appropriate.

### Street scene and heritage

Given the value to the city of the beauty of its built environment, it is disappointing that amongst the aims and objectives set for the scheme there are none on visual amenity or conservation of heritage assets. Some of the specific suggestions for traffic restrictions are in conservation areas, where there is a statutory duty on the city council to preserve or enhance. Do the gains outweigh the visual impacts in sensitive locations?

One of the suggestions in the engagement surveys is for "more greenery/planters" but that is about as far as it goes. We are concerned that greenery and planters will not be a particular gain in practice when maintenance budgets are so constrained. Landscaping needs to be kept up and it may be that communities are not well placed to take this on themselves.

### Conclusion

We appreciate that the funding awarded was piecemeal and came with a short deadline. Given the good work on the BTS, we would have liked to have seen greater specific engagement between the ATF interventions and the transport strategy and work on ending air quality breaches. The proposals do not explicitly engage with broader transport policy and lack specific information on the benefits and consequences for both the city and individual neighbourhoods. We are particularly concerned that schemes do not explicitly aim to preserve or enhance the street scene, as, for example, the King Street scheme sets out to achieve. BCS is happy to discuss any aspect of this policy further with the city council to improve proposals going forward.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs S G Ellis