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To: The Chair and Members
of the Cabinet

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Date: 5 March 2024

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CABINET

Wednesday, 13th March, 2024

A meeting of the Cabinet is to be held on the above date at 10.30 am in the Committee Suite (DAW) - County Hall to consider the following matters.

Donna Manson
Chief Executive

A G E N D A

19 Question(s) from Members of the Public (Pages 1 - 8)



QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC Wednesday 13 March 2024

1. QUESTION FROM CLAIRE QUELVENEC (QUEEN STREET TRADERS AND RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION) (IN ATTENDANCE) Re: Queen Street – Newton Abbot and Opposition to Plan

The Queen Street Traders And Residents Association was set up in recognition of the strong uprising and huge opposition by local businesses, customers and residents against the disastrous proposed plan to limit access and pedestrianise Queen Street in Newton Abbot. These sentiments have been echoed by Newton Abbot town council who called an Extraordinary General Meeting on 28th February 2024 at which councillors voted to make very strong representations to the county and district councils for the scheme to be abandoned in light of the many concerns expressed by businesses and users of Queen Street.

The current proposed scheme does not have the support of Newton Abbot town council, the Queen Street Traders And Residents Association, the Federation of Small Businesses, several national town centre stores, nor Austins - our iconic independent department store which draws shoppers from around the county; all of whom recognise that this plan is a disaster which will destroy not only our high street, but have a negative impact on the town overall and crucially the livelihoods of its traders and their employees.

Traders and shoppers have repeatedly told both Teignbridge District Council and Devon County Council that their plan to change people's behaviour and encourage them out of their cars will not work. It is quite simply not realistic for customers shopping and buying goods to cycle or use poor public transport whilst the benefit of good access and convenient pop and shop parking on the high street has proved to be highly beneficial in terms of encouraging trade into the town. Access and parking is vital for the continued economic development of a growing town and if this is restricted in Queen Street, the main artery to the town, shoppers will instead favour the easier option of out of town shopping where there is plenty of free parking, or opt instead to shop online.

You only have to look locally to see how the proposed plan will destroy the town as it has others - Totnes (scrapped), Paignton (reversing), Torquay (dead), Exeter (7 businesses closed in under 6 months). Nationwide, the common negative result of pedestrianised towns was highlighted only last week on 24/02/24 in the Daily Mail where a draconian low traffic neighbourhood plan devastated the thriving Wandsworth Bridge Road high street in Fulham. This is yet another example of where local authority traffic control measures (designed to improve the urban environment and increase footfall) had only made things worse, killing off local businesses who saw a dramatic decline in footfall and 50% reduction in trade - a chilling example of how the livelihoods of those you are supposed to support and represent, are ruined in the face of the strong opposition that is ignored at your peril.

Queen Street is thriving with practically no empty units. It has a history of successful ongoing regeneration, attracting new businesses. It has a vibrant and important nighttime economy. Longstanding businesses Jacksons Fishmonger and Austins department store, both with over 100 years' experience trading in Newton Abbot, are among many who have extensive knowledge on how the town operates and have cited their genuine concerns and opposition to the plan from the start. At the end of this email is a non-exhaustive list of some of the 50 businesses, both on Queen Street and beyond in the town, who have confirmed their opposition to the plan and are urgently asking for it to be scrapped.

This plan will have a negative impact and cause real damage.

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We urge you to listen, as you listened to those towns who raised concerns about introducing parking meters (Braunton, Crediton, Dartmouth, Honiton, Okehampton, Salcombe, Sidmouth, Tavistock). The same logic applies to the plan for reducing access and parking on Queen Street, Newton Abbot.

*Supported by: Aaron Printers, Age UK, Andrew Hill Hairdressers, Austins Department Store, Bekra Models, Betfred, Costcutter, Cancer Research UK, Carthew Printers, Dawes Accountants, Gershwin's Hairdressers, Indulgence Tearooms, Ivor Dewdney, Itown Childrens' Play Centre, Jacksons Fishmonger, Jacksons Fish & Chips, Johnsons Dry Cleaners, Kim Pho Restaurant, Ladbroke's, Lemon Jelli, Little Valley Animal Shelter, Meddy Restaurant, Natures Bounty, Newton Abbot District Civic Society, Newton Abbot Recreational Trust, Papa Johns, Peplows Accountants, Percy's Fabrics, Pharmacy Café, Phoenix Sounds, Post Office, Poundland, Queen Street Butchers, Rupp & Fraser Accountants, Scott Richards Solicitors, Shaldon Bakery, Snappy Snaps, Spar, Sports Direct, Stitches Seamstress, Sweet Dylema, Teens Thai, The Pizza Café, The Foot Store, Thomas Trophies, Timpsons, Total Foot Care
Vision Express, Waffleinn, Warrens Bakery, Wetherspoons, WBW Solicitors*

My question is, in light of the overwhelming opposition to the plan and supporting evidence of how detrimental it will be, can you continue to ignore this, rather than scrap the plan before it kills trade and businesses are forced to close?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

The scheme has undergone significant consultation at every stage of project development, with opportunities at every stage for the public and stakeholders, including business to input to the scheme. This included a wide-ranging public consultation between April and June 2022 and a statutory Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation in October and November 2022. Subsequent to these consultations, Teignbridge Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC) noted its support for the scheme in July 2022 and approved the making and sealing of amended TROs in June 2023. Devon County Council Cabinet gave approval for construction in July 2023. In response to further feedback from businesses, Teignbridge HATOC approved a further relaxation to the TROs in February 2024. In the same month, Teignbridge District Full Council reaffirmed its support for the delivery of the scheme. On the basis of these approvals and following the appropriate democratic process, a construction contract has now been awarded to progress scheme delivery.

2. QUESTION FROM MARY WHITE (NOT IN ATTENDANCE) (has asked if Chair can exercise discretion and allow Cllr Bradford to ask a supplementary) Re: Queen Street – Halt the Scheme

Devon County Councillors and Teignbridge District Councillors need to halt and review the Queen Street plan. The current plans are economic suicide. These Government employees should understand how retailing and businesses work, listen to Newton Abbot's great Town Centre Manageress Sally Henley and the Federation of Small Businesses representative Carmen Hanif. Many businesses in Newton Abbot are thriving, it is completely wrong to allow conditions which could very likely threaten and destroy jobs, to take Newton Abbot on an absolutely unnecessary path of business and employment destruction. What are these officials trying to do to hard working employees let alone business owners who contribute to the economy and HMRC?

I also ask that the Cabinet read the article inserted below.



Daily Mail Sat
24.02.24.pdf

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Thank you for providing the article, however the measures described as introduced in Wandsworth are not the same as those approved for Queen Street. Please see the response to Question 1 regarding the process followed to approve the scheme. During this process amendments were made to the scheme to address concerns raised about loading arrangements for businesses, with additional and extended bays included in the design and relaxations of the traffic regulation order to support access for businesses.

3. QUESTION FROM ROSEMARY WHITBREAD (IN ATTENDANCE) Re: Queen Street – Impact on Businesses and those with Disabilities

I have known Queen Street intimately since the mid-1980s when I established my business in Queen Street and let out four shops underneath which have always been occupied. To my personal knowledge, this is a thriving, well visited and lively shopping area, both day and night, all the length of that main street in to Newton Abbot. It is a wonderful example of 'pop and shop' where local people and those from the surrounding area take advantage of central one hour parking. At night, in the area where it is proposed to take away 28 spaces, I have counted over 34 cars as people enjoy the social amenities of our town.

The current proposals will kill our town both the accessible shopping in the day and its use by residents who live there and those visiting at night. The atmosphere in Queen Street has to be experienced to understand this and I believe that those making a decision to remove this parking do not fully understand how our town centre works-and it does work!

There has been an outcry by the traders all along Queen Street against these proposals-and I know as I have visited and spoken with them over the last three years. They all fear for their livelihoods as people will be forced to park in one of the car parks at the end of a very narrow junction with very narrow pavements (Cricketfield) They believe that losing this convenient and accessible parking will stop people coming to our town and instead they will use out of town areas with free parking!

Although we are told that there will be ample parking for those less mobile, we know that many older people, even with blue badges, already use these 28 threatened spaces when the ones even for those with blue badges are full. We are a town with many older people and imaging them walking with zimmers or walking aids from this car park is unimaginable. So these plans are also discriminatory against those with mobility issues.

This will also be a nightmare for those with children who try to navigate with their shopping and pushchairs.

The junction of this road, Albany Street, is extremely narrow and one cannot think of a less sensible place to direct all the traffic coming up Queen Street.

Already, the Town Council, the Federation of Small Businesses, several very large businesses and a long list of small businesses have tried to make their concerns heard but the Teignbrdige District Council is not listening to us.

We know from examples all around Devon that plans to remove or discourage parking in town centre are being challenged and they have been listened to and many of these schemes have been cancelled or reversed. Near to our town, we can see examples where pedestrianisation has been a

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disaster-Totnes, Paignton and Torquay (which killed this town years ago). We do not want this to happen to Newton Abbot.

All around our town, there are plans to build new housing estates but where are these potential shoppers going to shop? Not in a town with inadequate parking as spaces disappear and car parks are sold off!

We know that our town is thriving with Queen Street being a great example. There are hardly any empty shops, and they are snapped up quickly. In pedestrianised areas, such as the market area, they are full of empty shops. Many big retailers have disappeared from our streets-M&S, Wilko,Edinburgh Wool - but the small traders are keeping this town alive. Sports Direct, Wetherspoons and Poundland (all in Queen Street) are against these plans and say it will threaten their business.

But we have found that the TDC just closes its ears to the voices of the people in this town who really know-the traders and the residents.

My question is-In the light of all this evidence of the danger to Queen Street's future and discrimination towards the elderly and disabled, will you as Devon County Council listen to us and reverse these plans for Queen Street and the road changes also affecting this street around Devon Square?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Please see response to Question 1, which outlines the democratic approvals process that has been followed. These approvals include the proposals in the vicinity of Devon Square and form the basis for proceeding with the scheme.

As part of the scheme development, an Impact Assessment was prepared and is available to view at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/queen-street-newton-abbot-pedestrian-enhancements-2/>. This assessment considered the actual or potential effects of the scheme on different people who share a protected characteristic including effects relating to age and disability.

4. QUESTION FROM LUCY HAIGH (IN ATTENDANCE) Re: Meeting Request ref LTN

We as an informal community group would like to request a meeting with Devon County Council at the earliest opportunity to make representation on behalf of 1000's of citizens who are concerned about the unintended negative division created by the direct result of the Heavitree and Whipton LTN trial.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

There is a statutory consultation running until 8 May 2024 relating to the Heavitree and Whipton Active Streets trial. I would encourage all those with an interest to ensure they are returning consultation responses in the first instance as their way to engage with the trial.

Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee is the decision-making committee for the Heavitree and Whipton Active Streets trial and so I would be happy to pass

this request on to the Chair of Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee for his consideration.

**5. QUESTION FROM RICHARD DAWS (NOT IN ATTENDANCE) (has asked if Chair can exercise discretion and allow Cllr Bradford to ask a supplementary)
Re: Queen Street Consultation**

In a Teams meeting with MP Anne Marie Morris on 20th February 2024 it was acknowledged by DCC Officers that they had in that meeting, and in the writing up of the consultation results for Queen Street in 2022, mis represented the objections by the public and traders to the **removal of parking and restrictions of motor vehicle access.**

In this meeting, set up by the MP for Newton Abbot to provide an update on Queen Street Pedestrianisation, the DCC Officers suggested that the results of the consultation on these two key elements was 'mixed' when it was in fact clearly against. This statement was challenged in the meeting, and it was also noted by me that the written summary of the 2022 consultation suggested the same; that the results somehow suggested a 'mixed' position of residents for and against the removal of parking and vehicle access. It is now clear that the document prepared by DCC has misled the public and misinformed Cllrs charged with making the key decisions on Queen Street. Officers attempted to perpetuate this misinformation which if led unchallenged would have misled the MP for Newton Abbot.

The officers were corrected in the meeting, and presented with the granular detail of the consultation they suggested was mixed. This being quoted directly from the 2022 consultations results.

.10.1. Do you agree with the proposed changes to on-street parking provision along Queen Street?

Figure 5.31 shows the responses to the public questionnaire which shows that 40% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the changes to on-street parking provision, while 51% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This decreases, when considering business response, to 26% agreed or strongly agreed whilst the majority (72%) disagreed (see Figure 5.32).

Fig 5.3.4 The least popular proposal was the removal of motorised traffic access between King Street and Queen Street, which 28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed whilst 49% disagree or strongly disagree. When considering business responses, support is lower for all proposals. This can be seen below in Figure 5.35. In particular, for the restriction of general traffic along Queen Street, west of Albany Street, 70% of businesses either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Equally, 64% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the removal of motorised vehicles access between King Street and Queen Street.

The above clearly does not represent a mixed position but represents clear and unambiguous opposition to the two elements referred to. The officers accepted in the recorded Teams meeting that the quote above was correct and said they would 'reflect' on the point that in presenting this as 'mixed' DCC had consistently misrepresented and understated these clear objections.

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Does the DCC Cabinet, like its Officers, accept that the Council has misrepresented the results of the Queen Street consultation and given that the decisions made by DDC HATOC committee was informed by misrepresented consultation results and is likely to force businesses closures, how does the DCC Cabinet propose to correct these major and material failings?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

I have discussed with the officers who supported the meeting with Anne Marie Morris and the statements do not accurately reflect the discussion in the meeting. I am satisfied that robust responses to the challenges raised were provided, many of which had previously been debated and addressed in the several committee meetings relating to the scheme.

Devon County Council officers have not misled either the public or Councillors regarding the scheme. Teignbridge Highways and Traffic Orders Committee and Cabinet have considered the scheme in line with the Devon County Council democratic processes to secure the necessary approvals for the scheme to progress. There have been several opportunities for all stakeholders to comment and provide input to the consultation process and comprehensive reports have been presented at each of these committees, including a Public Consultation Report which is available online.

6. QUESTION FROM CARMEN HANIF (NOT IN ATTENDANCE) Re: Concerns of the FSB on Queen Street

The Federation of Small Businesses has concerns regarding both the consultation process and the scheme for Queen Street and the negative impact this will have on the businesses should this scheme be implemented.

Given that there is not a single example of a successful pedestrian enhancement scheme in the whole of Devon that is currently active and that in all cases where they have been introduced businesses have suffered, why are you continuing to implement this scheme when the vast majority of businesses on Queen Street have advised you it will adversely affect their ability to trade and lead to business closures and loss of local jobs?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Many of Devon's larger towns including Barnstaple, Newton Abbot (as part of the Asda development), Exmouth and Exeter have long been operating successfully with pedestrian enhancement scheme in their retail centres, so I do not agree with this statement. Please see the response to Question 1, which describes the consultation process and the democratic processes followed to secure approval for the scheme.

**7. QUESTION FROM CAROL FINNING (NOT IN ATTENDANCE) (has asked if Chair can exercise discretion and allow Mr Harreld to ask supplementary)
Re: Petitions about the LTN trial**

DCC have responded favourably to the 5000 petition in regards to the parking meters in local areas and is currently encouraging community engagement. Therefore, can DCC please explain why Exeter HATOC questioned the validity and denigrated the series of petitions presented to them in good faith of over 7000 signatories that had concerns about the negative impacts of the Heavitree LTN trial.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

As noted in the question, this is in relation to a decision made by the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee. I would be happy to pass this on to the Chair of Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee for his consideration and will ask that this is covered at their next meeting.

**8. QUESTION FROM PATRICIA BASSETT (ATTENDANCE TBC)
Re: Air quality monitoring data for the LTN trial**

Since August of last year, I have been asking the quite simple question, 'By whom, where and when is air quality monitoring data going to be published in line with enabling residents being able to make informed choices as part of the consultation and LTN monitoring process?'

Ascertaining any increased vehicle movements on key roads will be an integral element of the LTN trial, ECC are the agents to do this via the Defra funding and protocols for the Heavitree corridor, but DCC have installed supplemental monitors, at various locations that ECC seemed unaware of.

Who has been responsible from Spring 2023 for this vital component of data analysis.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Exeter City Council (ECC) is responsible for air quality monitoring and would normally publish outputs from their annual air quality monitoring sites in the Autumn, reporting on the previous calendar year of data. I am aware that Devon County Council has been working closely with ECC and has funded some additional continuous air quality sensors in the Heavitree and Whipton Active Streets area (Polsloe Road, Pinhoe Road and Lower Hill Barton Road) to complement the ECC sensors installed on the Heavitree Road corridor funded by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). I understand the data will be shared by ECC, which will allow monitoring of hourly Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels and so will allow comparison with the hourly limit of concentrations above 200 µg/m³, which must not be exceeded more than 18 times in a single year.

I would be happy to pass this on to the Chair of Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee for his consideration at their next meeting.

