

Poor air quality in central Bristol

Campaigners for clean air in Bristol have reacted with dismay to news that the rules for Metrobus engine quality have been downgraded from bio-gas down to diesel "hybrids". Cabot Cllr Mark Wright says Bristol is moving too slowly on this issue of air quality in general. Mark says "As Green Capital 2015, we really should have had concrete steps towards improving air quality under way by now. Now even the Conservative government is telling us we should be implementing a 'Clean Air Zone'. A Conservative government telling the Green Capital of 2015 that it needs to do better for the environment! That's not good is it?"

Mark recently submitted a formal written question to the Mayor on the Metrobus downgrade, asking the Mayor if he was aware that more diesel buses could cause the city to be fined heavily for missing air-quality targets. The Mayor replied: "I am aware of the recent court cases but the scheme has to be commercially attractive to operators and self-funding so that the Council does not have to provide ongoing subsidies which we cannot support. We will work with the successful operator to encourage the use of the most efficient vehicle fleet."

Mark says, "I'm disappointed with the Mayor's reply - the Metrobus will be a nice earner for whoever runs it, but city residents will suffer for both the poorer air quality and any resulting fines if diesel engines are used for MetroBus. This also runs directly against my 3-year old campaign for a 'Low Emission Zone' in the city centre. Scientific research is increasingly showing that diesel engines are the worst for air pollution and we need to act on that."



↑ Buses and lorries are the biggest source of harmful pollution locally

Baltic Wharf caravan park / St George's School update

Baltic Wharf caravan park has unexpectedly had its lease extended until 2018. The lease was terminated last year in anticipation of the land being used for a much needed primary school site to expand St Georges school (from Brandon Hill). The Council has been annoyingly secretive about these plans for the future, but it looks increasingly likely that this land won't be used to expand St Georges after all. The Council is continuing to look for a suitable school site on the north side of the harbour for expanding St Georges school.

Cllr Mark Wright says "I have always been absolutely clear that I only support taking back the caravan site if it's needed for a school - because the Council has a legal obligation to provide enough school places. But I absolutely do not support simply flogging the site to build flats, and I will oppose that vigorously if it is proposed! If a school doesn't go on the site, then the caravan park should be allowed to stay permanently and continue making their good contribution to the local economy."



↑ Cabot councillor Mark Wright with Kay Barnard

Tim Farron is Lib Dem leader

The Lib Dems have chosen Cumbrian MP, Tim Farron, as their new national leader, after Nick Clegg resigned.

Cllr Mark Wright says, "I voted for Tim - he has an outstanding record of standing up for the disadvantaged in society and will be a great leader of the Lib Dem 'fight-back'. The Labour Party on the other hand has just pressed the self-destruct button and is now not offering any serious opposition to the Conservative government."



If you want to see Tim Farron in action you can see his superb Party Conference speech, which has been praised from across the political spectrum, here: <http://tinyurl.com/orwh5ma>

Kay Barnard selected by Lib Dems for Mayor

Bristol Lib Dems have selected Kay Barnard to contest the Mayoral election in May 2016. Kay was born and raised in the city, and has lived and worked here for most of her life. Like Mark, Kay is a scientist! She has a PhD in bio-chemistry. Kay will be promoting her ideas for Bristol over the coming months.

Working all year round, not just for elections

20mph zones in Bristol

The 20mph speed limit in Bristol has become a contentious issue. There is loud opposition from some on this issue, and recently a petition against the zones secured over 3,500 signatures and forced a debate in the Council chamber on whether to abolish the zones. The Lib Dems and Green Party spoke in favour of 20mph zones, while the Conservatives spoke against, and to our surprise the Labour Party also spoke against - despite previously being in favour! There is also a petition in favour of the zones: <http://tinyurl.com/oxlp8kf>

Cllr Mark Wright says, "I have always supported the principle of 20mph limits in Bristol (except on trunk roads), and was proud when the previous Lib Dem council started the roll-out across the city. The Mayor has continued that policy. I know residents in the city centre are strongly in favour of 20mph limits and I'll continue to support them."

Avon Crescent residents clobbered by Council

Residents of Avon Crescent and surrounding streets have reacted angrily to the Council cost-cutting and removing safety measures from planned changes to the road for Metrobus. A recent petition secured over 3,000 signatures calling for all through-traffic to be directed around the houses rather than between them, and while the Council has made supportive noises it hasn't progressed this to consultation yet.

To top it all off, residents were told with just a few weeks notice that nearby Smeaton Road will be closed for 6 months for Metrobus works! (This is the road at the end of Cumberland Road after Avon Crescent, and before the big brick bonded warehouses). Its closure will mean that all Spike Island traffic gets routed through Avon Crescent for 6 months. Cllr Mark Wright commented, "This is a shoddy way to treat residents. Metrobus construction will cause major disruption on Cumberland Rd over the next year, so the Council needs to raise its game, big time."



↑ Cllr Mark Wright has always supported 20 mph zones in Bristol. They make our roads safer.



↑ Crossing the road here from the bus stop to Baltic Wharf is dangerous

A Cumberland Road crossing for Baltic Wharf, at long last!

For some time now, bus users going to Baltic Wharf have had to dash across Cumberland Rd from the bus stop opposite the newsagent. Cllr Mark Wright have been pressing the Council for a solution to this for nearly two years, and now at last there has been a quick public consultation on a new pedestrian crossing at this spot. We don't know yet exactly when it will be installed, most likely along with the Metrobus changes, but it will make life safer for Baltic Wharf residents.

In addition, it has become likely that a new Metrobus stop will also be put right there as well. This means that when Metrobus is finished, Baltic Wharf and others on Spike Island will finally have an alternative to the dreaded 506 bus and its terrible reliability!

Other Local News in Brief...

"Warm-up Bristol" company goes bust

The company that provides the Council's "Warm-up Bristol" service has gone bust, blaming the new Conservative government's decision to cut green energy subsidies put in place by Lib Dems in the previous coalition government. Over 1,000 Bristol residents are affected by this. If you are affected, more information is available at this website: <http://tinyurl.com/pl6kjkq>

Jacob's Wells Rd zebra crossing

Momentum is growing for a zebra crossing somewhere about halfway up Jacob's Wells Rd. There is a strong demand to cross near the junction with Constitution Hill, particularly to get to Brandon Hill entrance. Mark thinks this is a good idea and is supporting it.

Road Closures

Residents of the Harbourside area continue to complain to Mark about access to their own homes when key roads The Portway, Anchor Road, and Cumberland Road are closed. Mark opposes the proliferation of occasions when these key transport roads are closed.

St Mary's Hospital site

A few years ago there were plans to redevelop the historic St Mary's Hospital site on Brandon Hill. Initially the plans were to demolish the landmark building, but after much objection (including from Mark Wright), that was scaled back to keep the historic front of the building. Those plans didn't progress, and now a new developer is here and, surprise-surprise, proposing again to demolish the whole building! Mark has already objected to this. Hopefully they will back down like the first developer did.

Burger van objection

Mark objected to an application to run a burger van outside the Anchor Point flats on Harbourside. It was bad enough that it was under peoples' bedrooms, but it was going to start at 7am each morning! In the end the licence was granted only on Thursdays from 8.30am, which was a partial victory. We don't understand why burger vendors keep wanting to be so anti-social and set up under residents' windows - it wakes people up and forces them to shut their windows to keep out the smell.

Bristol and the refugee crisis

Many people have been moved by the harrowing scenes of Syrian refugees making their way through Europe. Bristol is a self-declared "City of Sanctuary" and has a proud record of helping refugees.

We are pleased that the Mayor has been very proactive about this, and in addition, at the meeting of the Council on 15th September, Cllr Mark Wright was happy to vote for a motion urging the Mayor and the Council to do all they can to help any refugees that come to us, and to immediately take in 50 refugee families.

Contact your local Cabot Lib Dems

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