

County Councillor Liam Walker

Oxford Bus Gates Speech

Thank you.

I want to thank all those who have spoken today, and I am pleased that the Leader did a u-turn on the decision to ban some speakers and has allowed all those who registered in time to speak today.

So here we are again. Another dividing decision meeting with a scheme that will quite literally divide Oxford city.

Clearly this anti-motorist coalition know how divisive they are being by the number of security staff around county hall and the armed police officers outside.

As it has already been mentioned by others, the timing on the decision of these bus gates today is incredibly unusual given the upcoming closure of Botley Road by Network Rail for the Oxford station upgrades. Why the rush?

By implementing these bus gates the cabinet risks this being the final nail in the coffin for businesses in Oxford. This council claims it wants to tackle congestion, so buses run on time – well, I suggest you scrap the LTNs as these measures have increased congestion, increased pollution, and have resulted in some businesses already closing their doors.

I accept its easy for me in opposition to simply criticise these plans without offering other alternatives, but we all know this isn't true. Only a few months ago I gave this council the opportunity to vote on exploring plans to make parking at P&R sites free in Oxford as I believe this will help to reduce congestion into the city and encourage public transport use.

But guess what, the Lib Dems, Labour and Green councillors all voted against this motion.

Why, because we all know these anti-motorist plans being discussed today aren't about supporting businesses or reducing congestion. This is about hammering motorists with more charges as this coalition appease their lobby groups in the city centre.

As is common with all the consultations that are now coming out of this council it wasn't possible to disagree with these bus gates.

But let's be honest folks, we know this decision was already made many months ago. If you don't believe me just ask the Labour Cabinet Member for Transport, Cllr Duncan Enright, who can't be involved in the vote today due to his predetermined decision comment in the Sunday Times where he said on bus gates, "It's going to

happen, definitely” – a misquote or a deliberate slip of the tongue knowing he wouldn’t have to buckle under his coalition Lib Dem paymasters and support their bus gates today.

These plans are so unpopular the cabinet have been forced to make so many exemptions its clear these bus gates will not have the desired impact that they want and are being forced through to secure some funding on electric bus funding: a condition you imposed yourself.

Rewarding Oxfordshire residents with 25 permits so they can pass around or access the city is like some sort of naff game show that is something you would expect from China not a free and democratic country like Great Britain.

My message to this cabinet is simple: scrap the bus gate plans.

Stop hammering motorists.

Stop hammering businesses.

And stop dividing communities.

Thank you.