

Statement: PS11.01

Cabinet – 24th January 2023

Re: Agenda item 11 - : Bristol Beacon Update

Statement submitted by: Dan Ackroyd

It is coming to light that the risks associated with renovating the Bristol Beacon were missed or ignored.

This is not the only music venue project that has a huge risk associated with it.

For the full council on 8 November 2022 I submitted the question:

"Would it be financially responsible to require YTL to commit to operating the Brabazon Hangars for at least two decades as an Arena, even if it was a run at loss to them"

The response was:

> I have every confidence that the YTL investment of up to £200 million
> demonstrates their commitment to building a world class arena.

That did not answer the question and avoids analysing the risk.

Although YTL are spending money on building the site, there is no commitment that they run it as an arena.

When the arena in Filton was first announced it was planned as being open this year. Not only has construction has not started, there has not been a contractor appointed.

Construction has been delayed until after huge sums of public money have been spent on trains and other infrastructure.

There have been no details of how 19,000 visitors plus hundreds more staff are meant to arrive at or leave the arena once an event finishes.

None of the submitted plans show a car park capable of holding thousands of cars, or where the hundreds of coaches needed to transport 19,000 people would be kept.

Even the proposed metro (which is actually a proposed commuter line to the airport) wouldn't help much. My understanding is that each line is proposed to have a capacity of 3,000 people an hour.

I fail to see how an arena can operate profitably, when it has such

poor transport links.

YTL are a for profit company that also owns Wessex Water. That company is dumping sewage into rivers because it is cheaper than improving infrastructure. You can't expect through sheer hope for them to run an arena at a loss.

There is a very real risk that Bristol will end up with no arena in either the centre or in Filton, and an empty office building that BCC will be paying rent on for 40 years.

I'm sure we're going to hear that the huge increase in costs for restoring the Bristol Beacon "couldn't have been foreseen". But the risk of YTL having benefited from amounts of public cash, and not actually running the hangars as an arena should be an obvious risk.

Mayor Rees, you have a responsibility to avoid too much risk for the public money being spent on a project that isn't going to deliver the public benefit it advertised.

Please can you learn from the unseen risks found in the Bristol Beacon renovation, and take steps to ensure that Bristol does actually get an operating music arena.

cheers
Dan
Ackroyd