

# Call to 'look after our own first'

Council chiefs have been warned that Bath is fast becoming a "two-tier" city – and that more needs to be done to help the less well-off.

The claims were made at the third meeting of the Better Bath forum, which discussed the future of the city's economy.

The evening began with speakers explaining the city's economic situation and the need to bring in more high-flying businesses.

But Lawrence Buabeng, who is involved with the Snow Hill and London Road Community Partnership, raised the issue of finding jobs for people who already live in Bath.

He said: "There is a big problem in the city with people who are drug and alcohol dependent."

"We need some sort of programme

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to bring them into the local economy."

This idea of supporting people in the city who are struggling to find work, before bringing in new workers, was backed by Julia Bailhache.

She said: "Bath is becoming more and more a city on two levels."

"We need to provide for those who are poor and those who can't afford to live in luxury."

"Those who don't have anything, who don't have the skills for pro-

fessional jobs, there is nothing for them."

Other speakers stressed the need for new jobs to address the city's over-dependence on the public sector.

Chairman of Wessex Water, Colin Skellett, said 40 per cent of workers in the city were employed by the public sector and that Bath had an ageing population with limited skills.

He added: "Doing nothing is not an option because Bath's economy is too fragile. We need to decide what it is we want to do and how we can do it, and most importantly we need to work together."

Divisional director for development

and regeneration at Bath and North East Somerset Council, Jeremy Smalley, said: "We want to find out what kind of workers the city needs to attract, to boost the economy."

"So far the research we have conducted shows support for three sectors – ICT, creative industries and professional services."

All the points raised at the meeting, which was chaired by The Bath Chronicle editor Sam Holliday, will be presented to the council for it to respond to more formally.

For more information and to see responses to the points raised, visit [www.betterbath.org.uk](http://www.betterbath.org.uk).



WARNING: Colin Skellett

## Good to talk

BT used to have the slogan: it's good to talk. If this is the case then Bath is clearly a very good place to be because this is a city where people have so many opportunities to debate their concerns. And two diverse events in the past few days have perfectly illustrated this.

Last Wednesday the Better Bath Forum held another excellent and thought-provoking debate at St Michael's Church and we also report today on a splendid two-day conference for youngsters aged 14 and 15 at the University of Bath on climate change.

Both events shared one thing above all. They showed that if you give people the right environment to debate important issues then they will take it. Keep talking Bath.