

DEPUTATION ONE  
WETHERBY BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please make your speech now to the Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin your introduction by introducing the people in your deputation.

MS R NICHOLSON: Lord Mayor Members of the Council, my name is Rosemary Nicholson and I am chairman of Wetherby Business Association and I am supported by fellow members, vice chairman Sheilagh Venn and Susannah Berry from Wetherby News.

We are sick with worry about the severe downturn in business within Wetherby town. Since the upgrade of the A1 to motorway standard which necessarily involved removing the Historic Market Town brown sign, Wetherby businesses have seen a significant reduction in footfall.

Unfortunately the services area just north of Wetherby has been labelled as Wetherby Services, which has added to this poor situation.

The entrances to Wetherby, North and South, are not yet on satellite navigation systems so it is easy to understand why people are bypassing the town. What will be shown on a satellite navigation is the old slip roads and as these no longer exist people just drive by.

Historically, Wetherby has played host to significant tourist numbers on a daily basis. We have been a popular stopping off point for coaches and people travelling up and down the country.

Today, this is not the case. Since the removal of the brown sign and the introduction of the Wetherby Services sign, cars and coaches are stopping at the services area rather than them seeing the attractiveness of Wetherby through the Historic Market Town brown sign.

Shops started to close shortly after the removal of the sign. Business, as you know, has seen a dramatic downturn due to the recession and where businesses were struggling, they then were faced with an almost complete drop off of customers leading to inevitable closure.

In some instances shop owners have simply handed back they keys to the landlord as they could not make the business pay. Only two weeks ago, I received an email giving details of potentially six shops that are due to close within the next couple of months. This is on top of five units that are already empty. To add insult to injury, we have just heard that the Co-op in Market Place is to close. The Co-op is also home to our Post Office so it is particularly tragic that the Co-op finds itself having to close due to the downturn in trade.

Interestingly, our local newspaper, the Wetherby News, has been running a campaign seeking local support for the reinstatement of our brown sign. As you can just see the petition runs to several pages and this is from local residents, not just businesses. Even

residents can see that the atmosphere within the town has changed and certainly not for the better.

We need our brown sign back now. We have the full support of our Ward Councillors, Wetherby Town Council and I also have a letter of support from our Elmet Member of Parliament, Colin Burgan, plus we have support from the Shadow Transport Secretary, Teresa Villiers.

We now need the support of you, members of the Council. Please do not let our town die – give us back our brown sign. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bentley?

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could we take a vote on that, please? *(A vote was taken)*  
This is CARRIED.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon.