



## Notes on a Meeting on Street Drinkers

called by Helen Peter of the WA in September 2012

with Police, Julian House workers, the Travelodge Manager & Local Councillors.

### 1. Main problems.

- Street drinkers (SDs) are moved from the town centre & tend to congregate in Widcombe as it is near to the town & shops, is flat with no hills, follows the river & canal, & there is easy access to shops selling alcohol. Thimble Mill is in a dip, so feels slightly hidden away from the road. There are convenient seats by Thimble Mill & the Travelodge.
- SDs can be intimidating to tourists and local residents when begging, fighting or even just sitting with dogs etc.
- They frequently break into the Travelodge bins to feed their dogs.
- They leave litter and sometimes excrement where they drink.
- They buy alcohol at McColl's and at Sainsbury's along the river.
- Mc Colls' managers are adamant that they will serve them as paying customers.
- McColl's appears to stock alcohol specifically for the street drinkers, (cheap ciders, Lambrusco etc.)
- The problems become much worse if more than 3 or 4 SDs congregate.
- Local residents, workers and visitors want the problem to stop.
- The SDs make Bath and Widcombe seem unappealing to tourists and can stop people walking along & enjoying the river or canal.
- Most SDs are vulnerable, many with mental health problems, addictions etc. However, there is no need for them to behave antisocially.
- There are 2 types-the homeless drinkers and those who are housed, (the majority?), but who choose to drink together on the streets.
- The problems tend to be seasonal and cyclical.
- A "wet house" where SDs could go to drink seems unlikely to become a reality in Bath.
- The Rossiter Road changes may have some impact on the SDs and should be considered, along with the possibility of CCTV on the Widcombe Parade & area in the future. Would more seating attract more SD's?

### 2. Facts

- Widcombe is already a designated DPPO (Designated Public Place Order) where no alcohol can be drunk on the street.
- A major deterrent is when police come and throw their alcohol away.
- The police say they are very firm and have zero tolerance to trouble.
- SDs can be intimidating for all- outreach workers and police have been threatened recently.
- Several recent incidents lead to a severe crack down on the Widcombe area, so now it has become much quieter as they have been "scared off" from congregating in Widcombe.
- The problem is seasonal and should cease when the weather turns colder and rainier.
- Julian House is being refurbished. In November it will offer 20+ beds and 24 hour care so drinkers will have somewhere to go and receive help if they seek it.
- Travelodge advises guests to walk the road way and to return at night by taxi to be safe.
- The police have drastically stepped up their surveillance since the incidents so the area should benefit from this increased police presence.
- The police will include the Travelodge car park in their daily rounds.
- All involved are requested and encouraged to call the police on 999 if urgent or 101 if non urgent, to report ASB (anti-social behaviour)
- That said, they must be doing something illegal, intimidating people, shouting, begging etc. Just sitting or lying somewhere does not constitute an offence (unless they are causing an obstruction).
- Some elderly drinkers (50+) are hardened, but are supported by an over 50's project where some stop drinking, as they have somewhere to go to be safe.
- The drinkers will probably always be present in some form or other. We need to seek longer term solutions too.