

Resources Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel
Call-In of decision E2692 Policy Loan Wilmington Farm Solar
Array

29th September 2014

Submissions circulated to the Panel (note these statements
were not made at the Panel meeting)

I would like to voice my support for the B&NES Council proposal to make a £500,000 loan towards construction costs of the Wilmington Farm Solar Array.

The recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.

The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment.

The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development. As a result the project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation.

In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES.

Regards,

Richard Hil

As a local project this will add not only economic community benefit of £700K over the next 20 years, but add real sustainable change to our region, now. This for me is the main reason to invest. As a parent, it is vital to be providing sustainable energy for my future generations, and for our communities future. The Banes core strategy has the overarching theme to address climate change - this is a great opportunity to increase Banes renewable energy by a third.

As a small investor it is a great chance for myself to continue to support this community owned project, to receive a good return and benefit my local community. BWCE have an excellent track record of completing projects and paying the percentages they forecast. I understand the loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment. BWCE continue to lead the field in the UK in community run, renewable energy organisations.

I hope you will look to support BWCE and this investment under the Green Investment & Jobs fund.

Liz Clarke

I'm extremely concerned at the "Call In" that has been placed on the Wilmington Farm Solar Array project. This smacks of political games against a community

process made by people genuinely concerned about Climate Change. Furthermore the people who are backing this investment are not only local people, they are local people who are concerned about the welfare of future generations.

Moreover, the proposed support from the local council fits in with the council's core strategy whereby addressing climate change has become an overarching policy.

Do these objectors have a real valid case, or is this just another example of NIMBY-ism?

This investment is made by the community and for the community. It is a community owned asset. This is an example of people taking control of their destiny; and it offers a payback over the period of the life of the project.

Recently our Prime Minister urged people to buy local (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-mid-wales-28393432>). Isn't this scheme an example of people producing clean energy locally & thus creating a "local supply", rather than sourcing dirty energy from distant places which have dubious/unstable political status? Wouldn't David Cameron applaud this effort as part of the "Big Society" that he promoted back in 2010?

We've just witnessed the power of the British Democratic Process in Scotland where large numbers of people voted, of their own free will, to effect their destiny. Let's continue to back the efforts of local people to control their destiny.

In the case of the Wilmington Farm Solar Array, large numbers of local people have effectively invested in something that will benefit the local community.

I urge the Council to agree to the loan for this forward looking investment.

Yours etc

Steve Cross

Please circulate this to the Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

I wish to endorse the council's decision to support this important project which will boost B&NES' renewable electricity output by one third.

At the same time, I object to the call-in, which is hard to understand when there is the promise of a 6.5% return on the investment.

Turning the project over to the commercial sector is a non-starter. The banks refuse to fund projects under 2-3 million pounds.

The beauty of the project is the community impact. Not only will it provide green energy for the area, but it will generate funds for further projects, benefit investors and fulfil B&NES Core Strategy aims.

What's not to love?

Lin Patterson

It was with considerable surprise and dismay that I learned of the "call in" of funding as above.

I have been a member of BWCE for nearly 3 years having invested in their first share offer (along with many other local people). The ethos of the organization is a beacon to those who are concerned about global warming, community and their investment returns. My investment has performed consistently well, as predicted at the outset.

Funds are accumulating (part of the scheme) for local projects associated with fuel poverty and climate change. This year, over 20,000 pounds and last year 4,800. Future years will see increasing amounts made available for these purposes.

It is anticipated that the Wilmington project will create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project.

All installation and maintenance works for BWCE projects are, where possible, carried out by local companies creating further economic benefit locally.

These factors would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes.

The proposed loan from the council will give BANES a commercial return on their investment. Other loan providers have been investigated but the banks operate with a minimum of 2 - 3 million pounds for financing this sort of project. It may be of interest to know that the 2011 project secured 1 million pounds of loan funding from Scottish and Southern Energy.

The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

I would strongly urge you to reconsider calling in this loan. If granted it would:

1. Conform with the recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES which makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.
2. Help to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development.
3. Consolidate a project which will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.
4. Give BANES a decent return for their investment/loan.

5. Show the wider community BANES' direct commitment to positive engagement with sustainability.

As the President of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick advised, "Climate change policies cannot be the frosting on the cake of development; they must be baked into the recipe of growth and social development."

Please, call off the call in.

Yours sincerely, W Martin.

**AN URGENT APPEAL TO SUPPORT THIS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT
COMMUNITY BASED PROJECT - 22/09/14**

The Wilmington Solar Array project will increase B&NES's renewable electricity capacity by a third and make a positive step in addressing climate change - an overarching theme of B&NES' current Core Strategy.

This offer of a loan will help ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset and will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million. The Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5% on their investment.

The Wilmington Solar project is offering local citizens the opportunity to invest in local energy generation whilst receiving a respectable return on their money.

This 'call in' asks why BWCE does not seek a commercial bank loan but banks will only offer finance for projects in excess of £2-3 million. As a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan will help create some £700,000 of community benefit over the next 25 years which can be spent on much needed low carbon and fuel poverty projects. This additional benefit will leverage the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to any putative bank sponsored commercial scheme.

Finally, the loan will increase the chances of a successful local community owned project while strengthening Bath & West Community Energy, a national award winning community enterprise.

Paul Stansall

Moira Young

To whom it may concern,

I am 16, I am too young to vote and maybe my age means that you don't wish to hear my opinion. But I do care about the future of our planet (and I do want to make some money).

We have an Environmental Action Group at school and we try what we can protect the environment. I know B&NES does a lot to protect the environment and that is why I was so shocked to hear that you were thinking again about your loan to the BWCE.

I have closely studied the materials on BWCE as I consider investing. The minimum investment is £500 - that is about 75% of my net worth and you will appreciate how close I have looked at the scheme. To me, in summary, the scheme offers a fair return (7% much higher than I get on my Barclays Saver), low risk (backed by lots of assets), and the customer is in effect the government so will be sure to pay. In addition, the investment is ethical, and any surplus over my 7% is distributed around our region to good causes. You could ask why the council should lend the money not a bank. To me that is like asking why a library is run by the council and not by Waterstones. Sometimes the council is the best for the job.

I am going to invest and so I cannot understand why you are having doubts. By this low risk lending to BWCE you increase the local green generation of electricity by a third, you get a return on your money, people will get a job building and then looking after the array, and you do good. How can you not want to do that? PLEASE SUPPORT THE LOAN.

James Brennan

Dear Sirs,

I understand that a proposed loan from B&NES Council of £500,000 to go towards the construction costs of the Wilmington Farm Solar Array has been called in. I must strongly express my dismay and opposition to this short sighted proposal.

As I understand it, BANES Core Strategy makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project would increase by a third B&NESs renewable electricity capacity.

The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth 6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment. The loan makes both environmental and financial sense.

Previous BWCE schemes have provided an impressive track record in this regard and represented secure and democratic community interests.

You have queried why BWCE do not have a commercial bank loan. I find this suggestion naive and irresponsible! Banks will only offer project finance over 2-3 million. To borrow this amount would be a misuse of community finance and unnecessary.

The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development. Surely this is exactly what our Coyncil should be applauding and supporting in their electoral area?!

The project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.

In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes.

The previously agreed loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

Please reconsider this action !

Yours faithfully,

Sharon Alcock

I was surprised to see that the loan to BWCE has been called in for further deliberation and that a number of councillor are objecting to the loan.

The building of a solar array at Wilmington is a scheme completely in line with the my wishes and B&NES's stated goals for to have a more carbon free future. BWCE is just the kind of local collective that should be supported by the local council. The loan offers a real return to the council of (I guess) approximately 2~2.5% over the cost of borrowing, is backed by hard assets worth over £2.5mn and the income stream is guaranteed by government. In addition, it provides some direct employment and any surplus profits are being put in a a pot to benefit the local B&NES community. The loan could provide hundred of thousands of pounds to good causes over the next decades. By loaning the funds, B&NES is supporting a positive initiative backed by predominately local investors. BWCE is a model to other schemes and the support of B&NES's reflects well on the council.

I look at a lot of investments in my day job. This isn't high risk, it is is a low risk loan; asset backed with an income stream from central government. I ask you to approve the loan.

Martin Brennan

This is a very important issue and at the time of a major Climate Change conference should be taken very seriously.

Your recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.

The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment.

The call in asks why BWCE doesn't have a commercial bank loan – we have tried to secure commercial debt but banks will only offer project finance over £2-3 million.

The local authority loan would be helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development and the project will then be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.

In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes.

The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result. As you know BWCE is a model project now being adopted by other areas. Please reverse your decision.

Yours sincerely

Helen Kendall

Like many others, I am a small private investor in BWCE, an amazing community energy organisation that has already helped to get solar panels onto schools in and around Bath, cutting their bills and providing an excellent example of community energy in action. I understand that you have "called in" a possible loan to the new solar project at Wilmington. I urge you to go ahead with this loan, which is such a positive local project.

This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.

The loan of £500,000 will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on your investment.

The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development.

As a result the project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.

In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes.

The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

Thanks and regards,

Jeremy

I am both a resident of B&NES and a member of Bath and West Community Energy, and I would like to state how strongly I support the idea of the first lending some money to the second.

Climate change is an overarching concern of the Council - and indeed of everyone. If we are going to fry the planet why bother about anything else. The Wilmington Farm project would increase by 1/3 the renewable energy capacity in B&NES, the loan would be secured against assets of £2.6m - it won't be lost - and will earn the Council, and thereby the local community, interest of 6.5%.

Commercial banks are not interested in loans of this kind below £2-3m, and BWCE wants only £500,000. And why should it be desirable for the interest earned on the loan to go to the banking sector rather than accrue for the use of the local community?

Also this loan would be helping to create, over the 25 year life of the project, a sum of about £700,000 for the community fund that has been set up to fund local community low carbon projects and fuel poverty projects. This will greatly increase the social impact of the loan to the benefit the local area.

Susanna Kendall

Dear BANES Council

I am writing to add my voice to the request that you revoke 'calling-in' the loan of £500,000 previously agreed with BWCE.

To me, BWCE reflects all that we are trying to achieve in turning local community concerns and expertise into meaningful action. What this group has already achieved is phenomenal, proving that the company, with its positive social values and engagement with the wider BANES community, and significant contribution to our local sustainability agenda, can also be a commercial success. I have never been to such dynamic and inspiring meetings as those arranged by BWCE to talk about their plans and achievements - who else gives local people the opportunity to invest small amounts of their savings in local initiatives, and then monitor how their investments are going through a website allowing us to look at the energy production of its different solar panel sites etc. The projects this company sets up are more than solely investments, or solely means of generating green energy locally (although these are important enough), they have also inspired local people to get involved, learn about these issues, and believe that community action is worthwhile.

I do not see how providing a loan - which past performance of this company demonstrates is very low risk (and providing a very reasonable rate of return for the council) - can be deemed misuse of council funds. It is clear that to have got this far, the scheme has support from many members of the council; as BWCE have made clear, the loan would help create significant (£700,000 worth) of community benefit, help to develop low carbon and fuel poverty projects which clearly align with council concerns and priorities, will create local jobs, and engage local people in energy efficiency ideas, entrepreneurship and getting involved in their community.

So I would urge you to reconsider revoking this agreed load, so prevents the long-term benefit of ensuring that the project remains a community owned asset, rather than further lining the pockets of commercial companies.

BWCE cannot obtain this through standard bank loans, and it would be a real travesty to see this reversal put such a positive scheme under threat.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Gillison

Dear Democratic Services and All Interested Councillors,

I am writing to you concerning the Call in E2692 Policy Loan. As a BWCE co-operative member I realise I have a vested interested but feel I should raise some points for consideration when this matter is discussed (and point to some benefits).

The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment. I am aware this come from a borrowed "pot" of money so only works out

at about 2.5% return, but what other investment will give such a return? Is there an alternative investment the council has in mind that will give a better return? Surely this money needs to be used for something beneficial.

The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development. If it provides income for the council surely that is a benefit to all BANES council tax payers. In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within BANES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes.

The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping

to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment. I am aware this come from a borrowed “pot” of money so only works out at about 2.5% return overall, but what other investment will give such a return? Is the an alternative investment the council has in mind that will give a better return? Surely this money needs to be used for something beneficial.

The recently adopted Core Strategy for BANES states the importance of addressing climate change. This project would increase by a third BANES’s renewable electricity capacity. Also the project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a

reasonable return on their money.

Finally the call in asks why BWCE doesn’t have a commercial bank loan – BWCE tried to secure commercial debt but banks will only offer project finance over £2-3 million. So this is just the sort of small scale business the council should be trying to help.

Thank you for reading this and I hope the council comes to the right decision and is not frozen into inaction because some councillors are not sure that it sits comfortably with their politics.

Alan Smith

Dear Sirs,

I am very disturbed to hear that a proposed loan to help build a solar array has been called in.

The Wilmington Farm Solar Array is a small-scale community project, not a massive commercial development, and it deserves support from B&NES.

B&NES' support will further its aims to address climate change, and also bring an annual return of 6.5% - an excellent return on the investment.

As a small-scale community project, it is not easy to get a commercial bank loan - these only go to much larger energy projects.

The B&NES loan will help to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development. The project will give local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation, and be engaged in tackling climate change. Surely, this is an excellent example of "Big society", and needs to be encouraged!

Yours sincerely

David Beasley

To Resources and Policy Development Scrutiny Panel Re: Call in E2692 Policy Loan – Wilmington Farm Solar Array

I would urge the members of Scrutiny panel to agree that the cabinet members should proceed as agreed with the loan of £500,000 to Bath & West Community Energy. My reasons are set out below:

The recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project would increase by one third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.

The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment.

The call in asks why BWCE doesn't have a commercial bank loan – from my experience - to secure commercial debt banks will only offer project finance over £2-3 million. £500,000 is a perfect size

As a result the project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.

The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development.

In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation creating jobs in the green and insulation industries as a welcome byproduct.

The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will make a significant step in strengthening BWCE and helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

Peter Andrews

Democratic Services: Please circulate this message to the Scrutiny Panel

I write in order to strongly support the proposed loan of £500K to BWCE towards the construction costs of the Wilmington Farm Solar Array. The reasons for my support are many:

~ The Core Strategy for B&NES, recently adopted, makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This investment specifically aims to support the Council's policy commitments made in the B&NES Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy 2012-2015 to support the development of renewable energy in the area. This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.

~ The call-in request questions both the security and the return on the proposed loan. The money, £500K, will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million. The Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a significant commercial return on their investment, and one that it is hard to equal in current financial conditions.

~ The call-in suggests a commercial bank loan as a preferable alternative to the Council loan. Commercial debt has been explored by BWCE, but despite their excellent commercial record and national awards, banks will only offer BWCE finance for projects over £2-3 million.

~ The many local investors, including myself and family members, greatly value the community ownership of BWCE and its projects. Central to community ownership and investment is the retention of financial surpluses (already evident from BWCE's earlier projects) in the local community by dividend payments to investors, the Community Fund and - potentially - the good rate of return to the Council. The local authority loan will help to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development, and that such returns remain in the local community rather than disappearing to national/international bodies.

~ The project offers local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a good return on their money. The first stage of the share offer for Wilmington, to members only, was oversubscribed: clear evidence that the local population which the Council serves is extremely positive about this development.

~ In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500K loan would help create approximately £700K of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes. It also increases job creation prospects over coming years, as the Community Fund is invested in local works such as retrofitting the existing housing stock.

~ The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

I am astonished that 'my' Council, with an award-winning and proven home-grown success story, should have any reservations about nurturing and celebrating such success. Clearly due diligence is essential, but raises no concerns for the Directors and Members of BWCE. Please hear the voice and note the actions of your constituents, and support the loan to the Wilmington Farm Solar Array.

Dr Lyn Barham

Dear Sirs

I would like to add my support for this loan to be granted as originally intended.

- The recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.
- The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment.
- The call in asks why BWCE does not have a commercial bank loan – BWCE has tried to secure commercial debt but banks will only offer project finance over £2-3 million.
- The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community-owned asset, instead of a commercial development.
- As a result, the project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.
- In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes.

- The loan will increase the chances of a successful community-owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

Yours faithfully
Gill Christie

To Whom It May Concern,

I have recently become aware of the call-in of the decision-in-principle that the Council agrees to loan £500 000 towards the construction costs of the Wilmington Farm Solar Array. As a supporter of the project, I wish to point out some advantages of the scheme and comment on the reasons raised for the call-in where appropriate.

There is a twofold motivation for the primary reason to consider the loan, as given in the original case decision. The Green Investment & Jobs Fund created by B&NES Council was created in order to support and provide funding to such schemes as the proposed Solar Array. Secondly, the recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.

From a financial security point of view, the loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment. BWCE are well established and shown to have successfully raised funds for now income-generating projects in the local area, with the support and involvement of those in these communities. The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development. As a result the project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.

The call in asks specifically why the project has not sought a commercial bank loan – I understand that attempts have been made to try to secure commercial debt but banks will only offer project finance over £2-3 million. As a professional working for a large, global energy consultancy, I am fully aware that project finance for small projects can be difficult to obtain from commercial lenders due to the small size, which is one reason why schemes such as the Green Investment & Jobs Fund are created.

In addition to the revenue generated for the Council as an investor, as a community-owned asset the £500 000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and

ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes. Therefore, the £500k will have a multiplier effect in generating income via the community benefit to further enhance the reach of the Green Investment & Jobs Fund and its aims.

Fundamentally, the loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

I hope that these points will go towards strengthening the case for upholding the decision-in-principle to award the loan and that the Council agrees that the loan to BWCE supports sustainable community enterprise fully within the aims of the Green Investment & Jobs Fund.

Yours faithfully,

Ben Buxton

Democratic Services: Please circulate this message to the Scrutiny Panel

I write in order to express my support for the proposed loan of £500K to BWCE towards the construction costs of the Wilmington Farm Solar Array. The reasons for my support are thus:

- 1) The Core Strategy for B&NES, recently adopted, makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This investment specifically aims to support the Council's policy commitments made in the B&NES Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy 2012-2015 to support the development of renewable energy in the area. This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.
- 2) The call-in request questions both the security and the return on the proposed loan. The money, £500K, will be secured against an insured asset worth £2.6 million. The Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a significant commercial return on their investment, and one that it is hard to equal in current financial conditions.
- 3) The call-in suggests a commercial bank loan as a preferable alternative to the Council loan. Commercial debt has been explored by BWCE, but despite their excellent commercial record and national awards, banks will only offer BWCE finance for projects over £2-3 million.
- 4) The many local investors, including myself and family members, greatly value the community ownership of BWCE and its projects. Central to community ownership and investment is the retention of financial surpluses (already evident from BWCE's earlier projects) in the local community by dividend payments to investors, the Community Fund and - potentially - the good rate of return to the Council. The local

authority loan will help to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development, and that such returns remain in the local community rather than disappearing to national/international bodies.

5) The project offers local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a good return on their money. The first stage of the share offer for Wilmington, to members only, was oversubscribed: clear evidence that the local population which the Council serves is extremely positive about this development.

6) In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500K loan would help create approximately £700K of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies could be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes. It also increases job creation prospects over coming years, as the Community Fund is invested in local works such as retrofitting the existing housing stock.

7) The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

Regards

Kelvin Barham

Dear Sirs

Re: Call in E2692 Policy Loan Wilmington Farm Solar Array

Solar generated electricity is totally clean and 100% efficient. Solid fuel, oil and gas are the usual forms of energy used throughout B&NES for heating properties. Each of these supplies of energy causes pollution which is unhealthy and damages the environment in which we live. That pollution also damages the properties within B&NES. Bath Stone in particular is damaged by this pollution. More over Soil Fuel and oil need transporting to our properties by heavy, polluting vehicles also solid fuel leaves a lot of heavy waste product which goes to Land Fill Sites using yet more heavy polluting vehicles to transport it. B&NES Council are showing leadership in tackling pollution and climate change problems by encouraging and supporting projects such as the Wilmington Farm Solar Array.

The recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.

The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment.

The call in asks why B&WCE does not have a commercial bank loan – Bath and West Community Energy have tried to secure commercial debt but banks will only offer project finance over £2-3 million.

This local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development. As a result the project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.

In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes. These projects will employ people from within B&NES to carry out the installation and maintenance over a 25+year period.

The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

It is in the interest of the entire community living within B&NES for this project to progress without delay. Please do not allow this loan to be withheld.

Yours faithfully

R J Bean

To Resources and Policy Development Scrutiny Panel Re: Call in E2692 Policy Loan – Wilmington Farm Solar Array

I notice that the recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change a very important issue. B&NES record on this matter is not very impressive. This project would increase the renewable electricity capacity of B&NES by one third.

The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment.

The project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.

The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development.

In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. This would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation, creating and maintaining jobs in the green and insulation industries.

I think the members of Scrutiny panel should agree immediately that the cabinet members should proceed as agreed with the loan of £500,000 to Bath & West Community Energy.

MONICA ANDREWS

Dear Sir/Madam

As a Bathonian I feel I have to respond to the recent call in of the 500k loan to Bath and West Community Energy. First, B&NES, quite rightly, has made addressing climate change and encouraging a shift to renewable energy a priority. The Willmington Farm Solar Array would increase B&&NES' renewable energy by a third and the visual impact is slight. Secondly, it makes financial sense – the Council will make an annual return on their investment of 6.5% – i.e. a commercial return. Thirdly, as this is a Community project, it will be built and run as a community owned asset and profits will be invested for the benefit of the community – which is surely a better idea than being paid out as dividends to distant shareholders with no interest in the area. The call in is wrong headed, a political move intended to serve a political interest and not the community. It should be squashed.

Yours faithfully

Michael Middlehurst

understand that this loan is being queried and challenged. As an investor in the BWCE scheme, I can see only advantages to the Council from its involvement, in particular a good rate of return (it would be interesting to know which are the other potential investments that the councillors believe would be better).

I hope, when they read the answers to the questions they have raised, they will see that their worries are groundless.

Best

Margaret

I think it is completely unacceptable that the Council leader and one other Councillor should take loan decisions by themselves. This would not be acceptable in a private business or any other organisation. All spending should be scrutinised by all Councillors and the two individuals concerned should apologise to the Council and the public.

Regards

I am puzzled about a report in The Bath Chronicle that a loan was approved to the above for a solar farm scheme.

If this is true, I am surprised that the Council is prepared to make loans to private companies. I don't believe it is the role of the Council to use taxpayers money in private investments. This company should be looking for private investors or applying to a bank to fund a private enterprise.

I hope that the Council will revoke this decision and that the discussions and decisions surrounding this proposed loan are made transparent to the rate payers of this area.

Terry Bedding

In view of the approaching global energy crisis, it is very important to use modern methods of generating electricity such as the solar panels at Wilmington Farm, so I urge the Council to support this loan.

Mrs E Joyce Hitchcock

Dear Democratic services and Bathavon North Councillors

I am writing to say how surprised and disappointed I was to hear that the loan agreed by B&NES to Bath & West Community Energy (in which organisation I am an investor) has been called in by Conservative councillors. One wonders on what grounds any objection could have been made, in these times of constantly increasing fossil fuel prices.

The context of the development is that the recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change an overarching theme of the council, and this project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.

The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment. The call in asks why the project has no commercial bank loan. As I understand it, the group have tried to secure commercial debt but banks will only offer project finance over £2-3 million. The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development. As a result the project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.

In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan will help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies will be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes.

The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

It is very hard to see who loses out from the loan, as there are very clear benefits for the local community in providing a local source of cheap sustainable electricity for all, and profits retained and reinvested locally. As a constituent I call upon you to rethink your objection.

Best regards

Sarah Warren

Members will be aware that this issue is of interest outside the area, and we have received the following statements:

I have seen, from the Agenda for Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel meeting

Monday, 29th September 2014, that the above proposal has been called in for review,

Whilst I appreciate the need for due diligence, as a member of BWCE, an acknowledged national champion for promoting community renewable energy, I

hope B&NES will be able to support the loan which would allow this community project to be funded and to proceed on an efficient and economic basis.

In considering this item, I would ask B&NES to consider the following:

- The recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project will increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.
- The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment. It is helping ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, rather than a commercial development.
- The project offers local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.
- In addition to helping create a community-owned asset, it is assessed that the loan would create some £700,000 of community benefit over the project life. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social benefit of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES. This community benefit is in stark contrast to commercial schemes.
- The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

In reviewing the proposal, I trust you will give due consideration to the above aspects.

Many tanks and best regards;

Jon Bateman

Dear Scrutiny Panel, B&NES Councillors,

Re Loan Wilmington Farm Solar Array, Call In , E2692 Policy

I am writing to you as I fully support the proposed loan from the Green Investment Fund to Bath and West Community Energy Group for the construction costs of the Wilmington Farm Solar Array.

I understand your concerns in making sure that the new Green Investment Fund is being used in the best possible way. However, I consider from my own personal experience, that the Bath and West Community Energy (BWCE) have a very well proven track record of offering a green, truly local, ethical, efficient, well organised, professional, investment opportunity. I initially made an investment in

BWCE in 2012, and have been so pleased with those returns that in August 2014 I felt confident enough in them to make a further investment.

Another understandable concern of yours is in analysing potential community benefits. In many ways it is so difficult and complex for a council to quantify and justify such community benefits. I think that BWCE is a shining example of the wide dimensions possible through raising awareness of the environmental issues with a group such as theirs. I was not at all surprised that BWCE was honoured by being chosen as the national Community Energy Association of the Year in 2014 because from my own personal experience it was a well and truly deserved win. <http://ukcec.org/> UK Community Energy Awards. One strong piece of evidence of community benefit is the photograph of smiling children in front of their school roof at Oldfield Infants School. The photo is a heart warming, optimistic advertisement for the future and for the B&NES area generally.

I'm not sure if B&NES councillors are aware of the excellent influence this pioneering renewables group have had in other areas nearby upon those councillors and planning officers. This unselfish aspect is also difficult to quantify but is an aspect you should rightly be very proud of as a council. All of the BWCE team has been so willing for several years to share their expertise and experiences with a wider community. In 2012 a representative, Pete Capener, came one evening to talk to the members of Environment Forum section of South Gloucestershire Council about renewable energy. Pete and the others are very inspirational and I am a member of our own Westerleigh Parish local group which is at the very early stages of trying to follow his example. Whenever possible I have been to BWCE members meetings and AGMs, and have always been impressed with their professionalism allied to enthusiasm and dedication. One year the BWCE speaker was Jonathon Porritt, the founder of Forum for the Future <http://forumforthefuture.org/> who alerted us all to the latest developments of national and international picture of potential disastrous climate change.

Yours sincerely,

Stella Beecher

Dear Democratic Services Scrutiny Panel,

As a member of BWCE I am writing to support this project and ask BANES to agree the loan on all the grounds given below.

1) The recently adopted Core Strategy for B&NES makes addressing climate change an overarching theme. This project would increase by a third B&NES's renewable electricity capacity.

2) The loan of £500,000 will be secured against an asset worth £2.6 million and the Council will receive an annual interest of 6.5%, a commercial return on their investment.

3) The call in asks why we don't have a commercial bank loan – we have tried to secure commercial debt but banks will only offer project finance over £2-3 million.

4) The local authority loan is helping to ensure that the project is built as a community owned asset, instead of a commercial development.

5) As a result the project will be able to offer local people the opportunity to invest in local energy generation and get a reasonable return on their money.

6) In addition, as a community-owned asset the £500,000 loan would help create approximately £700,000 of community benefit over the 25 year life of the project. These monies would be spent on low carbon and fuel poverty projects, focussing on the area surrounding the installation. This would increase substantially the social impact of the loan and ensure a substantial element of the project income is retained within B&NES, in stark contrast to commercial schemes.

7) The loan will increase the chances of a successful community owned project. This in turn will also make a significant step in strengthening BWCE, a local community enterprise, whilst helping to safeguard the equivalent of four full time posts within BWCE as a result.

I believe that the council should be proactive and should make projects of this kind a spending priority.

yours sincerely,

Katherine Holden (Dr)