

**PARISH LIAISON MEETING**

**Minutes of the Meeting held**

Wednesday, 18th October, 2023, 6.30 pm

**In attendance:**

Cllr Karen Walker – Vice-Chair of B&NES Council (Chair)  
Cllr Gill Auld – Peasedown Parish Council  
Cllr Sue Batchelor – Dunkerton and Tunley Parish Council  
Cllr Paul Beazley-Long – South Stoke Parish Council  
Cllr Rupert Bevan – Radstock Parish Council  
Mandy Bishop – Chief Operating Officer, B&NES  
Cllr Pam Carver - East Harptree Parish Council  
Jackie Clayton – Head of Green Transformation, B&NES  
Lucy Cafferky – Service Designer, B&NES  
Jonathan Cordier – Service Design Team Leader, B&NES  
Geoff Davis – Clerk to South Stoke Parish Council and Monkton Combe Parish Council  
Dave Dixon – Community Engagement Manager, B&NES  
Sara Dixon – Locality Manager, B&NES  
Cllr Dawn Drury – Clerk of Keynsham Town Council and Chair of Compton Dando Parish Council  
Sue Dyer – Clerk of Whitchurch Village Council  
Cllr Lynne Easton – Chew Magna Parish Council  
Cllr Brian Edwards – Camerton Parish Council  
Jean Fossaceco – Clerk of Shoscombe Parish Council  
Cllr Fiona Gourley – B&NES Councillor, Bathavon South  
Mark Hayward – Community Engagement Officer  
Cllr Liz Kingston – Stowey Sutton Parish Council  
Richard Maccabee – Clerk of Batheaston Parish Council and ALCA Chair  
Cllr Matt McCabe – B&NES Councillor, Bathavon South  
Cllr Hal MacFie – Chair of Keynsham Town Council and B&NES Councillor (Keynsham East)  
Angus Rankine – Forest of Avon Trust  
Karen Renshaw – Principal Ecologist, B&NES  
Alex Rowbotham – Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Lead, B&NES  
Cllr Sam Ross – Farmborough Town Council and B&NES Councillor, Clutton and Farmborough  
Bob Scowen – West of England Combined Authority (WECA)  
Di Sheppard – Senior Landscape Architect, B&NES  
Phil Wright – West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

**8 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Vice-Chair of Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from:

## **Parish and Town Councils:**

Helen Jenkins (Clerk) – Paulton Parish Council  
Robert Lane (Councillor) – High Littleton Parish Council  
Katie Mason (Clerk) – Midsomer Norton Town Council  
Robin Moss (Clerk) – Farrington Gurney Parish Council  
Susan Smith (Clerk) – Compton Dando Parish Council  
Lottie Smith-Collins (Clerk) – Saltford Parish Council  
Melissa Whiting (Councillor) – High Littleton Parish Council

## **B&NES:**

Cllr Alison Born  
Cllr Anna Box  
Cllr Kevin Guy  
Cllr Manda Rigby  
Cllr Dine Romero  
Cllr Sarah Moore  
Cllr Sarah Warren  
Cllr David Wood  
Will Godfrey – Chief Executive

## **9 UPDATES FROM THE COUNCIL**

Mandy Bishop, Chief Operating Officer gave an update as follows:

### Parish Information Pack

1. The Parish information pack was presented at the last Parish Liaison meeting. As a result of the meeting the pack had been updated to include further queries that parishes raised.
2. This has now been sent to all parish councils as an attachment to the notes of the previous meeting.
3. A further query was raised about Planning notifications not being received when a decision is made. This is being followed up and will be added to the information pack.
4. The pack would be reviewed on a regular basis.

### Update on Emergency Planning Event

5. A successful emergency planning event was held on the 28th October. A number of Parish/Town Councils attended the session and there was a presentation from Chew Valley Flood Wardens regarding their work and how they engaged with the Council and other emergency services.

### Budget Consultation

6. Parish/Town Councils were advised that this would be happening at the end of November/beginning of December.

### WECA and BANES roles and responsibilities:

7. Parish/Town Councils had asked for clarity about a number of issues around transport, including the role and responsibilities of WECA and B&NES.
8. In January 2020 B&NES transferred some responsibilities to WECA in relation to transport. B&NES retained highways functions.
9. Further details would be sent out to Parish/Town Councils after the meeting.

## **10 FIX MY STREET DEMONSTRATION**

Lucy Cafferky and Jonathan Cordier gave a presentation on recent improvements made to “Fix my Street”, the B&NES reporting tool for highway and environment issues following feedback from users including Parish/Town Council representatives.

- The webpages had been developed to explain how the Council dealt with reported incidents.
- Users could now be signposted elsewhere where appropriate.
- The layout followed gov.uk standards to give the website a clear look and feel.
- Emergency notices were included which could head off reports. Scheduled issues such as road closures were also included.
- Inspectors updated as they responded to reports, and this would trigger a response to the public. A lot of time had been spent with Inspectors to improve this function.
- The underlying information pages had been changed.
- Improvements had been made to the maps and the Curo map layers had been updated. This helped users identify if their query was the responsibility of the Council or Curo.
- Users were able to drop a pin on an exact location also use “what3words”.
- An additional option had been included of using a mobile phone number as well as email address.
- The mobile phone app had been updated and allowed the user to choose a radius or a ward.
- An internal users’ group had been set up led by the internal systems team and including service representatives who use Fix my Street. There was the potential for Parish/Town Councils to link up with this group and details would be confirmed in due course.

In response to questions raised by Parish/Town Council representatives, it was confirmed:

1. The data clean up resulted in a half of reports (1500) being removed.
2. There was an overview by senior leaders of the reports raised.
3. If the land in question was not owned by the Council, the service support teams were getting better at signposting users, although this did depend on identifying who owned the land. There had been issues around Somerdale and who was responsible for maintenance such as blocked gullies.
4. In relation to identifying geographical boundaries around wards, the team was looking into developing this to identify parish areas.
5. The address of the website would be included with the notes of the meeting - <https://fix.bathnes.gov.uk/about/web-app>

## **11 WORLD CAFÉ SESSION ON NATURE RECOVERY; CLIMATE EMERGENCY;**

## TREES AND RELATED FUNDING

A 'World Café' style session was held to give Parish/Town Councils the opportunity to meet officers. The topics chosen were issues that ALCA and Parish representatives requested.

### **Group 1 – Nature Plans, Parks/Bee Bold Pollinator Project, and Rural UKSPF Funding**

Officers – Karen Renshaw, Stuart Gardener, Paul Pearce, Alex Rowbotham and Jackie Clayton (BANES Council)

**Nature Action Plans** - Karen Renshaw advised that the Council was committed to supporting Parish and Town Councils to deliver Nature Action Plans as part of the Ecological Emergency Action Plan.

She asked representatives to contact her if their Parish/Town Council was interested.

#### Questions and Comments

*What does a plan include?* The plan would identify areas that Parish and Town Councils would want to improve or projects they wanted to develop to support wildlife. When a funding opportunity became available, schemes would already be identified within the plan.

Farmborough Parish Council and Peasedown Parish Council would be interested.

**Rural England Prosperity Fund** - Jackie Clayton/Alex Rowbotham reported that West of England Combined Authority (WECA) funding would soon be available to support community projects in rural areas such as the retrofitting of village halls or electric vehicle charging on community sites. They asked representatives to consider whether there were any projects in their area which could benefit from the funding and confirmed that this would only be available to rural areas.

#### Questions and Comments:

*Does the funding have to be used for infrastructure?* Yes, it is a capital grant. It would require planning permission to be in place (if required) and a delivery partner.

*Could the funding be used to repair steps/handrails in a local nature reserve?* No, it can't be used for maintenance. It could be used for green infrastructure and an EV charging bid could be part of it. There were other funding opportunities such as the WECA Green Recovery Fund.

*Who would a delivery partner be?* This is whoever can deliver project the project. This could be a commercial partner, a Trust or a Parish/Town council.

*What are the timescales?* There would be a six-week window to apply for the funding between January and February 2024 and the money would need to be spent by end of March 2025.

*What value bid would be considered?* The maximum bid value was £40,000 and minimum bid value was £10,000. B&NES was anticipating that the fund would support approximately 10 projects across the area with an average value of £20k-25k.

*Had any projects been identified yet?* No. Groups were being asked to identify potential projects as it would be useful to have a project pipeline for when funding became available.

**Bee Bold Scheme Pollinator Project** – Paul Pearce outlined what the Council's Parks Team had been doing to address the ecological emergency such as changing planting and reducing the number of times per year that grass areas (not used for ball games/picnics) were mowed. He confirmed that funding from WECA had been used to communicate the ecological benefits of longer grass, including signage, and that the Council was looking to work with communities to design spaces for pollinators which were also good for people e.g., wildflower meadows rather than longer grass. There had been 6 pilot projects and these sites would be used to demonstrate how other areas could be developed as neighbourhood nature areas. He asked Parish/Town Council representatives to consider if they could identify potential areas for similar improvements.

#### Questions and Comments:

*Shoscombe had participated in no mow May and had received some criticisms from local residents, especially in relation to ticks/dog faeces.*

*Communication was helpful in terms of explaining why grass isn't being cut. The signage was useful, in particular the illustrations of pollinators.*

*RHS could also support Parish Councils with planting.*

*How could communities develop bee pollinator sites?* People could adopt the areas owned by B&NES by way of a simple agreement. The Council could support Parish Councils to do this, and more information could be found on the Council's website under "neighbourhood nature areas". There was also the Nextdoor Nature Initiative supported by Avon Wildlife Trust.

## **Group 2 - Tree/Woodland Planting and Forest of Avon Funding**

Officers: Di Sheppard (BANES Council) and Angus Rankine (Forest of Avon)  
A demonstration was given on the new Woodland Opportunity Digital mapping website which has been created and is hosted on the council website. The tool enables the Council to work with communities to achieve right woodland in the right places. The Council aims to avoid planting woodland on land with specific constraints such as important habitats, heritage sites, high grade agricultural land, as well complementing the character of the rural landscapes. This is the first example available across the country to combine specific constraints, with the sensitivity of our rural landscapes to planting woodlands of different sizes.

The maps can be viewed via this url:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/afafb2517d16499b8efd534d52bed4b8>

The woodland maps have been created in different scales to include:-

- Small woodland ≤ 5Ha
- Small to Medium Woodland 5-15Ha
- Medium Woodland 15-30Ha
- Large Woodland >30ha

Parishes can use the tool to help find sites for woodland planting. The maps also include a layer that identifies land constraints. If parishes identify any sites, please contact the Forest of Avon Trust – Lewis Chisholm [lewis.chisholm@forestofavontrust.org](mailto:lewis.chisholm@forestofavontrust.org) or Angus Rankine [angus.rankine@forestofavontrust.org](mailto:angus.rankine@forestofavontrust.org).

The team are focussing on the following parishes to consider larger woodland and need the help from parishes to identify farmers and landowners who might be interested. The areas include: Corston, Newton St Loe, Englishcombe, Priston, Marksbury (plateau areas), Keynsham (small south eastern area), Camerton (plateau areas), High Littleton (plateau areas, Salford (small southern area), Farmborough, Temple Cloud with Cameley, Hinton Blewett (Plateau areas), Clutton (plateau areas), Timsbury (plateau areas)

**Forest of Avon funding opportunities** – Angus Rankine email, [treesforclimate@forestofavontrust.org](mailto:treesforclimate@forestofavontrust.org). Angus gave an overview of the Trees for Climate (TFC) fund through DEFRA for community and landowner tree planting across urban and rural areas in the West of England. The fund can cover up to 100% of costs, including 15 years of establishment and maintenance payments. There is a team of experts who work with landowners to ensure that the right trees and right place is found.

### **Group 3 - WestLink**

Officers: Phil Wright (WECA) and Bob Scowen (WECA)

The wide radius of Westlink hinders bus availability and causes delays for passengers. With only an average of 30 buses, the service is not effective. A maximum ride time of 20 minutes would greatly improve the service. While there were initial difficulties due to the rushed launch, the service has potential. The use of non-local drivers is a common issue nationwide. The drivers recruited for Westlink buses must have a Public Service Vehicle Licence. They work 4 or 5 days a week, with 12-hour shifts. Block bookings are not allowed. The buses used for Westlink come from a depot in Bedminster Bristol, which is not ideal for their daily operations.

### **Parish Feedback**

Users have reported buses diverting off the Keynsham to Royal United Hospital route, causing them to be late or miss appointments. As a result, they have switched to using dial a ride instead.

Users must be within the desired travel zone in order to book.

We kindly request the reinstatement of the 757-weekly bus, which served the communities of Combe Hay, Wellow, and Shoscombe, providing transportation to Tesco in Midsomer Norton.

Camerton residents have been facing challenges with the return journey from the Odd Down Park and Ride, as the service is either unavailable or subject to long delays. This has prompted users to explore alternative options.

In the case of Radstock, a more flexible service would greatly benefit residents, particularly those who struggle with the hilly terrain that is not always compatible with the existing Westlink service.

It is important to publicise any improvements made to the Westlink service to ensure that residents are aware of the changes.

Consider the use of 8-seater vehicles, similar to those used in Leicester and Milton Keynes, could potentially address any driver-related issues.

The Newbridge Park and Ride currently lacks a commercial service to the Royal United Hospital. It is suggested that Westlink could operate this route.

To effectively utilise Park and Rides as hubs for Westlink, reliable bus availability is crucial.

The Chew Valley has seen success with Westlink connecting different villages, but people need assurance of consistent bus service through scheduled timetables.

Unfortunately, Dunkerton and Tunley have no scheduled bus services, and Westlink's reliability has been a concern for users trying to access at the Odd Down Park and Ride.

Peasedown St John benefits from 4 routes and a satisfactory service. The addition of better bus shelters and real time information would be well received.

Batheaston lacks awareness of the availability of Westlink. The reduction in scheduled bus services has resulted in poor service quality.

Villages like Corston, which are underserved, have the potential to greatly benefit from a service like Westlink. However, the current implementation is failing our residents and not effectively reducing car usage.

### **Bus Service Information**

The national shortage of bus drivers is causing difficulties in providing various services, as seen in the recent changes in Manchester where 350 vacancies still need to be filled.

Rural bus services require high levels of public subsidy. It was recently quoted that running 4 buses over a year would cost £1.1 million.

**12 CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS**

The Vice-Chair thanked everyone for attending.

**13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 28 February 2024 at 6.30pm *(This date was subsequently changed to Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 6.30pm to facilitate the attendance of police colleagues for a discussion on community safety)*

Wednesday 19 June 2024 at 6.30pm

Wednesday 18 September 2024 at 6.30pm

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**