

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Thursday 22nd January 2026

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Alex Beaumont, Anna Box, Duncan Hounsell, Saskia Heijltjes, Karen Walker, Bharat Pankhania (in place of John Leach) and Dr Eleanor Jackson

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Hal MacFie

180 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

181 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

182 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Leach gave his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Pankhania.

Councillor Jackson attended the meeting as the Labour member (current vacancy).

Councillor MacFie gave his apologies.

183 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jackson declared she is a director of the Radstock Cooperative Society, which has a development with some relationship to Aequus. She confirmed this would not influence her contributions. The Chair confirmed she may speak on Aequus-related items.

184 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

185 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

Councillor Born read a statement from Professor Rory Shaw regarding Air Pollution (statement attached to the minutes).

Councillor Warren read a statement from Dr Lucy Anderson regarding Air Pollution (statement attached to the minutes).

Lily Hughes made a statement regarding 'Wood Burning and Air Pollution' (statement attached to the minutes).

Councillor Walker asked how B&NES could educate residents. Lily Hughes replied that the council should use all available channels — including social media and local media — to inform residents, as many people are unaware of the health risks.

Councillor Jackson asked whether a supplementary planning document banning bonfires would help. Lily referenced Birmingham's example but could not confirm applicability.

The Chair thanked Lily Hughes for attending.

186 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

187 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Bath and North East Somerset, gave an update which covered the following:

Climate & Nature Strategy - Proposed Timeline

- 26 March: Panel meeting dedicated to policy development for the updated Climate & Nature Strategy.
- 9 July: Focus on climate resilience and adaptation, following risk assessment.
- 24 September: Draft strategy and updated action plan presented to the Panel ahead of Cabinet and Council in November.

(No separate annual progress report this year; progress will be incorporated into the strategy discussion).

Additional Updates

- Successful bid for EV (Electric Vehicle) charging infrastructure at Keynsham Recycling Hub.
- Funding secured with Wessex Water and Southwest Water for catchment-based nature recovery work. Recruitment underway for three new staff to support projects.

Bath Riverline:

- Phase 1A substantially complete.

- Phase 1B construction begins February, completion expected in summer.
- Further funding sought for Windsor Bridge area.

Panel member questions:

Councillor Hounsell asked for an update on the Better Moorings Project. The Cabinet Member agreed to follow this up.

The Chair asked how the Climate & Nature Strategy timeline would fit with the Local Plan timeline. It was suggested that options be looked at regarding dates/ extending meetings/additional meeting.

188 AEQUUS BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Matt McCabe, Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, introduced the item. There was a presentation which covered the following:

- Aequus Group Business Plan Refresh
- Business Plan Opportunities and Challenges
- Aequus Social Value Outcomes
- Aequus Governance Update
- Updated Financial Forecast and Pipeline
- Summary of Key Pipeline Changes
- Updated Pipeline Analysis
- Updated Pipeline Analysis – Key Dependencies
- Updated Financial Overview – Revenue Forecast 2025/26 to 2029/30
- Updated Financial Overview – Profit Forecast 2025/26 to 2029/30
- Shareholder Returns
- Updated Key Risks

Panel members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Beaumont asked how Aequus would engage communities in future developments. The Aequus representative responded that engagement would take place through public sector partner discussions, engagement with landowners and new community engagement partners.

Councillor Heijltjes asked whether Bath Quays would include affordable housing and if so, how many of the 96 units would be affordable/social housing. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the LLP structure allows subsidy to deliver policy-compliant affordable housing. He stated that he could not say now exactly how much affordable housing will be delivered.

Councillor Pankhania asked whether new homes would include solar generation and battery storage. The Aequus representative explained that EPCA homes already include air-source heat pumps, MVHR, triple glazing, and solar PV. Battery storage is under review.

Councillor Heijltjes asked if money from revenue returns would go to frontline services. The Aequus representative explained that it was based on the delivery timeline, some of which is out of our control. The Action Plan has helped. The Cabinet Member added that it can be more complex when dealing with other Councils.

Councillor Jackson stated that she had voted against the North Quays project as there was no social housing planned. She asked why there were no Aequus projects in North East Somerset. The Aequus representative explained that early-stage discussions were underway but details were commercially confidential.

Councillor Hounsell asked whether financial projections could be shown in today's money. Officers confirmed that net present value modelling could be provided.

The Chair thanked the officers and Cabinet Member.

189 BUDGET DRAFT PROPOSALS

Councillor Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the item. He stated that he was happy to hear from the Panel regarding the proposals and where they think the risks might sit.

Panel members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Hounsell asked whether closing recycling centres would increase cross-district travel. The Cabinet Member stated that this was under consideration and no final decision had been made. He stated that we are well provided for in terms of recycling centres.

Councillor Wait asked whether Keynsham would ever be the only site open. The Cabinet Member confirmed it would not.

Councillor Walker asked if recycling vehicles would be able to take more items. The Cabinet Member explained that kerbside recycling vehicles already take a range of items including small electrical items.

Councillor Heijltjes asked whether changes to waste rounds would reduce resilience. The Cabinet Member confirmed that there would be no reduction in service.

Councillor Walker asked about the removal of one off growth funding – the officer explained that this referred to enforcement cameras which are in place; a time limited piece of work regarding the car club and extra support for supported bus routes. Also School Streets go live after Easter so the funding for the set up is no longer needed.

Councillor Wait asked about the number of School Streets, the officer confirmed that Lime Gardens/Charmouth Road is included.

Councillor Heijltjes asked whether enforcement officers could use e-bikes.

Officers explained that current ANPR technology is not compatible with e-bike deployment.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how Park & Ride charges would be enforced. The officer said improved ticketing and monitoring systems were being explored.

Councillor Jackson stated that there is an ambition to have a hospital flyer from Oddown to the RUH, the bus service (number 4) is extremely erratic. She asked if the budget provides for more information to be publicised about bus services which may encourage more people to use them. She stated that buses used to get fined for cancelling services. It was explained that many bus services are run by WECA and that advertising services is being discussed at the next WECA meeting.

Councillor Jackson asked if there had been any investigation into the effect of parking charges in North East Somerset on small businesses. The officer stated that it is nationally recognised that well managed parking facilities encourage turn over. There has been no dedicated work on the impact on small businesses, but we will continue to monitor.

Councillor Walker asked if there is a quicker system for reporting parking enforcement issues. The officer explained that the direct email should be timely. It is then put on a patrol list and the area will be visited.

Councillor Heijltjes asked about the CAZ (Clean Air Zone) deficit. The officer explained that the number of contravening vehicles is declining. The Cabinet Member confirmed that this will become less profitable as it becomes more successful.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers.

190 AIR POLLUTION AND HEALTH: EVIDENCE AND TARGETS

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Bath and North East Somerset, introduced the policy and development item. She read a statement from the Director of Public Health. There was a presentation which covered the following:

- Pollutants in BANES
- Health Impacts
- Particulate Matter and Health Impacts
- Vulnerable Community Members
- Air Quality Standards and Targets
- Examples of LA's with Local Targets
- NO₂ Forecasting
- Particulate Matter Forecasting across B&NES
- Suggested Local Annual Targets and Supporting Strategy

Panel members had the following discussion:

Councillor Pankhania asked whether new sources of PM2.5 were being monitored. He stated that it may be smarter to look at new engineering processes to see if they generate eg. Cosmetics. The officer explained that the strategy would include source-apportionment and that monitoring was needed to identify hot spots.

Councillor Hounsell asked whether modelling included new housing growth. The officer explained that modelling does not consider new local interventions but does consider traffic changes.

Councillor Hounsell asked if there is a policy regarding wood burning stoves in terms of people using treated wood. The Cabinet Member stated that all suggestions can be incorporated into the policy and in the meantime, the Environment Protection Team can investigate.

Councillor Wait asked whether wood-burning impacts on individual homes could be monitored. The officer explained that particulate matter is harder to monitor and the equipment is more complex. She confirmed that mobile PM monitors exist and limited monitoring is possible.

Councillor Box noted monitoring in Bath and suggested that it would be great to widen this out. She underlined the importance of enforcement. She also stated a nervousness of hot spots being identified which could cause traffic diversions. She explained her job with patients with COPD (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and asked that the link to poverty be considered as a theme. Officers agreed.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that she supports setting local targets. She asked if 2030 timing is realistic. She also asked whether school streets could be monitored before and after implementation. The officer stated that targets are realistic, WHO guidelines are extremely ambitious.

Councillor Jackson asked if farm vehicles are monitored. Officers explained that they are not specifically monitored. It was explained that monitoring has been done in Westfield and if they have been taken away it will be due to levels being lower.

Councillor Walker asked if people could be supported if they wish to swap from solid fuel use. She also asked whether bonfire restrictions could be enforced. Officers confirmed they can be enforced through statutory nuisance powers, alongside public education. The Cabinet Member stated that there are initiatives for those on low incomes (Warm Homes).

Councillor Hounsell stressed the importance of education and communication as changes can take a long time (eg. Recycling).

Councillor Box stated that a strategy is a good idea and that there is a crossover with the NHS.

The Panel unanimously agreed to recommend to the Cabinet Member that:

- the Council should identify and adopt local targets for nitrogen dioxide and particulate pollution.

- the Council should prepare a Clean Air Strategy that sets out what the local target should be, and what regulatory powers there are to help protect people's lives.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers.

191 PANEL WORKPLAN

Panel members noted the workplan and that the items and meeting dates (re. Climate item and Local Plan item) would be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 12.13 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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Professor Rory Shaw – statement to CES Panel

Reducing Air Pollution in Bath

The problem with air pollution is that it is invisible and everywhere. Pollution kills and disables us humans by causing the major killing diseases of heart attacks, stroke, lung cancer, chronic bronchitis, and asthma. Pollution can kill quickly. There are more stroke and heart attack fatalities within hours of a pollution spike. Pollution also leads to progressive accelerated disability, with cost to the patient and NHS. In children there is progressive life-long disadvantage due to recurrent infection and impaired lung growth as well as time off school.

There are two aspects to the science. The more visible the smoke and the more you can smell it, the greater the number of partially combusted particles which in turn have been rendered toxic by heating. Good examples of the most dangerous smoke are bonfire smoke, wood and coal smoke. The second very dangerous type is the smoke containing microscopic toxic soot particles (PM10s and PM2.5s) which penetrate deep into the lungs past the body's normal defense systems. These are released by diesel engines.

Bath has a particular problem. The steep valleys restrict pollution dispersal. We have canal boats which traditionally burn solid fuel. We have not enacted bonfire restrictions in built up areas. Many homes use wood burning stoves. There are also still many diesel vehicles on our roads.

On the plus side, Bath people are sensible, proud of their City and interested in their environment. The first step has to be a well thought through public education campaign, combined with reminders about adhering to current legislation (eg for the barge owners). In addition, I suggest small but high-profile steps. Make public announcements about rigorously enforcing the Highways Act 1980, by issuing Abatement notices to any householder whose bonfire smoke spreads outside the curtilage of their garden. Randomly inspect Barges emitting yellow smoke. These will upset very few people, yet make a small but significant difference to pollution and importantly show that the Council has started to take action.

I would focus my education campaign around mothers and children. Damaging children's health for life seems a cruel thing to do just because we can't be bothered to avoid causing air pollution.

Professor Rory Shaw, Retired Consultant Chest Physician

Useful resources:

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health website

Hammersmith and Fulham Council re danger from wood burning

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Air pollution in BaNES is a huge concern and while tackling vehicle emissions is essential, the progress made will simply not be enough if the council continues to ignore the problem of domestic burning.

In 2024, government data showed that wood burning (22%) has overtaken traffic (18%) as the main source of particulate pollution across the UK, and policies such as Bath's Clean Air Zone, aimed at reducing vehicle emissions, have no impact on wood burning. The data also showed that PM2.5 emissions from home burning went up by 56% in the decade leading up to 2022, as wood-burners rose in popularity, in part driven by the mistaken belief that they're more eco-friendly than other heating methods. Burning wood is not carbon neutral and actually releases more carbon dioxide than coal or gas. In the majority of cases, domestic burning is unnecessary, more expensive than gas central heating and done purely for aesthetic reasons.

According to the Chief Medical Officer's 2022 Air Pollution report“ solid fuels are by far the most polluting method of domestic heating”. It found that a DEFRA approved Ecodesign stove gives off 450 times more PM2.5 pollution than a gas boiler and has an estimated emission rate of six times the mass of PM2.5 than a diesel HGV. A 2025 study found that multifuel Ecodesign stoves emit more ultrafine particles than a standard Ecodesign stove, and that wood briquettes and smokeless coal actually *increased* ultrafine particle exposure by 1.7 and 1.5 times, respectively, compared to seasoned wood, showing that simply switching to smokeless fuel does not make burning safer.

PM2.5 is associated with many conditions, including decreased lung development, asthma, allergies, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder), pulmonary fibrosis and an hugely increased risk of lung and breast cancer. A 2023 study showed that people who used their wood burner on more than 30 days a year had a 68% increased lung cancer risk compared with people who did not burn wood. Air pollution from burning in UK homes contributes to nearly 2,500 premature deaths and costs the NHS millions of pounds a year.

Despite blocking up our doors and windows, smoke from neighbours' chimneys inevitably comes into our house. Why should our children have to breathe this dangerous air? The complaint system is not fit for purpose.

Between 2024 and 2025, 103 complaints about wood burners were made in BaNES which resulted in just 6 warning letters, 2 inspections and 0 fines.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has called for a phase-out of domestic wood burning in urban areas and as a local authority, you have a huge responsibility here. I urge you to follow other councils' (Camden Council, Oxford City Council and Lambeth Council) lead and use all your available channels (social and print media) to inform and discourage domestic burning unless it is the only source of heat. Many people are simply not aware of the realities and residents need to be advised that it leads to potentially serious health problems for themselves and their neighbours.

The scientific evidence is conclusive. Domestic burning is a growing, yet avoidable problem, and action is urgently needed.

Thank you.

Air pollution remains one of the most significant environmental determinants of ill health in the UK. The Royal College of Physicians estimates that air pollution contributes to around 40,000 deaths each year in the UK. The associated health harms, which include cardiovascular disease, respiratory illness, cancer and dementia, are estimated to cost the UK economy £50 billion per year and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, further exacerbating health inequalities.

These health harms are not confined to time periods or locations that breach legal limits. Growing evidence shows these adverse health effects can occur at concentrations well below current UK legal thresholds. This is reflected in the World Health Organization's 2021 Air Quality Guidelines, which set substantially lower recommended levels for NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}. In the UK, this has recently prompted an inquiry by the Environmental Audit Committee which will consider whether existing targets are sufficiently aligned with health protection.

Local authorities are increasingly developing Clean Air Strategies to support strategic and consistent area-wide approaches to managing air quality. Across England there is growing precedent for using such strategies to set a clear health-led direction of travel. Several authorities have chosen to adopt locally ambitious targets that go beyond national minimum requirements, recognising the benefits of doing so for population health. For example, Brighton & Hove City Council's Air Quality Action Plan (approved in 2022) aims to reach an annual mean of 30 µg/m³ outdoor NO₂, across all areas of the city by 2027 which is 25% lower than the UK legal requirement of 40 µg/m³. Having set a 30 µg/m³ outdoor NO₂ limit in its 2021-2025 Air Quality Action Plan, Oxford City Council has now gone one step further, aligning with emerging EU standards and setting a 20 µg/m³ NO₂ target by 2030 in its latest plan.

These examples demonstrate that locally defined Clean Air Strategies and targets can play a key role in aligning action with health evidence, rather than focusing solely on minimum legal compliance. In developing a Clean Air Strategy with ambitious air quality targets, BANES Council would be joining a progressive set of councils signalling their dedication to protecting population health and reducing health inequalities, particularly for the most vulnerable.

Dr Lucy Anderson

UKRI Regional Clean Air Champion, Southwest England

Research Fellow, Environment & Public Health, University of Bristol

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