

PARISH LIAISON MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday 16th July 2025, 6.30 pm

Cllr Liz Hardman – Chair of B&NES Council (Chair)
Cllr Anna Box – B&NES Councillor (Chew Valley)
Cllr Bruce Clarke – Priston Parish Council
George Clutton – Radstock Town Council (Clerk)
Cllr Chris Dando – Radstock Town Council and B&NES Councillor (Radstock)
John Darvill – East Harptree Parish Council
Geoff Davis – Clerk to South Stoke Parish Council and Monkton Combe Parish Council
Robert Davies – Priston Parish Council
David Duckett – Hinton Blewitt Parish Council
Jean Fossaceco – Clerk of Shoscombe Parish Council
Cllr Fiona Gourley – B&NES Council (Bathavon South)
Sue Grimes – Publow with Pensford Parish Council
Cllr Phil Harding – Saltford Parish Council
Cllr Duncan Hounsell – B&NES Councillor (Saltford)
Cllr Matt McCabe – B&NES Councillor (Bathavon South)
Cllr Simon McCombe – B&NES Councillor (Mendip)
Richard Maccabee - Chair of B&NES Avon Local Councils Association (ALCA)
Kathryn Manchee - Dunkerton and Tunley Parish Council
Cllr Ruth Malloy – B&NES Councillor (Weston)
Natasha Morgan – Chew Magna Parish Council
Cllr Josie Pownall – Timsbury Parish Council
Cllr Sam Ross – Farmborough Town Council and B&NES Councillor (Clutton and Farmborough)
Lottie Smith-Collins – Clerk of Saltford Parish Council
Cllr Andy Wait – Keynsham Town Council and B&NES Councillor (Keynsham East)
Andy Walker - South Stoke Parish Council and Monkton Combe Parish Council
Mike Wareham – Monkton Combe Parish Council
Des Wighton - Monkton Combe Parish Council

B&NES Officers:

Mandy Bishop – Chief Operating Officer
Ellie Bryant – Project Manager, Community Energy Network
Jackie Clayton - Head of Sustainable Energy
Richard Daone - Deputy Head of Planning Policy
Dave Dixon – Community Engagement Manager
Sara Dixon – Locality Manager
George Edwards – Senior Engineer, Transport Policy
Cleo Newcombe-Jones - Regeneration Team Manager
Lyndsay Margerison - Transport Policy Manager
Alison Wells – Community Engagement Officer (B&NES)

1 WELCOME

The Chair of Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 UPDATES FROM THE COUNCIL

Mandy Bishop, Chief Operating Officer, B&NES Council gave the following update:

1. There had been a full inspection of Children's Services. The report would be available on 28 July.
2. A corporate peer challenge review organised by the Local Government Association had recently taken place. There had been positive feedback about the work of the Council with partners and communities and a full report would be available in September.
3. Following the election for the WECA mayor Helen Godwin in May, there was a re-set in relations with the constituent authorities and the leader of B&NES, Cllr Kevin Guy, had been appointed as Deputy Mayor.
4. The Council would be having some senior leadership changes:
 - a. Will Godfrey would be retiring as Chief Executive at the end of January.
 - b. A new Director of Children's Services, Jean Kelly, had been appointed.
 - c. Mandy Bishop had been appointed as Chief Executive of North Somerset Council.
5. English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill – this bill aimed to move decision making closer to residents and included neighbourhood governance suggestions.

Alison Wells, Community Engagement Officer gave a brief update on the recent Parish Charter and Parish Liaison Surveys:

1. A survey had been sent to Parish Councils in relation to the redrafted Parish Charter. 7 comments had been received, and an updated document would be circulated.
2. Parish Councils had been consulted about their views on the location of Parish Liaison meeting. 10 responses had been received, 7 favoured Keynsham as a location, 4 for all meetings and 3 for a mixture of in person and online meeting. There was a vote by those present, and the majority favoured all meetings being in person.

Ellie Bryant, Project Manager for the BANES Community Energy Network, gave an update on the Energy in Your Community Project. A copy of the slides would be circulated after the meeting.

Richard Daone, Deputy Head of Planning Policy, gave an update on Local Plan – pre-options engagement. A copy of the slides would be circulated after the meeting.

3 WORLD CAFE SESSION - SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

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 agreed on:

Topic 1 – Local Plan

Name	Role
George Blanchard	Senior Planning Officer
Richard Daone	Deputy Head of Planning Policy
Cleo Newcombe-Jones	Regeneration Team Manager

The Parish Councils were asked to identify aspirations and challenges.

Table 1

1. There is pressure to build extra homes but if agricultural land is used, how do you feed people?

Response - one way would be to avoid building on the best agricultural land to minimise impact. Need to balance competing priorities.

2. If you just to retain the best agricultural land, will farming become more intensive – using chemicals etc? My solution is that you shouldn't just look at best land for growing food.

Response – the Local Plan does not have much control over agriculture land.

3. Buildings can be designed to a greater density in urban areas rather than rural areas. This may be a solution to housing demand.

4. There are restrictions to developments in Bath due to world heritage site status.

5. There is a lot of student accommodation in Bath. Does this count towards housing figures?

Response – yes, it did count in terms of overall figures but not on a one-to-one ratio.

6. Housing should be on brownfield sites in sustainable locations.

Response - agreed, but there is also a shortage of housing in villages.

7. Housing was needed in villages but there needed to be limits to development in rural areas and housing needed to be affordable/social housing. There was a demand for smaller units for younger people/older people.

8. There also needed to be employment opportunities in rural areas.

9. The emphasis is on building new houses, but we should be making better use of existing stock.

10. Developments should include green spaces and infrastructure. Other countries build communities rather than just houses.
11. What about the proposal for parts of the green belt to be grey belt and the impact for rural areas?
Response – this needed to be assessed, but even if they met the criteria for grey belt, they won't necessarily be identified for development. The assessment should be shared with Parish Councils.
12. B&NES no longer has a 5-year land supply, and this is an important issue for rural communities. It will be difficult to resist development.
Response – this makes it even more important to develop a new Local Plan and we need to do this as quickly as possible.
13. Any delay in the Local Plan process will make rural villages at risk of speculative development. Can B&NES lobby Government?
Response – B&NES along with a number of other local authorities has written to the Government.
14. The quality of housing is at risk when building is done quickly. What about the infrastructure? Concerns the planning system won't be able to cope with increased demand. Will there be enough builders? Can targets be achieved if housing is not built on time?
15. Will B&NES need to take on housing need from Bristol?
 WECA is looking at a spatial strategy, but it will be a challenge for B&NES to take any more housing as the target had already doubled and meeting this new target would be a challenge in itself.

Table 2

1. Concern that developers will use the increased housing target to come back with applications that were previously refused. The lack of a 5-year land supply for housing made communities vulnerable to predatory developers. Many villages did want more housing, but it needed to be the right type in the right location.
2. There were major issues with public transport in rural areas being poor, development needed to be in the right place to avoid being car dependent.
3. If Parish Councils were happy with existing housing development boundary, did they still need to respond to consultation?
Response – yes, Parish Councils were advised to respond to confirm they were happy with existing boundaries. Parishes needed to make sure they

made representations on the new local plan, to ensure they could participate in the examination in public.

4. I represent a “dormitory village” where most residents commute to other areas. Car parking is a big problem. Could there be provision for co-working facilities to encourage people not to commute?

Response – in terms of including this in the Local Plan, there would need to be evidence that there was a need. In terms of funding, there were only planning obligation opportunities for new developments, but there was Community Infrastructure Levy funding opportunities for other projects.

5. Radstock was on the boundary with Somerset. There needed to be close working with neighbouring authorities around developments that impacted residents of B&NES.
6. It would be useful for Parish Councils to be given guidance on the merits of developing a neighbourhood plan.

Table 3

1. As a Parish Council representative, I would like a faster response if I ask the Planning Team a question. E.g., is the breeding of pheasants on agricultural land permitted development? Why are there traffic lights for a new solar farm development – they are not needed or wanted by local residents.

Response – this comment will be taken back to the team.

2. It would be useful if B&NES Planning Officers could explain the reasons why planning applications were approved where objections had been raised by the Parish Council.

3. How confident are you that you will reach 5-year land supply for housing?

Response – that is difficult to answer, and it shows the importance of progressing the local plan as quickly as possible.

4. The lack of a 5-year land supply was a major concern for Parish Councils. There was a fear that concerns about the sustainability of developments/highway concerns would be set aside in favour of development.

Response – Although there was a tilted balance in favour of development due to the lack of a 5-year land supply, developments still needed to comply with local and national policies.

5. A lot of Parish Councils don't have neighbourhood plans and feel exposed. It was noted that neighbourhood plans involved a lot of work. Was it enough for to undertake a housing needs survey? Does that act as protection that can be used as evidence?

Response - George Blanchard/Gary Ward could advise on housing needs surveys and the different types of survey that Parish Councils could undertake.

6. Parish Councils wanted to engage with the Local Plan consultation and encourage residents to do the same, but how could they reassure residents that their views wouldn't be ignored? *Response – all responses would be carefully considered, but it was a difficult balance and the Parish Councils' support in managing residents' expectations was welcomed. Constructive ideas on how housing targets could be achieved was encouraged. The Council would publish documents to say how it had responded to the consultation.*

Next steps

Parish Councils noted the following:

1. Cabinet would be asked to approve the Local Plan consultation document and papers would be published on 4 September
2. Once approved consultation would start on 2 October for 6 weeks (until 13 November).

Topic 2 - Transport

Name	Role
Lyndsay Margerison	Transport Policy Manager
George Edwards	Senior Engineer, Transport Policy

Table 1

1. There is a lack of buses in rural areas.
2. One half of my village is fairly close to a bus stop but the rest of it is a mile away. The bus companies think this is an acceptable walking distance but it's too far for some.
3. People are unable to walk their children to school due to a lack of pavements in some communities. Virtual footpaths seem to have helped in other areas and may be a cost-effective solution.
4. Where there is a bus service, there needs to be bus shelters. Children are getting soaked on their way to and from school. Older people too. Real time information is also important – if buses aren't reliable, people won't use them. They aren't interested in having a bus lane that only shaves 20 seconds off a journey – they just want the buses to be regular. Fare prices are also

important. It can be cheaper for a family group to take a taxi. The free travel for young people over the summer holidays is welcome.

5. People don't just want to travel to Bristol and Bath – they want to be connected to local communities and within communities. Buses need to link villages with Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Paulton too.
6. Lots of people use the bus to get from the Chew Valley to Bristol but not the bus linking communities – maybe they don't think about it.
7. No-one seems to know about the extended hours of the Bath Park and Ride but it's brilliant. Also, the website suggests that it stops at 8.30pm on a Saturday night when many people would welcome using it.
8. It is very rural where I live – there are no buses so I don't think about using them. I agree that few people know about the link bus in the Chew Valley. People spend a lot on their cars and want to get value by using them.
9. On the Park and Ride, children have to pay the adult fare if they are not accompanied by an adult – it is very confusing for them.
10. It costs more for a group to go into Bath on the Park and Ride than parking in the city all day.
11. Other cities have very reasonable group rates for their Park and Rides e.g. Oxford
12. I understand there are to be mobility hubs in rural areas to support people to use different modes of transport.

Table 2

1. I work from home which reduces my need to travel so would say that good broadband connectivity is an important factor. There will always be people that need to go to a workplace, which is a challenge, but working from home with good broadband will help.
2. Bus transport to rural areas is poor but I don't know what the answer is.
3. The WECA funded Big Lemon services are time limited – there needs to be longer term funding solutions – bus franchising may be an option.

4. The Westlink service has been 'flaky'.
5. Most households now have two cars or more. We have lost our bus service because they say that they cannot get past the parked cars. However, putting double yellow lines down will just annoy residents.
6. Our village is so rural that we may never have a bus service but while residents may have to start out in a car, they don't have to do their whole journey that way. They could use the Park and Ride. There may also be potential for some cycle lanes.
7. Buses need to be frequent and reasonably priced to encourage people to use them.
8. Have you tried to get into Bath in the morning on the A367? What will it be like when there are even more houses built in the area?
9. The bus lane on the M32 is amazing – the buses sail past the queues of cars.
10. WECA seemed to focus on creating bus lanes at the expense of rural bus services – that is how it felt at least.
11. We are planning to downsize to Bath because we will be able to get around without a car. Transport has a huge effect on where and how people want to live.
12. When the Council employs people, do they consider how far they intend to drive to their job?
13. There can be negativity around working from home but I get more done.
14. I understand that Bristol University bar people from using staff car parks if they live within a certain distance.
15. Larger cities need a proper mass transport system. Part of the money coming to WECA from the Government is for mass transit.
16. I imagine the money is for feasibility – it will not be enough to deliver it.

Table 3

1. How does the B&NES' Transport Strategy fit with WECA?
2. There is limited access to public charging points for electric cars which does not encourage people to transition to these vehicles. We have a lot of flats and terraces in our community so need more public chargers.
3. Radstock has lots of buses to other places but not within in. This particularly relates to schools. Pupils of Writhlington living in places like Peasedown and Paulton cannot get a bus that enables them to get to school on time. This is why people drive. There could be some simple things that would help, such as the walking route now available from Haydon to Writhlington.
4. Many of the buses that serve our community come via Wiltshire and/or Somerset and rely on subsidies from these Councils. We are concerned that this makes them vulnerable. Who do we need to talk to about that?
5. Westlink does not deliver. The 2V Big Lemon service is really good but doesn't do everything we need.
6. I used my Birthday Bus Pass to get to this evening's meeting.
7. We have a good bus service in Paulton. People active in the community negotiated with First on the main route. The Parish Council also moved forward with the Westlocal service, funded by WECA, which goes around the estates as well as to Radstock and the Odd Down Park and Ride. We need more of these and for them to run for longer (it runs until 7pm). We have funding for 2 years and are hopeful there will be more to support it after this.
8. We considered this as a Parish but felt the liability outweighed our precept.
9. Cars use Weekesley Lane as a short cut between Paulton and Camerton but it is a narrow road and traffic converges on a tight bend at Meadgate. Is there scope for the road to be widened via developer funds?
10. The primary school in Camerton closed so children go to Timsbury. There is pavement so they cannot safely walk to school.
11. We need to ensure there are safe routes to schools. When Clandown School closed and pupils were moved to Trinity, a safe walking route could not be established and most parents now drive there. The purchase of just a 3m strip of land could have provided a safe route. There isn't even a crossing from Clandown and suggested enhancements to Public Rights of Way have not happened. We need to avoid situations like this with the next Local Plan.

12. We wanted to link all the schools with the V2 service and could maybe look at this again.
13. If you have a congestion charge for Bath, it will encourage people to use the bus.
14. You have got to put in the alternatives before you introduce measures to make it harder, or more expensive, for people to use their cars.
15. I live in Midsomer Norton and work in Radstock. I can cycle most days. A bus journey would be 40 minutes. If I need to go to Bath, it can be cheaper to park in the city centre for a short meeting than get the bus and is certainly quicker.
16. Apparently, the 20mph limit in Wales has resulted in more children walking to school because they feel safer

Topic 3 – Community Energy Network

Officers

Name	Role
Ellie Bryant	Project Manager, Community Energy Manager
Jackie Clayton	Head of Sustainable Energy

Key information to share

You can find more information about the project here -

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/communityenergynetwork>

You can sign up to the registration form here - <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/register-your-interest-community-energy-network>

On this site there is also an information pack which has FAQs and details on the project.

Contact Ellie with any questions – ellena_bryant@bathnes.gov.uk

There were many questions around the practicalities of establishing a community-owned renewable energy project - including funding, land ownership, governance, and community benefits. These areas will be explored in greater depth through the 'Energy in your Community' project. The approach is deliberately broad at this stage, with the finer details to be shaped through co-design and ongoing dialogue with the community. See the information pack for more information.

Several attendees raised concerns about the deadline of 1st August. We're unable to shift this due to the wider project timeline, however we appreciate this feedback and will note it for future engagement. Please also note the registration form only takes a

few minutes to complete and it is to capture interest to have conversations and explore the potential of community-owned renewables at this stage, so you do not need specific sites or fixed solutions. We'd still welcome interested groups to get in touch with us (via email) after 1st August, either to join up to areas that have been selected, or this may be considered for future phases of the project.

Table 1

1. We have received the information on the form but have some questions from parish councillors in Batheaston.
- Group thinks there isn't space within their parish so potentially not worth applying ?

Response – We will join areas up so it won't just be one small area that is considered, we will look at other criteria including grid capacity and geographical spread. The process will explore possibilities together with the community so you don't need to have areas selected or decided at this point.

2. Concern around the financial responsibilities that may fall to the parishes and how things will be funded?

Response - The form doesn't mean there is any commitment at this stage, it is just to explore possibilities. In terms of governance of the groups, that will be discussed in detail in the workshops. There are a range of financial models, including share offers, and community energy fund grants, whatever happens the projects will only take place if they are financially viable and there is no pressure on parishes to handle the finances. BWCE can also offer support with this. Community Benefit funds will be set up from the sale of energy generated, which can be held by communities.

3. BWCE, CSE have lots of expertise and the Radstock community were keen for the parish to declare a climate emergency. So we know there are active people, but how to get knowledge out to communities - to get the information out there on things like retrofit and energy saving?

Having Energy Champions, who are people in the community that have had Energy Essentials training and can spread the word about available funding or loans for retrofit as well as promoting energy saving tips and support for communities. Peer to peer support.

4. Lots of people's homes are currently heated by oil – could there be any schemes looking at that?

Action for Ellie to follow this up.

5. Green homes events - held in Bath, they were great but what about other areas. We would be interested in these happening in other places.

6. Is this project strictly for within B&NES? There is an obvious partner across the border in Wiltshire.

Action – Ellie to follow this up with funder, CSE and Wiltshire.

Table 2

1. What's the minimum land space?

Response – at this stage we're not asking people to pick sites, it's more that people come forward to discuss options as a community.

2. Deadline too soon, not just for this but a wider point about lead time for things with Parishes. Should have at least 8 weeks or 6 weeks, some people suggested longer but others said too long and then there are issues of it dropping down on priority lists.

3. Volume of consultations that come out, really high, is there a way they we could just be sent ones that area relevant to us? A more targeted approach to comms with the parishes, rather than one 'all parishes' email could they be broken down into regions

Action: Mandy to pick up points about lead times for parishes and volume of consultations sent

4. Democracy is important, but good to remember time pressures that are on many parishes, mostly ran by volunteers.

5. Could be good to have a weekly list of consultations - communicated effectively rather than individual emails.

6. Landownership - at what point is that sorted in your project process? Don't you need that first?

Response – the aim of the process is to take a community lead approach so that communities express their views as the first step. BWCE are experts at negotiating with landlords, another point is that it would be a better case to take to a landowner to say that the community supports the project.

7. What about having them on car parks? Acts as a way to also shade cars from heat too. Done in other countries.

Response - This has been looked into and its more expensive as they need to be built higher up. That said it could still be explored or raised in the workshops for the project development.

8. Other places to have solar - along roads - panels to deflect sound solar at the same time.

Action – Ellie to look into this and raise with wider project team.

9. How many megawatts for the project – 5MW for the whole project. What does that mean in terms of equivalent numbers of households? E.g. how many households per megawatts.

Action - Ellie find out average household energy use for 1MW for comparisons.

10. We need land for food not solar

Response - Renewables wouldn't be put on land that is high quality arable land.

11. What happened to the 3 pilots?

Response - They are being developed as part of this project, so in those areas more engagement will be taking place soon.

Table 3

1. What about landowners? Have we spoken to the Duchy estate?

Action – Ellie to explore with BWCE

2. Could ground source heating be part of this?

Response - not within the scope of this project but some feasibility studies for heat from mines are taking place.

3. Village community energy solar power - good to think about future resilience.

4. We need to think about the way we're integrating systems – for example competing priorities

5. Solar panels degrade, so do eventually need replacing and the amount of energy they produce reduces – this is only by around 1% or less per year

6. For housing planning would it be possible to be orientating roofs to build for solar gain? Particularly for factories and warehouses too

7. Options for different types of wind e.g. Cylindrical wind turbine

8. Price of power going negative - how to accommodate for that. Contracts of difference - guaranteed a price

Response - This is something that would be explored in detail throughout the Energy in Your Community process.

9. East Harptree – car parking issue on the streets, considering building a car park, feels like there is lots of competing priorities

10. Marksbury solar panels there – it is a very intimidating, industrial project, in the middle of green belt 25 hectares which is very intrusive.

Response - The scale of the projects through Energy in Your Community are much smaller not at commercial scale. They could also be designed to improve biodiversity and not be imposing as the location would be decided by the community.

4 CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair of the Council paid tribute to Mandy Bishop as this would be her last meeting before taking up her new role. She advised that as well as her positive impact on B&NES as a whole, she had made a particular contribution to Parish Liaison meetings by making them more interactive.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

5 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was noted as follows:

Wednesday 15 October 2025 at Keynsham Community Space.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services