

Tay McLean (Author/Speaker)
Statement to B&NES Cabinet
31st March 2022

BATHAMPTON MEADOWS

It has become more and more convoluted, the news pertaining to the transaction that had been executed on behalf of B&NES residents. The news (as available in the public domain), so far, is as follows:

- **Transfer of public ownership of nearly 25 hectares of grazing meadows to the National Trust for a peppercorn AND a 15.6 hectare parcel of private land belonging to New Leaf Farm was sold to the National Trust for “fair market value” reportedly in the region of £915,000. These deals were done simultaneously (?).**
- **The justifications for the peppercorn for transferring the COMMUNITY ASSET are a) social and economic benefits worth £2.3m over 30 years, with volunteer time adding an extra £327,000, which the council judged are “far exceed not only the restricted but also the unrestricted value of the asset” ***
- **b) That a peppercorn reward for handing over that £2.3m benefit is because “any cash from the sale could not have been used on day-to-day services anyway.” ***

Factual information, as far as I can work out are :

- **We are already experiencing the projected £2.3m non-monetary eco socio health benefits WITHOUT the National Trust involvement. In fact, I believe most residents are delighted that the NT has taken over a large section of the Meadows.**
- **“In March 2020, surveyors gave a restricted value of its land at Bathampton Meadows of £460,000 or an unrestricted value of £915,000. The authority had been receiving an annual rent from a farmer of £3,500”**

It looks like the owner(s) of New Leaf parcel land got the £915,000 instead of B&NES residents. And we lost the annual income rent of £3,500.

- **Proceeds from COMMUNITY TRANSFER may be used for purchasing of replacement capital assets. B&NES’s ‘Accounting Officer, Community Asset**

Transfer Office plus Treasury ought to be consulted & approved prior to the transfer, for transparency, governance & scrutiny reasons.

- As far as I understand, NO PUBLIC CONSULTATION with B&NES residents was carried out prior to the transfer. The former B&NES land is part of the B&NES RIVERLINE PROJECT, where B&NES residents are notified and consulted at each stage of development.

There have been several heated debates in the social media which have led to much speculation and uncomplimentary views & comments. Until we get clarification especially about the direct and indirect interests of our council leader & his family in those two related (or tied?) transactions, it looks like this saga will continue, to the detriment of the Council and the Community.

END OF STATEMENT

References:

- [Local authority assets – Disposal guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Mar 2016 — Local authorities will now be able to reinvest the proceeds of asset sales in their services, enabling them to deliver more for less.

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508307/160316_Land_disposal_guidance.pdf
- https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/final_cat_policy_march_2020_-_updated_with_new_corporate_strategy_2020-24_2.pdf
- https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s64537/Appendix%20D%20-%20Bathampton%20Meadows%20Business%20Plan_NT%20FINAL.pdf
- <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/local-news/councillor-hits-back-claims-bathampton-6674117>

- How can a council be sure it's getting the best value out of a community asset transfer? The Government's best value guidance recognises the importance of social as well as economic and environmental value in the achievement of best value. [Community Asset Transfer](#) can contribute to achieving the policy objectives of the local authority. Disposal to secure a capital receipt must therefore be considered alongside other options in order to secure best value. <https://mycommunity.org.uk/frequently-asked-questions-about-community-assets>