

MEMBER ADVOCATES – ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2025-26

Councillor Jess David – Member Advocate for Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery

As Member Advocate for Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery, I have continued to support the Council's environmental priorities through partnership working, community engagement, and practical local action. Key activity this year has included:

- Attending the B&NES Climate and Nature Network Forum in November, contributing to discussions on climate resilience, biodiversity, and green infrastructure priorities and meeting with local partners.
- Meeting with the Bath Allotment Association to view successful examples of the Water My Plot initiative and supporting a further bid for Neighbourhood CIL funding to expand this programme.
- Taking part in local conservation sessions with the Parks Department and Your Parks B&NES, helping to improve green spaces and strengthen community involvement. Worked with local Friends groups to carry out planting schemes and wider nature recovery initiatives in local parks and open spaces.
- Developing a community event as part of the Local Nature Festival (June 2026), helping to promote awareness and engagement with biodiversity and the natural environment.
- Continuing to advocate through correspondence and casework on environmental matters, including river health, biodiversity, and habitat protection.
- Attending and inputting to regular Climate and Nature team meetings.

Cllr Fiona Gourley – Member Advocate for Rural Communities

Public Transport

- Worked with Transport Cabinet Leads and B&NES Bus Team and attended WECA meetings to represent B&NES residents and to develop better strategies, policies and services. Advocated to restore regular and reliable public transport to underserved communities, particularly in rural areas.
- Spoke about impact of lack of rural transport on residents to Lib Dem Conference, WECA and B&NES Council and in local media.
- Aimed to represent all rural residents across B&NES by working cross-party with other councillors to understand issues and support campaigners.
- Met First Bus regularly and worked closely to find solutions to bus-related problems, including poor facilities in Bath Bus Station.
- Campaigned against bus funding reductions from Government via WECA, including launching bus petition and securing media coverage.

- Attended briefings on car clubs and EV charging and advocated to officers for better provision in rural areas.

Village Agents

- Advocated for Village Agents scheme to Cabinet during budget process; promoted Villages Agents in newsletters; spoke about the role of Village Agents at Parish Council meetings and to residents who might benefit from their service.

Local Plan

- Discussed Local Plan with all Parish Councils and at village meetings, presentations and with individual residents.
- Championed the needs of rural communities for appropriate local housing at Informal Cabinet, Council, Group meeting and lobbying of individual Cabinet leads.
- Supported residents concerned about changes in Local Plan relating to Somersetshire Coal Canal.

Other

- Supported rural businesses e.g. listing of Apple Tree as asset of Community Value in Shoscombe.

Councillor Kevin Guy – Member Advocate for Armed Forces and Veterans

In addition to the annual Remembrance Service, over the past year we have marked the annual flag raising in Parade Gardens in recognition of Armed Forces Day, the 80th anniversary of VJ Day, and celebrated the life of Bath resident and war veteran Stan Ford, who survived the D-Day landings, and who died at the age of 100.

Thank you to the City of Bath Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club for the very generous donation of a new Armed Forces Day Flag. Club members gifted the flag to be used at our annual ceremony, marking the start of Armed Forces Week, on 22 June.

Councillor Alan Hale – Member Advocate for Safer Roads

Over the past year, I have actively fulfilled the role of Member Advocate for Safer Roads, providing support and advice to councillors on road safety matters.

I have worked constructively with the Ward Councillor to address concerns at a problematic junction, contributed to consultations on road layout changes and speed limit reviews, and strengthened engagement through meetings with my Cabinet Member.

I look forward to building on this progress through continued collaboration with the road safety team.

Councillor Ian Halsall – Member Advocate for Engagement with Students

Over the past year, I have continued working closely with the Student Community Partnership (SCP). We had a successful Moving In campaign which covered a wider area than it has previously, extending over 6 wards, and relaunched the British Heart Foundation recycling points as part of a successful Moving Out campaign.

The SCP has continued its excellent work to encourage good relationships between student and permanent residents (particularly around being good neighbour and providing guidance around waste and recycling services) and has continued important work with partners around river safety, evening personal safety and housing.

Councillor Liz Hardman – Member Advocate for Children Looked After

As Corporate Parents, we all have a duty to our children in care. However, I requested to become the advocate for Children Looked After so I could be more involved in improving their outcomes.

Part of my role as member advocate for Children Looked After is that I am a governor of the virtual school. Every CLA is a pupil at this virtual school. The children's attainment and progress are monitored very carefully as well as their attendance and behaviour. As a governor, I attend meetings three times a year. The outstanding virtual School Headteacher gives us a report on our CLA. The most recent report described how improved relations were between our local college and our CLA. One of the most important statistics is that for the past four years, not one CLA has been permanently excluded. This is down to the outstanding leadership of the virtual school Headteacher.

As a result of one of our Corporate Parents meeting, it was decided that a subgroup would be set up to meet with our care experienced young people to discuss issues with them face-to-face. This group has met twice and is made up of Jean Kelly, Director of Children's services, Jo Parker and Charlotte Egmore James, B&NES officers for Off the Record and CLA, Cllrs Dine Romero, Lesley Mansell, Joanna Wright and myself. The issues we discussed which were of importance to our care experienced young people were getting themselves onto Category A of Home Search when looking for accommodation. The other issue was help in getting a driving licence. These issues were resolved and reported to the most recent Corporate Parents meeting, where substantial progress has been made due to this subgroup.

As Chair of B&NES Council, I have been able to do more for our CLA. A new pledge video was produced by our young people stating what the duties of Corporate Parents were. At the Council meeting on March 19, I showed this video to the full

Council, reminding them of our duties as Corporate Parents and hoping more of our councillors would attend Corporate Parents meetings.

Finally again, as Chair, I unveiled one of the Sycamore saplings which had been donated to Alice Park. This sapling was dedicated to our CLA and care experienced young people . It was called the tree of life. Many of our CLA were invited to attend and it was wonderful to see how much it meant for them to have a tree named after them.

Councillor Saskia Heijltjes – Member Advocate for Active Travel – Bath

I have undertaken a range of activities to promote active travel in Bath including initiating a Dott e-scooter, e-bike and e-cargo bike demonstration for the Larkhall Festival in May 2026, and launching the first ever Bike Bus in BANES. I have also maintained engagement with strategic and policy processes by having regular meetings with cabinet members Cllrs Joel Hirst and Lucy Hodge and various officers.

On the infrastructure and advocacy side, I have submitted comments on various planning applications and highways projects to champion active travel provision, and raised numerous issues directly through Fix My Street to address problems on the ground. I also attended several online events on active travel and the Playing Out Conference in Bristol in March 2026, which provided valuable opportunities to connect with peers and draw on best practice from across the country.

Councillor Ruth Malloy – Member Advocate for Great Spa Towns of Europe and Twinning

Aix en Provence: Marian McNeir organised another successful ‘art & gardens’ visit to Aix in September 2025.

Alkmaar: 2025 was the 80th anniversary of our friendship link. The Mayor of Alkmaar visited in July 2025. bath-alkmaar.org.uk, and many organisations continue their exchanges.

Beppu: the monthly Japanese culture & language club continues to be popular. It was the first time the BBFA had taken part in the Bath Christmas Market, and it went very well.

Braunschweig: 2026 is the 55th anniversary of the official twinning agreement, but the first exchanges took place 75 years ago.

bath-braunschweigtwinningassociation.org.uk

Kaposvar: the civic link is still strong, and we hope that the twinning link will soon be revived at the local level.

Oleksandriya: the Friends of Oleksandriya (FoO) organised a 4th concert in the Abbey to commemorate Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, as well as many other

fund-raising events. www.friendsofo.co.uk It's now possible to join the FoO as a member to show your support.

Summer 2025 **Boules inter-twinning association competition**, with teams from the BATA, BBTA and BAenPTA competing ; needless to say, the BAenPTA won!

Christmas Market 2025: BATA, BBFA and BAenPTA were represented (3 days each) during the final 9 days, at the new community chalet location in Milsom Street. All are very appreciative of this opportunity to promote Bath's international links to the wider public.

Twinning Forum: meetings were held on 24th July 2025 and on 5th February 2026.

European Local Links (European Movement UK): Marian McNeir (Oleksandriya, Ukraine), Liz Mills (BATA), and I attended occasional (mainly online) meetings during the year, to understand better how these partnerships can support our local communities more broadly.

Finally, **Chris Baker (Off the Wall Films)** has shown many international films, in the original languages, over the past year, in collaboration with several twinning/friendship organisations: his support is very much appreciated

Councillor Sarah Moore – Member Advocate for Accessibility

This year I have met with many groups to discuss accessibility issues; I have attended a number of meetings as well to discuss everyday issues that need to be addressed.

This year has seen a large increase in funding to improve our footpaths; however, I have written to the Cabinet Member responsible for Highways to request more is done to improve the dropped kerbs at junctions by installing more tactile paving and also making sure they are clear of obstructions, especially in our town centres.

I have also written to the Cabinet member responsible for our parks to request our policies are reviewed for play equipment renewal to ensure more accessible play equipment is installed across the Bath and North East Somerset area. Every child deserves to be able to access play equipment without the need to travel long distances.

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty – Member Advocate for Homeless People

Bath & North East Somerset continues to face significant housing pressures, mirroring the national picture. Demand for social housing remains extremely high, while affordability and poor housing conditions continue to affect many residents. The council is continuing to progress affordable and social housing schemes and advanced the Local Plan Reset. The new Renters' Rights Bill, including the long-awaited end of Section 21 "no fault" evictions, is also expected to provide greater

security for tenants. Meanwhile, local support groups assisting rough sleepers and vulnerable residents are supporting increasing numbers of people each week.

Councillor Shaun Stephenson-McGill – Member Advocate for Active Travel – North East Somerset

Together with Cllr Saskia Heijltjes, I've had regular meetings with cabinet members, Cllr Joel Hirst and Cllr Lucy Hodge, to discuss Active Travel schemes and overall strategy. In addition, I've had meeting with officers and on occasion individual NES Councillors.

I've attended various online webinars and conferences around Active Travel especially those organised by Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking.

I've actively joined their campaign for the prohibition of pavement parking in England. This national campaign was a partial success, and the English Devolution & Community Empowerment Bill should reach Royal Assent this month. It's disappointing not to see a nationwide prohibition, instead handing the power to local leaders to ban pavement parking. This will result in inconsistency across England for communities and drivers, which increases risks for everyone using our streets. It makes it a political choice, but the fact is, pavement parking endangers lives of the most vulnerable. These new powers do not go far enough to protect pedestrians. Disabled people, parents with buggies and older residents shouldn't have to depend on individual local authorities' appetite and capacity to enforce. In the short term from this autumn, local authorities will be able to enforce against unnecessary obstruction of pavements using civil enforcement officers (CEOs). I will do my best as the Member Advocate for Active Travel (NES) to encourage WECA & B&NES to act against pavement parking as strongly as possible.

Councillor Andy Wait – Member Advocate for Rivers and Waterways

As always, it has been a busy year on the rivers. Those nerds who remember my last report will know that I left it on a cliff hanger with the lives of cygnets and young ducklings in grave risk, due to the unprotected drains in the locks at Widcombe. Amy from Bath Swan Rescue, and residents taking on the Canals and River Trust (CRT) to try to stop the young birds being sucked down the drains due to the workings of the locks. We had some success and have been working since that time with CRT, who don't consider this to be a top priority. Last year we had some successes but also some fatalities. The work goes on as the bird nesting season is once more upon us.

I have become a River Detective and Water Guardian looking after a stretch of the River Chew from Albert Weir to the mouth of the Chew when it runs into the River Avon near the Lockkeeper Inn. It involves taking monthly tests of the river quality, for nitrates and phosphates and sending my results to the Bristol and Avon Rivers Trust (BART) as well as looking out for pollution and other issues.

Finally, Oli Henman and I are looking at bringing a motion to council regarding an Avon Charter to look at giving protective legal powers to the River Avon in an attempt to bring those who pollute the river to justice. We are working with all the councils who form part of the course of the River Avon.