

Bath & West Community Energy

This document provides a summary of responses from the political parties in Bath & North Somerset (B&NES) to four questions posed by Bath & West Community Energy.

All local parties were approached, and responses were received from the following. Responses to each of the four questions will be presented together and in alphabetical order.

- [B&NES Independent Group \(BIG\)](#) – local manifesto/key local policies see [here](#)
- [Conservative Party](#) - local manifesto/key local policies see [here](#)
- [Green Party](#) - local manifesto/key local policies see [here](#)
- [Labour Party](#) - local manifesto/key local policies see [here](#)
- [Liberal Democrat Party](#) - local manifesto/key local policies see [here](#)

The four questions were:

1. *What are your priorities and what actions will you champion over the next four years to ensure B&NES Council fulfils its 14th March 2019 pledge “to provide the leadership needed to enable our communities to achieve 100% clean energy across all sectors in B&NES by 2030”?*
2. *Community ownership of renewable energy can help build consent and support for new local renewables. What steps will you take to ensure that community enterprises in Bath & North East Somerset are given the support they need to rapidly increase the number of renewable energy assets under community ownership?*
3. *Community engagement and partnership around increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy demand can help build trust and normalise new energy behaviours. What steps will you take to ensure that community partnership is central to achieving the outcomes of the climate emergency declaration?*
4. *What are the most important things that you would like to see in the six-month progress report on action taken since the climate emergency was declared (due in September)?*

BWCE Climate Emergency Questions: Response from B&NES Big Independent Group

1. *What are your priorities and what actions will you champion over the next four years to ensure B&NES Council fulfils its 14th March 2019 pledge “to provide the leadership needed to enable our communities to achieve 100% clean energy across all sectors in B&NES by 2030”?*

We will ensure that every BIG policy and every policy we support will be designed to mitigate the effects on our climate. This includes transport, waste and recycling, housing design and location, energy generation, green spaces, public realm, health and wellbeing. As over 50% of our 2017 emissions came from energy and transport it means energy is a key target for us.

It will be impossible to achieve 100% energy generation from renewables without the introduction of onshore wind energy into the mix. So the first thing we would do is to push to see that wind energy is developed in B&NES, preferably in conjunction with BWCE or another community owned body. To that end we would like to see the areas already designated as suitable for wind energy to be developed quickly.

2. *Community ownership of renewable energy can help build consent and support for new local renewables. What steps will you take to ensure that community enterprises in Bath & North East Somerset are given the support they need to rapidly increase the number of renewable energy assets under community ownership?*

Community involvement is in BIG’s DNA. Our first step would be to talk to the community enterprises and see exactly what it is they need in order to expand and be successful. It is easy to promise the earth and most political parties will do that. We believe in being realistic and forming a broad consensus on what needs to be done and then making sure that it is done. It is vital that party politics does not get in the way of this important aspect of battling climate change

3. *Community engagement and partnership around increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy demand can help build trust and normalise new energy behaviours. What steps will you take to ensure that community partnership is central to achieving the outcomes of the climate emergency declaration?*

We agree completely with the statement at the beginning of this question. As said in earlier questions we will support sensible measures introduced by other parties and proposed by the Sustainability team in the council. We would push for the setting up of a ‘panel’ consisting of Councillors, council employees, community activists, businesses, residents and recognised experts in the field and make sure that it had powers to implement its findings.

4. *What are the most important things that you would like to see in the six-month progress report on action taken since the climate emergency was declared (due in September)?*

To be realistic 6 months is sadly not a long time in the workings of the Council. So again, to be realistic, we would like evidence that ALL council policies have been reviewed in the light of the climate emergency declaration in order that we can see the size of the task and begin to plan how to address it.

We are particularly keen to see that the already proposed and sensible policies on wind, planning regulations for new buildings, implementation of an enhanced Clean Air Zone, electric vehicles and more provision for cycling and walking are adopted at the earliest opportunity.

BWCE Climate Emergency Questions: Response from Bath & North East Somerset Conservative Party

1. What are your priorities and what actions will you champion over the next four years to ensure B&NES fulfils its 14th March 2019 pledge “to provide the ... leadership needed to enable our communities to achieve 100% clean energy across all sectors in B&NES by 2030”?

As we promised in our Environmental Sustainability Motion and the Joint Motion on Climate Emergency, we will bring climate change to the centre of all we do, in order to set the example to the community of Bath and North East Somerset. We have set up a task force under the strategic director to initiate a plan to deliver zero carbon by 2030. This will be across all work streams, planning, transport, care and separate out, energy, heat and transport. The officers will report back in 6 Months with a costed and timed solution.

2. Community ownership of renewable energy can help build consent and support for new local renewables. What steps will you take to ensure that community enterprises in Bath & North East Somerset are given the support they need to rapidly increase the number of renewable energy assets under community ownership?

We will continue to champion community energy and support BWCE in all that they do. Lobbying Central Government and working with BEIS Hub to make break in to the market easier.

3. Community engagement and partnership around increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy demand can help build trust and normalise new energy behaviours. What steps will you take to ensure that community partnership is central to achieving the outcomes of the climate emergency declaration?

Using the [Environmental Sustainable Partnership](#) Board we will champion community engagement and education of the public in Climate Change and what we can do about it.

4. What are the most important things that you would like to see in the six-month progress report on action taken since the climate emergency was declared (due in September)?

We need to see the plan, the timings, who is responsible for what, how much, what legislation needs to change and targets to be achieved along the journey.

BWCE Climate Emergency Questions: Response from Bath & North East Somerset Green Party

1. What are your priorities and what actions will you champion over the next four years to ensure B&NES Council fulfils its 14th March 2019 pledge “to provide the ... leadership needed to enable our communities to achieve 100% clean energy across all sectors in B&NES by 2030”?

The Climate Emergency motion was almost unanimously passed in March, and to meet the challenge it gives every one of us, we will need to work together, across political and other divides, to ensure it is successful in making the area carbon neutral by 2030. The council's role will be one of leading, facilitating, encouraging and enabling all our communities to work together to this end, and to make this a truly participatory process.

We will work closely with other councils that have also made this declaration, so that between us we can come up with best practise to fulfil the pledge. The C40 Cities initiative will be a place to start this work. Bristol City Council were the first authority in the UK to make the declaration, and have produced an excellent report, Change Starts Now, on how to move forward towards making their authority carbon neutral by 2030. This in turn makes use of the research undertaken by Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West region, in her report 'Power to Transform the South West'.

B&NES council has identified a team to produce the 6 month report that is required by the climate emergency motion, and our priority at this stage must be to work closely with that team to ensure their work is prioritised and puts forward a workable timetable to meet this challenging goal. We would certainly want to see a councillor identified as a champion for this work within the council, whose role is to ensure that the priorities set by this report are then reflected within all the roles the council plays and activities it takes. We will need to identify a realistic budget and scope various sources of funding.

It is our desire to make B&NES council a leader in the development of carbon neutrality in the area. To this end we will need to give priority to how we work with all residents, employees and employers within the authority area to enable a consensual approach to be built where the benefits of going carbon neutral within the timeframe can be agreed by the widest sections of the community, and for communally agreed solutions to be found for the inherent problems that will arise. There are many models of community working which can be followed, which we will need to investigate, but at present the idea of a Citizens Assembly to disseminate ideas and put forward consensual proposals may well be the best approach.

The actions that will be required to ensure our whole area becomes carbon neutral by 2030 are many, relating to all spheres of life, and will be the substance of the 6 month report, but amongst more obvious measures will be those that tackle traffic related pollutants and encourage rapid shifts in modal use to active travel and clean energy powered vehicles; actions to ensure all houses and other buildings within the area have high energy conservation measures; with much emphasis on retrofitting of our older housing stock; and measures to promote the widest range of renewable energy production within the area, both on buildings and other infrastructure within the area. We recognise there will be a need for some very imaginative solutions to bring about the overall aim, and we would champion those that are shown to be workable.

2. Community ownership of renewable energy can help build consent and support for new local renewables. What steps will you take to ensure that community enterprises in Bath & North East

Somerset are given the support they need to rapidly increase the number of renewable energy assets under community ownership?

This will obviously be an early discussion which the council will need to have with your own community enterprise, and with the increasing number of incipient community energy initiatives that are already developing. We recognise and agree that community ownership of renewable energy production is essential to build consent, and the Bristol report outlines some of the work taken there, which we would seek to emulate. One other advantage of local community-based energy production is that it creates employment and keeps profits local. Our aim should be to have all the area's renewable energy needs produced locally, and we would work with all enterprises that have an interest in this to ensure we can get an early rapid increase in renewable production within our area. We will need to come forward with a budget specifically to support community energy, and outline ways to source the funding for this.

3. Community engagement and partnership around increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy demand can help build trust and normalise new energy behaviours. What steps will you take to ensure that community partnership is central to achieving the outcomes of the climate emergency declaration?

As stated in the answer to question 1, developing successful community engagement will be one of our first priorities. We believe that most residents will be enthused to engage in ideas that not only improve carbon neutrality but remove pollution and make the area a better place to live, and that tackle fuel poverty and social inequality. We have a particular problem in our area with a wealth gap within Bath and between the city and the wider area, and we must ensure the transition needed to be made also fulfils the need to reduce this. We will explore all avenues open that lead to the fullest community engagement.

4. What are the most important things that you would like to see in the six-month progress report on action taken since the climate emergency was declared (due in September)?

The most important things are:

- a) A realistic timetable that lays a path that we can follow over the next 11 years.
- b) The range of options for community engagement that will form the basis of all plans that are developed.
- c) Develop a baseline of residents' carbon footprints, so that realistic targets can be set.
- d) Outline budgets needed to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, and how funding for this can be scoped from a wide range of sources.
- e) Work with WECA, other local authorities and national government to identify funding streams.
- f) Identify the full scope of local renewable energy production.

BWCE Climate Emergency Questions: Response from Bath & North East Somerset Labour Party

1. *What are your priorities and what actions will you champion over the next four years to ensure BaNES Council fulfils its 14th March 2019 pledge “to provide the leadership needed to enable our communities to achieve 100% clean energy across all sectors in BaNES by 2030”?*

Labour’s priorities for energy in the emerging Climate Emergency are set out in our manifesto.

The aim of making the Council carbon neutral by 2030 will be pursued through these priorities:

i) opposing all fracking in Bath & North East Somerset; ii) introducing Supplementary Planning Guidance to support hydroelectric, solar and wind turbine energy sources; iii) ensuring all Council buildings are as energy efficient as possible; iv) a programme of energy efficiency measures for local properties to address both fuel poverty and climate change; v) investigation of Bath’s hot springs for the heating of the Guildhall. Wherever relevant and possible we would hope to work with local enterprises, such as BWCE in pursuit of these objectives.

2. *Community ownership of renewable energy can help build consent and support for new local renewables. What steps will you take to ensure that community enterprises in Bath & North East Somerset are given the support they need to rapidly increase the number of renewable energy assets under community ownership?*

Labour would press for specific officer posts dedicated to a strategy of Community Wealth Building, working with other local ‘anchor institutions’ such as housing associations, universities, and colleges to encourage the purchase of goods and services from local businesses, co-operatives and charities. If financially feasible, Labour would aim to develop a Council Investment Bank for local SMEs, using Council reserves; offering support to co-operatives, mutuals and credit unions.

3. *Community engagement and partnership around increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy demand can help build trust and normalise new energy behaviours. What steps will you take to ensure community partnership is central to achieving the outcomes of the climate emergency declaration?*

BaNES Labour is committed to new forms of participation and involvement in council policymaking. Subject to discussion and agreement with relevant interests, one of these forums would aim for ‘energy democracy’, optimising the engagement of as many relevant stakeholder groups as possible.

4. *What are the most important things that you would like to see in the six-month progress report on action taken since the climate emergency was declared (due in September)?*

- i) Detailed proposals to the West of England Combined Authority for investment in public transport, particularly new bus fleets and services, to encourage less car use.
- ii) A firm programme for insulation, especially of older properties, with appropriate changes to planning guidelines.
- iii) New Planning Guidance that supports additional hydroelectric, solar and wind turbine energy sources to improve provisions in the Local Plan.
- iv) A strategic plan to raise awareness of the causes of climate change and disseminating information to help consumers, residents and businesses to reduce carbon emissions.
- v) Progress in getting WECA to shape its skills programme to benefit the new green economy.

BWCE Climate Emergency Questions: Response from Bath & North East Somerset Liberal Democrat Party

1. *What are your priorities and what actions will you champion over the next four years to ensure B&NES Council fulfils its 14th March 2019 pledge “to provide the leadership needed to enable our communities to achieve 100% clean energy across all sectors in B&NES by 2030”?*

The Council can play a strong role in creating the right conditions for communities to move towards clean energy. This will include making sure that the right strategies and policies are in place and working with partners including WECA, the government, business, education and NGOs.

We will set an example through initiatives such as solar photovoltaic roofs on Council buildings and other properties (e.g. long-term car parking spaces), and looking at how other areas of Council activity and policies can be brought to bear. These could include, for example, the standards applied to developments through the Council property company or procurement policies. We will also look at upgrading Council-owned vehicles to electric and reducing the need for business travel.

Planning policies must be used and adapted to stimulate and encourage low carbon development. For example, we would seek to:

- strengthen the carbon reduction policy approach in the emerging Local Plan so that all new developments achieve zero carbon emissions from a combination of energy efficiency, water efficiency, on-site carbon reductions and allowable off-site solutions;
- work to ensure the sustainability of a planning application is given enough weighting in the planning process;
- require major non-domestic developments to meet the BREEAM Excellent standard or be Passivhaus certified;
- require new build to incorporate charging points for electric vehicles and encourage car-free schemes in suitable new development locations.
- look into the opportunities for encouraging wind energy generation, in suitable locations, and examine the potential for biogas.

We want to see better support for energy improvements and energy saving. We need to tackle the barriers to retrofitting and micro-generation, which prevent many residents, businesses and even schools from being able to improve the energy efficiency or generation potential of buildings. We will lobby for changes to legislation and for more powers for Councils in this area and look at working with local companies and our universities to develop and evaluate improved techniques for retrofit in older housing stock, to reduce demand for heating.

2. *Community ownership of renewable energy can help build consent and support for new local renewables. What steps will you take to ensure that community enterprises in Bath & North East Somerset are given the support they need to rapidly increase the number of renewable energy assets under community ownership?*

The Council must play a role in enabling residents and businesses to develop renewable energy assets. This could be by encouragement, education and information; by creating the right policy framework (as outlined above); and by working with partners to develop and highlight opportunities, including facilitating access to funding programmes.

3. *Community engagement and partnership around increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy demand can help build trust and normalise new energy behaviours. What steps will you take to ensure that community partnership is central to achieving the outcomes of the climate emergency declaration?*

An education and co-operation programme will be key to building interest in the changes which will be needed and to helping people understand the importance of changes they can personally make, such as switching to renewable suppliers and reducing energy consumption.

We propose establishing a Citizens' Panel to act as a zero carbon forum, to debate and agree measures to help local people achieve low carbon living and to help residents become carbon 'literate'. We will be open to ideas such as the use of art, promotional activities, and information services and will work with all partners to put the issues of energy and climate change on the agenda across the board.

We envisage the creation of a Cabinet post responsible for climate and the environment. This would help raise the visibility of the actions the Council will have to take and give residents' a clear sense of accountability and accessibility. We also intend to establish better methods for residents to be involved in the decision making process, such as Citizen Juries, overhauled Council procedures and initiatives such as the use of Skype for external speakers.

4. *What are the most important things that you would like to see in the six-month progress report on action taken since the climate emergency was declared (due in September)?*

- We would expect to see a realistic work programme established, showing the scale of the in-house challenge and proposals for the bigger picture. This should include work streams; budgets and funding; lobbying efforts; research projects and statistics; re-organisation; and baseline and performance indicators.
- Engagement to have been initiated with staff, partners, government, and residents on the issue, including through WECA, Unions, schools, and forums. Development of a sense of cross-community (and cross-political!) ownership and co-operation.
- We expect timelines for the delivery plan for the West of England Energy Strategy and the updated B&NES Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy.
- Any actions which could be taken immediately should have been implemented. These could include the creation of a Cabinet post responsible for Climate Change or the principle of including sustainability considerations in council decision-making and reporting on progress regularly.