



Bristol Energy Network

Directors Report 2017

This report is a summary of the network's activities over the period of its financial year July 2016-June 2017 and includes some activity up to the AGM on December 6th 2017.

Summary of the year

Bristol Energy Network (BEN) thrives on the energy and enthusiasm of its membership and we have been working with existing and new members to grow the network and its activities across the city, reaching into new communities as well as seeing members as diverse as Ambition Lawrence Weston, Bristol Energy Co-op, Bedminster Energy Group and the CHEESE project collaborate, grow and flourish. During 2016, we worked closely with Bristol City Council (BCC) supporting their 'Community Energy Best Practice' programme funded by the former Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC). Three part-time members of staff were employed within the programme. Our activity included, notably, outreach and roadshows as well as strategic input to the design and operation of the Bristol Community Energy Fund. Together this has enabled us to engage with new communities around the city. The programme came to an end in February 2017. Since then, we have been developing new partnerships in the city, engaging with new communities and continuing to build on the legacy of the DECC-funded programme. We have also been actively seeking new funding to maintain the network.

The BEN Board of Directors (8 people) and staff meet regularly to review and plan the work of the Network, using quarterly open meetings to ensure that the rest of the network's members also have a say.

The network's core activities and priorities cover four areas:

- **Being the network:** communicating with members and bringing people together.
- **Supporting the network:** building capacity and supporting existing groups and the development of new ones.
- **Representing the network:** the visible face of Bristol Community energy.
- **Stewarding the network:** developing shared resources, partnerships and collaborative working.

BEN staff 2016-2017:

- Project development: David Tudgey (0.5fte)
- Coordinator and energy fund support: Sophie Pritchard (0.5fte)
- Outreach: Thando Zwane (0.6fte up to Jan 2017)

Projects and activities

Bristol Community Energy Best Practice

Bristol City Council secured £850k of grant funding from the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in 2015 to develop and deliver a 'community energy best practice' programme which could be replicated by other local authority areas. The programme was intended to pilot new forms of engagement

and support for the community energy sector at a citywide level, delivering renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in co-operation with the community energy sector. Their success in securing the funding and delivering the programme comes in part from the existence of an active community energy sector in the city and BEN and CSE as local support organisations. During this project we have, as agreed with BCC, worked with communities in the areas of St Pauls, Lockleaze, Knowle west and Brislington. BEN and its members have been involved in the following activities:

i) Community Outreach

Outreach was seen as the key new activity that BEN needed to do in order to make a difference across the city and reach new communities. Thando Zwane, our Outreach Officer, spent the year connecting with new communities, understanding what their issues are and helping them to apply to the Bristol Community Energy Fund (BCEF).

ii) Supporting the Bristol Community Energy Fund (BCEF)

A key part of widening engagement was the availability of grant funding to support new projects. There have been 3 funding rounds between April 2016 and January 2017, awarding £154,000 to 27 projects. BEN and its members were clear that for a new grant fund to really have an impact, it needed to have wide representation on the assessing panel and be accessible to a range of groups across the city – beyond those already engaged in energy activities. Sophie has experience in participative fund making and this has been very valuable in shaping of the fund. Another unique feature of this fund has been the outreach carried out by BEN to access new communities, offering support to apply and to carry out the projects.

iii) Capacity Building

The capacity building element of the programme was intended to support and connect existing activity in the city alongside general awareness-raising of energy issues to different communities. It has in part taken the form of a roadshow or pop-up shop involving taking materials and information out across the city as well as helping develop citywide approaches and identifying common themes between groups - putting them in touch with others to help build capacity. Working in the four targeted area has identified opportunities and learning for the network and led to locally based themed BEN meetings.

Free Training

One element of capacity building was to offer a series of free training workshops to members and other groups, this was successful not only in developing knowledge but also bringing new groups into contact with BEN and raising awareness of energy issues. We deliberately ran them at different times to widen access as far as possible and resources were uploaded for everyone to access. The four workshops were:

- Community powered change: Making decisions that make a difference (Sat 19 November, 10am-5pm)
- Powering your projects (fundraising) (Tues 17 January, 10am-3pm)
- Building your Group; bringing new people and skills into your group (Sat 28 January, 10am-1pm)
- Practical Steps for Building Diverse and Inclusive Groups (Tues 21 February, 6.15-8.45pm)

Roadshow / pop-up events held:

July 2016

- Love Lockleaze

August 2016

- Hillfields Youth Club Community Day
- Knowle West Fest
- Silver screen Knowle West Over 50's film club
- Rework Shopfront Knowle West, Filwood Square
- B & Q Hartcliffe

September 2016

- Knowle West Health Centre
- Brizlewood Make Sunday Special

November 2016

- Buzz Lockleaze (Lockleaze), Bring & Share event
- Knowle West - Big Switch (Shopping Centre)

December 2016

- 1625 Independent People (Central - Trinity)

January 2017

- Bristol Energy Hub (Central - Harbourside)

February 2017

- Lockleaze Energy Day (Lockleaze)

Bristol's Big Energy Switch

BEN worked with city partners to take part in the National Big Energy Saving Week in Autumn 2016. This is a national campaign to help people cut their fuel bills and get all the financial support they are entitled to. Throughout November and December BEN and partners including CSE, Citizens Advice and Buzz Lockleaze, held advice events to help people save energy and learn more about switching supplier to save money.

Better Bristol Crowdfund: Fuelling the energy revolution in Bristol!

BEN and member groups including Re:Work, CHEESE, Bedminster and Ambition Lawrence Weston got together to take part in the Bristol Green capital's Better Bristol Crowdfund campaign in June 2017. We campaigned for '*Creating a green, fair energy system. No to dirty fossil fuels and fuel poverty - Yes to clean, green energy and warm, healthy homes!*' and raised money from 32 supporters as well as being awarded £5,000 by an independent panel of judges who selected our project as demonstrating an exceptional commitment to inclusion and equality.

Co-ordination

Alongside the new outreach and capacity-building activity, the essential co-ordination of the network has continued. This includes monthly e-newsletters, open network meetings and other communications through the website, Facebook page and regular use of Twitter.

Ben meetings and events, 2016-17

1. **BEN Open meeting**, Lockleaze Old Library, 6 July 2016,
2. **What can community energy do for us in changing times?** 15 September 2016, Bristol Energy Network and Bristol Energy Co-op jointly put on this event at Hamilton House during Community Energy Fortnight.
3. **BEN open meeting, Community Energy and You**, Knowle West, 12 October 2016, working with Knowle West Media Centre
4. **Workshop: Warm Homes and Well-being**, Barton Hill, 15 October 2016, in Bristol Healthy City Week
5. **Discussion: Health Inequalities and Climate Change**, Triodos Space, 18 October 2016, in Bristol Healthy City Week.
6. **BEN AGM**, The Station, 06 December 2016
7. **BEN open meeting**, Unitarian Hall in Brunswick Square, 25 January 2017, looking at priorities for the energy movement in 2017
8. **BEN open meeting:** Baggator in Easton, 26 April 2017, **Energy Conversations:** How do we help to create behaviour, social and political change

9. **Stall at BGCP 10th Anniversary Green Mingle**, 06 July 2017, celebrating the Green Capital Partnership's 10th anniversary and our success in the Better Bristol Crowdfund

Finances and funding

Activity up to March 2017 was largely funded by the Community Energy Best Practice Programme, with a total spend of £110,000 from January 2016, to cover Outreach, support for the Community Energy Grant Fund and Capacity Building as well as core co-ordination – spend under this programme in the current year was around £77k. As well as covering a total of 1.6 fte staffing costs – spread across 3 staff members, this has allowed us to maintain office space, cover the costs of financial and staff management, hire venues and provide refreshments for meetings, set up training for members and purchase new communications materials such as banners, powerbikes and energy monitoring kits – all of which are available for members to borrow.

Since March the board and staff have been actively seeking new sources of funding. Multiple applications have been submitted with the following having been successful to date:

- The Green Capital Partnership's Better Bristol crowdfunder (£5,700) – July 2017
- Bristol City Council – evaluation of the first three rounds of BCEF (£9,817) – August 2017
- Smart Energy GB (£4,800) – October 2017
- Bristol City Council supporting the re-opening of BCEF (£14,000) – October 2017

A more detailed financial breakdown is provided in the accompanying draft financial report for FY 16/17.

Governance

The BEN Board of Directors meets at least quarterly to provide strategic direction to the Network and discuss progress with projects and new initiatives. Between these formal meetings, individual directors provide management support to the paid employees of the Network and have been working with the City Council to ensure the smooth running of the Community Energy Best Practice (CEBP) project, the further development of BCEF and exploring how BEN could be involved in the new EU funded Replicate project. They are also helping to ensure that current community efforts are recognised and built on for the benefit of the whole city – ensuring representation at relevant meetings hosted by the Council, Green Capital Partnership and others.

BEN Directors 2016-2017:

The network's board is currently comprised of the following 7 directors:



Caroline Bird (chair)



Jake Barnes



Simon Roberts OBE



Sam Willetts



Charlotte Eddisford



Vincent Brissenden



Bakary Sanneh (treasurer)

Helen Lacey, whilst not formally registered as a director as been acting in an advisory capacity and a ninth director, Ashley Cartman, was elected to the board in December 2016 but resigned in April 2017.

Future plans

BEN continues to thrive with an increasingly visible presence within and beyond the city, good communication materials, office and storage space and a growing list of member organisations.

We currently have two major projects working with the council:

1. supporting the next 2 rounds of the BCEF (November 2017-April 2018)
2. community and participant engagement for the retrofit / smart homes element of the EU funded Replicate project – working with Knowle West Media Centre and community partners in Ashley, Lawrence Hill and Redcliffe

We are sad to say goodbye to Sophie who has been so valuable for the network and are now recruiting for a new Partnership and Development Manager and a Network Administrator – we hope both positions will be filled by the end of January 2017. We will also seek one or two more directors to fill skills gaps in the current board.

The Board continue to seek new sources of finance, building on the strategy for the future of BEN that was developed earlier in the year. We will continue to consult with members on the future direction and activity of the network, where it can add most value to community activity and what its most useful purpose is.

Current member organisations (alphabetical, as of December 2017)

1. 1625 Independent People
2. African Voices Forum
3. Ambition Lawrence Weston
4. Bedminster Energy Group
5. Bishopston, Cotham and Redland Energy Group
6. Boundless Futures
7. Bristol Energy Cooperative
8. Bristol Friends of the Earth
9. Bristol Green Doors
10. Bristol Power Cooperative
11. Buzz Lockleaze
12. Centre for Sustainable Energy
13. Change Agents
14. CHEESE project
15. Cycletricity
16. Demand Energy Equality

17. East Bristol Foodbank
18. Easton Energy Group
19. Friends of the Earth Bristol
20. Full Circle
21. Greater Fishponds
22. GroundWork South
23. Keynsham Community Energy
24. Low Carbon Gordano
25. MakeYourHomeEco
26. Montpelier Energy Group
27. North Bristol Advice Centre
28. Pennywise
29. re:work ltd
30. Totterdown Energy Group
31. Sustainable Thornbury
32. Talking Money