



Bristol Energy Network

Directors Report 2016

This report is a summary of the network's activities over the period of its financial year July 2015-June 2016 and includes some activity up to the AGM on December 6th 2016.

Summary of the year

This has essentially been a period of 2 halves – first there was activity around Bristol's year as European Green Capital in 2015 and then, in 2016, we have been working closely with Bristol City Council (BCC) supporting their 'Community Energy Best Practice' programme which was funded by the now-defunct Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and through which we have been able to fund three part time members of staff and new activity.

In July 2015, we were halfway through Bristol's year as European Green Capital. BEN was leading the Energy Action Group for the Green Capital Partnership and several member groups and the Network were successful in securing funding through the grants programmes available for the year. A key BEN project in 2015 was the Energy Champions initiative in collaboration with the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE).

As 2015 drew to a close, BEN reached agreement with BCC over funding for a year's worth of activity supporting the further development of community energy activity in the city. As well as supporting the core activities of The Network, additional funding has enabled us to develop outreach and capacity building activity.

The BEN Board of Directors (8 people) and staff meet regularly to review and plan the work of the Network.

The network's core activities and priorities were set in consultation with the membership in 2014 and have not changed. They 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 2015-2016:

- Project development: David Tudgey (0.5fte)
- Coordinator (including, to Dec 2015 energy champions) and energy fund support: Sophie Pritchard (0.5fte)
- Outreach: Thando Zwane (0.6fte from Jan 2016)

Projects and activities

Energy Action Group – to December 2015

A sub-group of Bristol Green Capital Partnership and one of 14 action groups, the Energy Action Group's aim was of 'accelerating progress towards Bristol becoming a truly sustainable energy city, through reducing energy consumption, increasing renewable energy generation, reducing fuel poverty and engaging and empowering people'. BEN was voted as chair of the group, a position that Jerome Thomas took on to represent BEN with CSE as vice-chair.

The group successfully supported winning bids to the Green Capital Bristol 2015 funding including:

- Energy Champions (BEN) – to recruit, train and diffuse ‘champions’ to support existing groups and develop new activity,
- Cold Homes Energy Efficiency Survey Experts (CHEESE) (Bristol Friends of the Earth, Easton Energy Group, Lawrence Weston and Bishopston, Redland, Cotham Energy) -
- Talking Energy (Talking Money & Make Your Home Eco) – designed to help vulnerable individuals in fuel debt get support through workshop support and peer to peer learning
- Route to Retrofit (Bristol Green Doors) - to encourage and enable people to retrofit
- African Voices - To train and recruit energy champions from BME networks
- Energy Tree (Demand Energy Equality, Bristol Drugs project and @bristol) – the installation of energy tree and solar panel workshops with school children

As 2015 drew to a close, a wrap up event for the group discussed Bristol’s potential to be a zero carbon city with invited speakers from Greenpeace, the Resilience Centre and the Green Party introducing their own analyses.

The Green Capital Partnership’s first meeting of 2016 focused on energy with the City Council’s ‘Energy Security Framework’ under scrutiny.

Energy Champions

The Energy Champions project was run in partnership with CSE, it started in December 2014 and continued to the end of December 2015 by which time there were 140 champions recruited. The aim was to recruit volunteers from across Bristol, provide training in energy and then support them to assist existing energy groups, run their own projects and approach non-energy community groups to support them to run energy projects. The co-ordinator managed recruitment and training whilst the project officer helped connect them to groups and find activities for them to undertake. Some champions, after the end of the project, continued as volunteers for different community groups but, without the regular support, others ceased to be involved. Many of the member groups have benefited from their support notably Bristol Energy Cooperative and the CHEESE project, as well as new groups forming.

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.

Whilst some of the programme has been carried out internally by BCC, BEN and its members have been involved in the following activity:

i) Community Outreach

Outreach was seen as the key activity that BEN needed to do with the additional funding offered. It was recognized that community energy initiatives were concentrated in particular areas of the city and were largely run by a particular (predominantly white, middle class, male?) segment of the population and, whilst all activity is welcome, if BEN is really to make a difference across the city we need to reach new communities. Thando Zwane, our Outreach Officer, started in January on a 12 month 0.6fte contract and has spent the year connecting with new communities, understanding what their issues are and helping them to apply to the Bristol Community Energy Fund (BCEF). As agreed with BCC, this activity has largely been in the four target wards of Lockleaze, St Pauls, Knowle West and Brislington. She has met with 19 community groups and 15 of them have applied for funding from the BCEF - 7 successfully in the first round.

ii) Supporting the Bristol Community Energy Fund

A key part of widening engagement was the availability of grant funding to support new projects. £300,000 has been made available in grant funding to be awarded over a number of funding rounds. 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 our support for the fund. Part of Sophie’s job has been to work with BCC and Quartet to develop and launch BCEF, including holding focus groups and recruiting the panel. The first funding round was launched in February and grants worth £53,000 were awarded in March to 12 groups out of a total of 32 applicants. The second round opened in June 2016 following a thorough review of the first round which was led by the panel. Changes included developing a scoring matrix for panel members and amending the application form. A particular feature of this fund, and what makes it stand out from other funds, is the work of the dedicated outreach person to get the word out, offering support to apply and support to carry out the projects. This is rare in the funding world.

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 supporting existing members apply for the fund and help develop citywide approaches to projects such as CHEESE project and Demand Energy Equality solar workshops, identifying common themes between groups applying for funding and putting them in touch with other to help build capacity and reduce duplication. Working in the four targeted area has identified opportunities and learning for the network and led to locally based themed BEN meetings. Although this has largely concentrated on the four target wards agreed with BCC, opportunities have been grasped when they have arisen – for example by having a stall at the Festival of Nature and supporting member groups with their events. We now have new materials including thermal imaging cameras and a powerbike which are available to all member groups.

Roadshow / pop-up events held:

- 18th January-Blue Monday
- 13th February-Love Your Community in Barton Hill Settlement
- 2nd May-Redland May Fayre
- 2nd May-91 Ways to Build a Global Community, St Pauls
- 11th and 12th of June-Festival of Nature
- 18th June-Owen Square Community Energy
- 18th June-Lawrence Weston Carnival
- 23rd July 2016 – Love Lockleaze

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 such as setting up a new website, Facebook page and regular use of Twitter.

BEN meetings and events, 2015-16

- 1 BEN open meeting: ‘Engaging communities in energy issues’ - 23 June 2015, Trinity
- 2 Energy Action Group regular meeting (BEN chair) - 16 July 2015
- 3 AGM and social - 21 October 2015, Easton Community Centre
- 4 BEN / EAG - ‘What could a Green Energy Plan look like for Bristol and the South West’ - 3 Dec 2015, Trinity
- 5 BEN open meeting: ‘It doesn't stop here’ - 3 Feb 2016, The Station
- 6 Energy Skillshare (Energy Champions) - 20 Feb 2016, Hamilton House
- 7 BEN open meeting: ‘More than the sum of our parts’ - 4 May 2016, Kuumba Centre
- 8 BEN open meeting: ‘Putting communities at the heart of Bristol's energy system’ - 6 July 2016, Lockleaze

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 including recruiting the new outreach officer and helping to ensure that current community efforts are recognised and built on for the benefit of the whole city.

BEN Directors 2015-2016:

The network's board is currently comprised of the following 8 directors:



Caroline Bird



Jake Barnes



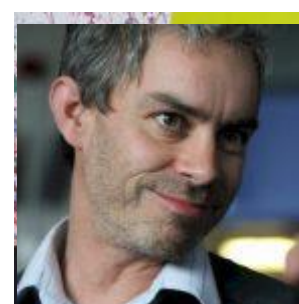
Vicky Wakefield-Jarrett



Paul Adams



Simon Roberts OBE
Charlotte Eddisford
Vincent Brissenden
Sam Willitts



A ninth director,
Mohammed Elsharif, was
elected to the board in

October 2015 and, whilst he only served until January 2016, brought valuable experience to the Board and supported staff in carrying out their roles.

Finances and funding

Activity up to December 2015 was largely funded by the Energy Champions project.

Following consultation with the membership on future priorities for BEN and negotiations with BCC, the Network secured agreement from BCC for a total spend of £110,000 to cover Outreach, support for the Community Energy Grant Fund and Capacity Building as well as core co-ordination. 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.

A detailed financial breakdown is provided in the accompanying financial report.

Future plans

Following this year of activity, BEN is in good shape for the future. It has a higher profile within and beyond the city, good communication materials, office and storage space and a growing list of member organisations.

HOWEVER, current funding runs out in March 2017 and the Board are actively seeking new sources of finance. The development of a strategy for the future of BEN is part of this planning. We will be consulting 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 2016)

1. African Voices Forum
2. Ambition Lawrence Weston
3. Bedminster Energy Group
4. Bishopston, Cotham and Redland Energy Group
5. Bristol Energy Cooperative
6. Bristol Friends of the Earth
7. Bristol Green Doors
8. Bristol Power Cooperative
9. Buzz Lockleaze
10. Centre for Sustainable Energy (non-voting)
11. Change Agents (non-voting)
12. CHEESE project
13. Cycletricity
14. Demand Energy Equality
15. Easton Energy Group
16. Full Circle
17. Greater Fishponds
18. Keynsham Community Energy
19. Low Carbon Gordano
20. MakeYourHomeEco
21. Montpelier Energy Group
22. Pennywise (non-voting)
23. re:work ltd
24. Totterdown Energy Group
25. Sustainable Thornbury
26. Talking Money (non-voting)