



# Bristol Energy Network

## Directors Report 2018

This report is a summary of the network's activities over the period of its financial year July 2017-June 2018 and includes some activity up to the AGM on December 10<sup>th</sup> 2018.

### Summary of the year

This year has been one of consolidating the activity of previous years and developing the learning from the community engagement processes to good effect in new projects. In particular, we have been working with the city council – firstly, in 2017, to review and then support further rounds of their 'Bristol Community Energy Fund' and secondly, in 2018, fulfilling the community engagement role within the smart homes part of their EU funded REPLICATE project. Through these initiatives we have been able to reach new communities and share the learning of our existing members. As a network, we thrive on the energy and enthusiasm of the membership and work to ensure that there are opportunities to connect across the spectrum of activity of both existing and new members in order to grow the network across the city, reaching communities and members as diverse as Ambition Lawrence Weston, Bristol Energy Co-op, Bedminster Energy Group and the CHEESE project. The addition of a 'Partnerships and Development Manager' role this year has enabled us to be more focussed on developing a funding strategy and relationships to support new bids to suitable funders.

The BEN Board of Directors 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.

### BEN vision and values

*Our vision is a city where clean, green, affordable energy is delivered to the community by the community.*

1. For everyone – actively working to create an energy movement that reflects the diversity of Bristol communities and ensuring everyone has a chance to play a part in designing and carrying out the work;
2. Open and honest – being accountable to those affected by our work by giving them the opportunity to be involved and openly sharing information about our activities;
3. Community-led – communities, rather than private interests, lead the work and benefit from it;
4. Sharing and supporting – working together, sharing learning and supporting each other to achieve shared goals.

### BEN core activities

- **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 2017-2018:**

- Project development: **David Tudgey** (0.5fte)
- Coordinator and energy fund support: **Sophie Pritchard** (0.5fte up to December 2017)
- Administrator: **Caroline Ennion** (0.25fte from 19 February 2018)
- Partnerships and Development Manager: **Mary-Jane Wilshire** (0.6 fte from 27 March to September 2018 and continuing at 0.2fte)

## **Projects and activities, July 2017 –June 2018**

### **Smart Energy GB 2017**

This funding enabled BEN to work with a number of organisations representing older people in the city and to raise awareness of Smart meters and their use. We also took the opportunity to raise awareness of energy issues more generally, reaching a wide audience of older people in different parts of the city.

### **Bristol Community Energy Fund (BCEF) 1) Evaluation, June – August 2017 and 2) next rounds – Sept 2017 – March 2018**

In 2015, during Bristol's year as European Green capital, Bristol City Council secured £850k of grant funding from the then Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to develop and deliver a 'community energy best practice' programme intended to pilot new forms of engagement and support for the community energy sector at a citywide level. The funding in part recognised the existence of an active community energy sector already in the city. A key part of widening engagement was the availability of grant funding to support new projects with 3 funding rounds between April 2016 and January 2017, awarding £154,000 to 27 projects. A unique feature of this fund has been the engagement carried out by BEN to access new communities, offering support to apply and to carry out the projects.

Before the fund re-opened at the end of 2017, BEN was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the previous rounds drawing on the post-project surveys from Quartet who administered the fund with additional follow-up with funded projects. Case studies produced from the funded projects can be seen at <http://bristolenergynetwork.org/projects/bristol-community-energy-fund/case-studies/>

Key findings included:

- collaborations between new (non-energy) groups and more experienced BEN members worked well
- the fund was successful in reaching areas with higher levels of deprivation
- the application process was clear and support offered was helpful
- reporting and data collection could be more streamlined
- events to share experiences would be welcome

A further 2 rounds were held in 2018 with the second round outcomes announced in June. As previously, once the fund re-opened, we offered one-one support and set up workshops and pro-active support in different neighbourhoods to encourage new communities to consider energy and what might need to be done within their communities.

### **Megawatt support - August – September 2017**

Using our experience with supporting the BCEF fund, we carried out a similar role with the Bristol Energy Co-op's 'Megawatt' fund, carrying out workshops and one-to-one support for applicants. A total of 10 projects across the city and beyond were awarded funding totalling £50,000.

## **REPLICATE – from December 2017**

REPLICATE (REnaissance of PLaces with Innovative Citizenship And Technology) is an EU-funded multi partner project across 3 main cities: Bristol, Florence and San Sebastian. Within Bristol, approaches include looking at transport, energy and ICT solutions for a sustainable city. The city council is offering ‘smart’ white goods (washing machines, dishwashers and dryers) free to households together with subsidised retrofit measures to make households more energy efficient.

BEN leads the community engagement process in this context and, working with Knowle West Media Centre, local community partner organisations and community energy champions, we have been taking the energy message out to communities across the target wards of Easton, Lawrence Hill and Ashley – using the opportunity not just to promote the project but also to raise energy awareness and create a legacy of knowledge.

## **Conference 19 October 2018 ‘The Energy Transition: Top Down v. Grassroots**

The conference was a highlight of our activity this autumn with over 150 attendees and a great range of speakers from both the grassroots – including Bath and Plymouth - and government, city council and support organisations (the ‘top down’).

## **Co-ordination and representation**

Alongside the funded project activity, the co-ordination and management of the network has continued as an essential part of supporting the whole network. This includes monthly e-newsletters, open network meetings and other communications through the website, Facebook page and regular use of Twitter.

Throughout the year Directors and staff have also taken opportunities to participate in meetings, consultations and the development of initiatives to help ensure the community perspective on energy is heard and represented.

## **BEN meetings and events, July 2017 – June 2018**

1. **Stall at BGCP 10th Anniversary Green Mingle**, 06 July 2017, celebrating the Green Capital Partnership’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and our success in the Better Bristol Crowdfund
2. **BEN Open meeting**, Redcliffe, 4 Oct 2017 ‘What does Community Energy need to thrive?’
3. **BEN 2017 AGM**, 6 December 2017, at the Bristol Energy hub, with Cleo Lake (now Lord Mayor of Bristol) as guest speaker.
4. **BEN Open meeting**, Bedminster, 17 April 2018 ‘Collaborating for a Better Bristol: focus on assets & activities’
5. **BEN Open meeting**, Easton, 3 July 2018, Community Energy Fortnight – celebration of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bristol Community Strategy for Energy

In addition to these meetings for members, the REPLICATE outreach and engagement activity has seen BEN represented at many events in the city during 2018.

## Finances and funding

As well as covering staffing costs – spread across 3 staff members, the pricing of contracts has covered overheads so that we have maintained office space, covered the costs of financial and staff management, hired venues and provided refreshments for meetings.

The following activities have been funded during the report period:

- 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
- Bristol Energy Co-op – Megawatt support (£2,500) – August 2017
- Smart Energy GB (£4,800) – October 2017
- Bristol City Council supporting the re-opening of BCEF (£14,000) – October 2017
- Bristol City Council REPLICATE community engagement contract (£42,000)

A more detailed financial breakdown is provided in the accompanying accounts for FY 17/18.

## Governance

The BEN Board of Directors meets every month or two 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, have been working with the City Council to ensure the smooth running of the BCEF and REPLICATE projects and explored how BEN could be involved in new projects. 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 2017-2018:

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



**Caroline Bird** (chair)



**Jake Barnes**



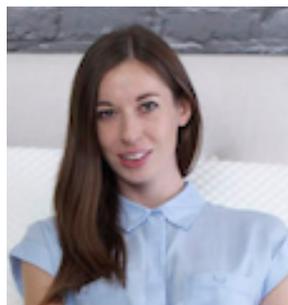
**Charlie Eddisford**



**Sam Willitts**



**Jen Coles**



**Helen Lacey** (who was acting in an advisory capacity and formally joined the Board in the spring)

## Future plans

BEN continues to thrive with an increasingly visible presence within and beyond the city, and a growing list of member organisations. The conference which we held, with partners, in Bristol in October 2018 attracted national attention and helped cement relations with significant local and national organisations including The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Community Energy England, Locality and Power to Change as well as Bristol Energy, Bath and West Community Energy and Plymouth Energy.

Current projects include:

1. REPLICATE: community and participant engagement for the retrofit / smart homes element of the project
2. Smart Energy GB 2018: engagement with older citizens on smart meters
3. InnovateUK funded 'Bristol Energy Smart System Transformation' (**BESST**) (from Jan 2019): supporting design of customer-centric solutions to scale up a local smart energy system in Bristol in support of the planned City Leap

We are sad to say goodbye to Mary-Jane who leaves us at the end of December and has been very valuable in helping shape and develop funding approaches for the future. Charlotte Eddisford, Helen Lacey and Bakary Sanneh are all stepping down as Directors this December. We thank them for their insights and hard work supporting and guiding the network's activities.

The Board continue to seek new sources of finance, building on the strategy for the future of BEN that was developed in 2017 and looking for suitable projects which we can work on with our members and other partners.

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.

## Membership

The network has corporate, individual and third sector members and, whilst anyone interested in the activities of the network and subscribing to our values can be a member, only community and non-profit initiatives in Bristol and the surrounding area have voting rights. All members are however regularly consulted with, on an ongoing and largely informal basis.

### **Current member organisations (alphabetical, as of December 2018)**

1. 1625 Independent People
2. African Voices Forum
3. Ambition Lawrence Weston
4. Bearpit Bristol CIC
5. Bedminster Energy Group
6. Bishopston, Cotham and Redland Energy Group
7. Boundless Futures
8. Bristol Energy Cooperative
9. Bristol Green Doors
10. Bristol Power Cooperative
11. Buzz Locklease
12. Centre for Sustainable Energy
13. CHEESE project
14. Coal Action Network
15. Demand Energy Equality
16. East Bristol Foodbank
17. Easton Energy Group
18. Friends of the Earth Bristol
19. Full Circle
20. Greater Fishponds
21. GroundWork South
22. Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership
23. Keynsham Community Energy
24. Low Carbon Gordano
25. MakeYourHomeEco
26. North Bristol Advice Centre
27. re:work ltd
28. Residents Against Dirty Energy
29. Totterdown Energy Group
30. Sustainable Thornbury
31. Talking Money
32. UJIMA

There are additionally another 30 individual and commercial organisations signed up as members but without formal voting rights.