PUCKLECHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 5TH JANUARY 2026 AT 19:00 AT THE SCOUT HUT.

PRESENT.
Cllrs G Boyle, H Parker, R Dunning, T Symons, J Hawkins and D Freestone
In attendance: David Tudgey from Bristol Energy Network (BEN), Clerk D Dunning and Wards Councillor Palmer and Stokes

Meeting commenced at 19:15.

Public Participation.
None.

2026/01/05 No 1. To receive apologies for absence.
Cllrs Hemmings and Reid.
Cllr Pibworth was absent.

2026/01/05 No 2. To receive further information and updates from Bristol Energy Network on their proposal for wind turbines at Leigh Farm.
David Tudgey presented an update since the last meeting:

- Public engagement meetings have been delayed until January.
- Agreed there is the need to conduct more noise monitoring across Parkfield. This is being addressed.
- Flyers will be distributed across Pucklechurch publicising the local engagement events which are:
    - Monday 19 January, 3:30–6:30pm — Pucklechurch Community Centre
    - Tuesday 20 January, 3:30–6:30pm — Westerleigh Village Hall
    - Saturday 31 January, 11:30am–3:30pm — Lyde Green Community Centre.
- Noted council's concerns that the event timings may exclude many working people.
- Ongoing technical work and studies to support the proposal including Heritage and Environmental assessments.
- The planning submission is anticipated at the end of March 2026.
- Apologised for issues around publishing information on the project and its exclusion from the winter edition of Pucklechurch News. Noted the next edition is mid/late February 2026.
- Reiterated BEN's desire to maintain ongoing dialogue and work with parish councils.

There followed comprehensive discussions on a range of topics associated with the project. Council stressed that the lack of clarity and hard facts means Pucklechurch Parish Council is unable at present to explain to the community it represents exactly what direct/indirect benefits, if any their community will receive from this project - appendix 1.

Meeting closed at 8.50pm

Appendix 1 Key discussions

Rationale for selecting Leigh Farm when it is outside the new Local Plan's identified safeguarded area for wind energy development.
South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) has no landholdings in the safeguarded areas. BEN undertook a number of site assessments. While Marshfield Energy was supportive, its plan could not be developed due to birds and one identified Local Authority site was designated a marshland. Leigh Farm was the only available SGC site deemed suitable for the project.

Impact of the turbines on the new Pucklechurch woodland and its wildlife including kites and buzzards.
BEN confirmed the turbines are set back from the woodland which should negate any impact of the sweep of the blades. The transit of birds has been reviewed. BEN stated birds are not attracted to turbine blades and learn to avoid them, so this is not deemed a problem. Arrangements could be made for the council to speak to the ecologists.

Existing infrastructure
BEN sees no issues with the gas pipeline that crosses the site.

Impact of the turbines on the closest local communities within 1km of the site .
BEN will conduct further noise impact assessments to cover all the closest properties including Parkfield (with the agreement of residents).

Partnership working
Whilst acknowledging the complexity of this project has raised difficult conversations, concerns were again raised around the lack of any sort of relationship with ELCoE and the impact on governance and future fund allocations to Pucklechurch.

At this point BEN provided more context on the background to this project.
The project focusses on South Gloucestershire which has a number of energy groups working to address fuel poverty and energy efficiency. This development stage is being funded by West of England Combined Mayoral Authority (WECA) with requirements to conform to the Green Book and best value and the need to demonstrate that the community model is a better option than private ownership.

BEN was tasked to engage with energy organisations to bring forward wind turbine sites. Under the proposal, BEN will initiate and run the two turbines in the early stages, but in the longer term it will be looking to transfer them to the "local community". ELCoE expressed an interest in the scheme and in adopting/hosting one of the two proposed turbines at a later date when risks are lower and refinancing is a more realistic option. A further organisation may likewise host the remaining turbine or other ownership options may need to be explored at a later date. It is anticipated that the initial surplus from years 2-10 may be minimal while construction and operating costs are covered (up to 15 years to pay off all costs) but all surpluses will be used to benefit local communities with initiatives such as fuel poverty support and retrofit programmes.

The non-disclosure agreement prevented any local community involvement until the proposal was agreed by SGC at its Cabinet meeting in July 2025. It was acknowledged that this impacted Government guidance on community engagement and it deviated from the SIFFT model where community engagement starts at stage 1 not as in this case as late as stage 3.

Leigh Farm model
Hard to compare this project with Ambition Lawrence Weston where the defined community was Lawrence Weston and the CIC mandated to direct all surplus to benefit that community. More information will be needed to fully understand the range of options available under this project and how communities will benefits.

BEN confirmed that their research shows it will be feasible to supply energy generated to the Science Park AI datacentre who have expressed an interest even with the potential for future housing developments. BEN see this project as being good for the planet and good for the community.

Defining "community" and benefits
Throughout the discussions the council remained concerned that information on the project seems to continually shift and that clarity around the actual benefits to Pucklechurch remains unclear and too fluid. it remains unclear who was meant by "community", is it a community of interests or a community of place or indeed an actual community driving the project? This has implications for:

- Who will actually benefit from the income surplus.
- How will the surplus be distributed – BEN mentioned via an application process
- Who will set the priorities and what gives them the authority to decide
- How can our community make its own decisions

Currently unlike commercial projects, there is no consideration or proposals to recompense Pucklechurch parish for the siting of a major infrastructure project in its parish and its impact. Nor indeed is there consideration for the impact on the adjacent parish of Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath. Pucklechurch Parish Council would be looking for an annual payment as recompense for hosting each turbine which it can use to directly benefit Pucklechurch. This would be in addition to our community having access to the community benefits generated by the project.

Publicity
For transparency and clarity, information should make clear that this is an energy sector driven project which proposes using a "community owned" model where any surplus income is invested in local communities.