

CONTINUING TO PUT RESIDENTS FIRST

Delivering a Sustainable Future

The 2019 B&NES Conservative
Manifesto



**Vote Conservative on
2nd May 2019 at the
Bath and North East
Somerset Council
Elections**

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FOREWORD

From the Leader of the Conservative Group in Bath and North East Somerset

Delivering a Sustainable Future - Continuing to Put Residents First

In 2015, we took over a Council that had been left by the Liberal Democrats with a £1.7 million funding gap where they had no realistic plan for dealing with the financial consequences.

Facing up to these challenges has required some tough decisions, but we have delivered on the promises we made to put residents first, while protecting vital services for the most vulnerable in our community: we've increased the Adult Social Care budget by £7.5 million - the largest and most sustained increase in well over a decade.

We have reduced the revenue budget by £49 million through cutting waste, changing the way we work and boosting sources of Council income.

We've pushed for innovative ideas, creating a new local authority owned housing company that will deliver affordable local homes, while our new approach to domestic waste collection saves money and has increased recycling by over 30%.

Since 2017, B&NES has directly gained over £21m to improve our roads. We have delivered a record number of new homes surpassing our target with over 1250 being built in 2017/18 alone – the majority of which on 'brownfield sites'.

I firmly believe our broad range of achievements locally and vision for the future continues to put residents first in everything we do!

You voting for a Conservative Council allows us to deliver the sustainable future that residents deserve whilst avoiding the financial catastrophe that the alternative could cause!

Sincerely,

**Councillor Tim Warren
Conservative Group Leader,
Bath and North East Somerset Council**



OUR KEY COMMITMENTS

1 DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

Improve and increase sustainable transport throughout B&NES, giving residents clear choice and independence when travelling.

2 ACHIEVE CLEAN AIR

Taking the initiative and tackling the issue of clean air in Bath and North East Somerset without charging cars.

3 MAINTAIN OUR STRONG FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Finishing our plan to cut waste whilst finding innovative ways of generating income to save taxpayers' money.

4 INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

Investing in local communities to promote a cleaner, greener environment for residents to benefit from while protecting our heritage.

5 EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE VULNERABLE

We will build on our achievements to continue to provide excellent education, modern facilities and a high standard of care for all.

6 BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We will redress the demand for affordable housing through further regeneration on 'brownfield sites' and give priority to B&NES residents.

7 GROWING OUR ECONOMY

Securing investment into B&NES to ensure we remain prosperous, vibrant and open for business.

8 INVESTING IN THE FUTURE THROUGH THE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY

By working closely with the Regional Mayor, we have secured over £79m of capital investment into B&NES; we will ensure our residents continue to benefit from future investment and projects.

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

Our vision is to improve upon and increase sustainable transport throughout Bath and North East Somerset to give residents real alternatives when travelling.

This is achieved through tackling the fundamental issue of congestion whilst making the road and rail network more resilient.

We will continue to support creative and imaginative experimentation into new clean and sustainable transport measures, automated vehicles and popular mass transport in order to improve the quality of life of all residents.

We will provide:

- ◆ A comprehensive B&NES Transport Study to investigate solutions to our transport issues;
- ◆ Additional and significantly improved local train connections between Bristol and Bath;
- ◆ A bus station feasibility study;
- ◆ Batheaston roundabout improvements, Priority Green Wave at traffic light junctions;
- ◆ Investigate free school bus transport for all B&NES children;
- ◆ Development of Metrobus;
- ◆ Continued support with groups over Community Transport to develop a rural service;
- ◆ Togg Hill and Freezing Hill Lane improvements to boost accessibility to the Lansdown Park & Ride;
- ◆ Where requested by the public and possible, further roll out of Residential Parking Zones;
- ◆ Support for the Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan which provides safer routes to school;
- ◆ Improvements to the Hicks Gate Roundabout to alleviate congestion;
- ◆ Roll out of 'low traffic areas' such as in Kingsmead Square and Milsom Street;
- ◆ Suburban Rail project which lets people travel from Bath, Oldfield Park and Keynsham to stations across Bristol including Clifton without changing;
- ◆ Continue working with Network Rail to enable capacity for Saltford Station;
- ◆ A37/ A362 improvements for the upcoming Somer Valley Enterprise Zone;
- ◆ Install a pelican crossing outside Norton Hill School.



ACHIEVING CLEAN AIR

For too long, air pollution has been largely ignored as an issue throughout Bath and North East Somerset and kicked down the road by consecutive administrations.... until now.

The Conservatives have taken the initiative and found a balanced solution which achieves clean air, without charging cars.

We firmly believe that our decision is a balanced one that protects the less well-off who cannot afford to have a car that is compliant.

Whilst we were mandated by Central Government to act on Bath, we fully recognise that clean air is an issue throughout North East Somerset, particularly in Temple Cloud and Farrington Gurney—that is why we have set funding in our budget to find a solution in the rural villages.



In addition to the 'Class C' Clean Air Zone, the supporting measures we are pushing for to achieve clean air are:

- ◆ Grants of £2k to help people to upgrade their cars—taking polluting ones off the street and giving priority to local residents and people living in neighbouring areas who work within the CAZ;
- ◆ Park and Ride opening hours extension and secure overnight 24/7 car parking;
- ◆ New electric vehicle charging points — including on street charging;
- ◆ More walking and cycling routes;
- ◆ Enforcing anti-idling and weight restrictions whilst ensuring all buses are compliant;
- ◆ All registered blue badge holders, registered healthcare providers and registered community transport providers who drive vans or minibuses would be able to register for a concession until 1st January 2023 giving drivers longer to upgrade. Wheelchair accessible taxis are exempt until January 2023;
- ◆ Interest-free loans to help owners of Pre-Euro 6 diesel commercial vehicles, whether that's a bus, taxi or lorry, to upgrade or retrofit their vehicle.

ACHIEVING CLEAN AIR

- ◆ Further support for local green businesses;
- ◆ Concessions until 2023 giving businesses longer to change their vehicles;
- ◆ Retrofitting for local buses;
- ◆ New Charging Hubs which will work similar to petrol stations, but for electric cars; drivers will be able to refuel their cars in minutes rather than hours;
- ◆ New electric car clubs and council fleet upgrades;
- ◆ Expansion of the successful electricbike-hire scheme that we have implemented across the city.



MAINTAIN STRONG FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Back in 2015, the Liberal Democrats had left the Council with a £1.7m funding gap which needed to be immediately filled. Since then we have found a further £49m of revenue savings while protecting the frontline services which assist the most vulnerable.

Throughout our administration, the Conservatives have not been afraid to face up to the difficult decisions – we have a plan to secure the long-term sustainability of the Council, rather than risking going back to the financial challenges we inherited.



To continue our plan to balance the Council's finances, we will:

- Continue to lobby Central Government to help us generate our own income to keep council tax down – this is achieved through:
 - **Short-Term Holiday Lettings Levy ("Airbnb's):** The majority of owners let out their properties for most of the year but, unlike hotels and B&Bs, are exempt from taxation unless their income exceeds a certain threshold; introducing a levy levels the playing field;
 - **Introducing a Local Tourism Levy:** A tourism levy for B&NES could raise over £2million per annum when applying a £1 per night per bed rate, which would be reinvested to maintain the world heritage status of our city;
- Continue to find efficiency savings throughout the Council by, amongst other things, further utilising digital services where appropriate;
- Roll out more Council partnerships with neighbouring authorities' departments to share expertise whilst cutting costs;
- Expand the Council's housing company to regenerate brownfield sites and bring derelict properties back into residential use which can often also generate income;
- Continue to negotiate with Government to lower business rates.

INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

Our vision is to invest in communities at all levels to make the environment we live in cleaner, greener and healthier with access to facilities that benefit all residents and local groups.

Since taking control of the Council, we have introduced an innovative waste service which has boosted recycling by over 30%, whilst crucially saving taxpayer money and reducing the amount we send to landfill by 75%. We have reduced gulls by 25% and protected the Council's street cleaning budget together with tougher enforcement on litterers up to £150 and £400 for fly-tipping. We are opening up new community libraries at a time when nationally they are closing down and upgraded the mobile library with onboard WIFI for remoter areas of B&NES.

On top of this, we have signed on the dotted line to bring back a centrally-located Police Station in Bath after it was shut down during the Liberal Democrat's previous administration.

To continue investing in your future, we will:

- ◆ Oversee the reopening of Bath Police Station;
- ◆ Continue to be one of the top local authorities in the UK for recycling;
- ◆ Yet again, protect the existing free parking that the Council provides in our towns and villages;
- ◆ Further increase the number of community libraries in the scheme that we have spearheaded;
- ◆ Complete the modernisation of Keynsham and Bath Leisure Centres;
- ◆ Continue to work with local organisations and interested parties to safeguard the future of the Bathampton Meadows;
- ◆ Promote investment in our green spaces across B&NES, particularly in Keynsham, Sydney Gardens, Alice Park and the Bathscape project for families to enjoy;
- ◆ Transform the consultation process that the council operates in order to be more accessible and user-friendly to residents.



EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE VULNERABLE

Since 2015 we have overwhelmingly achieved in providing excellent education, modern facilities and a high standard of care:

- We have boosted school funding from one of the lowest in the South West to one of the highest
- We are the best performing Children's Social Care Provider in the South West
- We have improved educational outcomes with over 90% of children in 'good' or 'outstanding' schools as opposed to 78% in 2015
- We are the best in the country for equal opportunities and the 3rd best for supporting families



In addition, we increased the Adult Social Care budget by £7.5 million which protects elderly and vulnerable residents whilst enabling people to remain in their own homes – this is the biggest and most sustained social care investment in over 10 years.

To build on our success for Young People and the Vulnerable, we will:

- ◆ Secure extra resources to maintain specialist staff so families have early-access help;
- ◆ Continue to promote fostering as a positive and rewarding opportunity for our residents;
- ◆ Publish our 'Council Offer' to our Care Leavers and do more work with partner organisations to ensure that young people who have been in our care have the best opportunities to thrive;
- ◆ Create additional special school places to meet local needs and reduce the number of children having to access residential schools at a greater distance from home;
- ◆ Work with young people, schools and other partners to improve educational outcomes for our most disadvantaged children;
- ◆ Encourage proposals for a skills academy in B&NES, which delivers local skills training at post-16 to ensure we have a future workforce aligned to the skills needed by employers;
- ◆ Redress the attainment gap for disadvantaged children in B&NES, aiming to narrow the gap between high and low performers through our Realising Talent Scheme.



BUILDING MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Whilst Bath and North East Somerset is a thriving and vibrant region we fully recognise that more needs to be done to redress the demand for affordable housing.

Over the last 4 years we have been the envy of our neighbouring authorities across the West of England by beating our record on affordable housing for 3 consecutive years.

However, we remain firm that our greenbelt and countryside must remain protected for future generations.

Therefore our primary aim is to further regenerate brownfield sites across B&NES whilst opposing unnecessary development on the greenbelt.



To deliver this we will:

- ◆ Defend our local greenbelt against inappropriate housing development;
- ◆ Invest in development on 'brownfield' sites;
- ◆ Continue to work with the West of England to support and invest in new affordable housing schemes throughout B&NES;
- ◆ Fight for as much affordable housing as possible on the Bath Quays redevelopment project;
- ◆ Work to give priority to B&NES residents in new housing projects, where possible, using Keynsham Riverside as a model going forward;
- ◆ Ensuring that the villages and market towns' distinct communities and way of life are preserved from developments that directly affect this.



GROWING OUR ECONOMY, INCREASING LOCAL JOBS

Over the last 4 years we have worked hard to secure investment to ensure that B&NES remains prosperous, vibrant and open for business.

Only the Conservatives can be trusted to attract even more high paying, highly skilled jobs for the benefit of local people through the Bath Quays and Somer Valley Enterprise Zone which we have spearheaded.

Through working with the West of England and independent traders we are formulating a plan to tackle the retail crisis in the city, market towns and villages.



To achieve this, we will:

- ◆ Work closely to maintain the independent retail sector within Bath and North East Somerset;
- ◆ Apply the 'Love our High Streets' - £3.3 million funding to increase footfall, attract new uses and improve local facilities in Midsomer Norton Town Centre, Twerton High Street and Bath City Centre;
- ◆ Campaign to treble the size of the 'Love our High Streets' budget to £10 million for B&NES;
- ◆ Protect the city's heritage and international status through backing the 'Great Spas of Europe project' which seeks to give Bath a rare double-listing as a World Heritage site;
- ◆ Invest in the future of the Fashion Museum elevating it to a truly world-renowned status;
- ◆ Invest in Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock town centres through regeneration projects, supporting independent traders and animating the high streets to attract additional footfall;
- ◆ Promote the completion of the roll-out of superfast broadband, especially in rural areas;
- ◆ Develop skills training and access to employment / apprenticeships by working with local schools, colleges and universities;
- ◆ Bring together the heritage craftspeople through improved training opportunities to ensure the city's traditional skills are retained into the future in order to maintain the World Heritage Site;
- ◆ Promote the completion of the Bath City's Riverside Enterprise Zone which will deliver 9,000 new jobs in the media and publishing sectors;
- ◆ Promote the completion of the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone which is a 'once in a generation' opportunity to bring over 1,700 high paying jobs to the 'Old Mills' site;
- ◆ Restrict the conversion of office space to residential through the cancellation of Article 4 which allowed businesses to automatically obtain planning permission rather than going through the correct planning process.

WHAT WE GET FROM OUR WEST OF ENGLAND MEMBERSHIP

B&NES Conservatives spearheaded setting up the West of England Combined Authority which brings huge investment from government which we wouldn't receive without having a seat at the table of regional decision-making.

By working with the Regional Mayor, Tim Bowles, we have already been allocated around £80m million pounds worth of capital funding.

Connecting Communities, Tackling Transport and Investing in our Roads

The Conservatives in B&NES are investigating the issues and opportunities facing transport in the city, market towns and the rural villages:

- ◆ £700k for A39 Bences Garage Scheme to ease congestion with the A368 Marksbury Road;
- ◆ Investment into Mass Rapid Transit with routes serving Keynsham and Bath.
- ◆ Suburban Rail: Total of £56.2 million will allow travel from Bath, Oldfield Park and Keynsham across Bristol to Clifton.
- ◆ Further £460k to develop the £4.7 million Hicks Gate Roundabout Scheme which alleviates congestion and journey delays at the junction;
- ◆ £280k to develop improvements to the A37 and A362, the proposed Somer Valley Enterprise Zone at the Midsomer Norton Old Mills;
- ◆ £100k to enable work at Freezing Hill Lane which will improve accessibility to Lansdown Park & Ride and ease congestion on the London Road;
- ◆ £850k from 2017-19 to tackle potholes through WECA.



WHAT WE GET FROM OUR WEST OF ENGLAND MEMBERSHIP

B&NES is Open for Business

B&NES Conservatives are working with the Regional Mayor to invest in big projects that will provide thousands of high paying jobs and opportunities for you and your families whilst regenerating existing facilities to make them fit for the future:



- ◆ Over £30m to support the Bath Quays North regeneration project which will see 200,000 square feet of offices in the heart of the city – the first of its kind for 30 years;
- ◆ £20m investment in Bath City’s Riverside Enterprise Zone which enables the Council to deliver 9,000 new jobs in the media and publishing sectors;
- ◆ Somer Valley Enterprise Zone - 'once in a generation' opportunity for the Council to bring over 1,700 high paying jobs to the ‘Old Mills’ site at Midsomer Norton;
- ◆ £2m for Bath College to support the refurbishment of its Catering and Hospitality Education and Training Hub;
- ◆ £410k to develop the Bath College Digital and Creative Innovation Centre;
- ◆ B&NES received £3.1m from Business Rate Retention—this money is entirely because of our membership of the West of England Combined Authority;
- ◆ 5G Tourism Trial— Access to trial a superfast 5G network as part of a £5m investment;
- ◆ ‘Love our High Streets’ - £3.3m funding to increase footfall, attract new uses and improve local facilities in Midsomer Norton Town Centre, Twerton High Street and Bath City Centre – we are campaigning to treble the size of the budget to £10 million for B&NES;
- ◆ West of England Careers Hub – support to strengthen links with employers improving career opportunities at Writhlington School, Broadlands Academy, Bath College and Hayesfield Girls School with work to branch this out to more schools.
- ◆ £4.5m allocation to B&NES schools to support Pre-NEETs (those not in education, employment or training);
- ◆ Future Bright Scheme – help to develop local people’s skills, increase their income and improve their job prospects through career coaching, training and support.