Conclusions of the BetterBath Forum meeting 1 March 2010:
Wind Energy in Bath

The ninth BetterBath meeting discussed how wind energy might contribute to meeting Bath's future energy needs.

Simon Lewin of the Centre for Sustainable Energy explained that wind power is currently the most developed and most cost-effective form of renewable energy. Large turbines are much more effective than smaller ones. Wind performs particularly well on cutting carbon, and there is therefore a pressing need to make progress on installing wind energy if the UK is to meet its legal obligation to cut carbon emissions. He emphasised the importance of the planning system in identifying and managing the constraints on locating wind turbines.

Caroline Kay of the Bath Preservation Trust drew attention to the need for policies on the response to climate change to take account of the importance of Bath's outstanding natural and built environment, and called on B&NES Council to develop appropriate planning policies to clarify what is and is not acceptable within the World Heritage Site and its landscape setting.

Trevor Osborne then chaired a wide-ranging discussion. There was widespread recognition of the urgent need to increase the proportion of our energy needs which is met from renewable sources, and general agreement that wind will need to be a significant part of the mix, particularly in the short to medium term. Some speakers saw no objection to a proliferation of wind turbines around the edges of Bath, while others wanted high priority to be given to protection of the city's particularly important architectural heritage and the beauty of the surrounding countryside. Many people called for more information about the relative merits of the options available (off-shore vs on-shore wind, large vs small turbines, wind energy vs other types of renewable energy etc). It was noted that 10 large (at least 100m high) turbines would supply only 10% of B&NES' electricity requirements.

The Conclusions below are addressed to Councillor Terry Gazzard and Councillor Charles Gerrish for action.

Conclusion 1: Progress must be made as a matter of urgency. In responding to these conclusions the Council should set out a clear timetable for putting in place the strategy and detailed planning policies required to facilitate appropriate wind energy developments.

Conclusion 2: In order to facilitate a better-informed debate, the Council should publish a simple document setting out its best estimate of the proportion of the District's energy needs which might be met by each of the different forms of renewable energy.

Conclusion 3: The Council should commission a detailed study, similar to the West Sussex Sustainable Energy Study, to identify potential locations for wind turbines. Similar studies should be carried out by the other authorities within the West of England Partnership, and decisions on the optimum locations for large turbine installations should be taken at sub-regional level.

Conclusion 4: As recommended by the Government and English Heritage, B&NES urgently needs to develop a comprehensive climate change mitigation strategy covering all aspects of energy conservation and generation, supported by detailed planning policies designed to minimise any adverse impact on the historic natural and built environment. These policies should recognise the fact that wind turbines have a limited life: permission for turbines should be limited to a period of 25 or 30 years.

Conclusion 5: The Council's renewable energy strategy should include the following elements:

1. **Energy conservation is at least as important as energy generation. The first priority must be to encourage reductions in energy use (for example by not over-heating public buildings).**
2. **One size does not fit all. The respective roles and locations for both large and small turbines need to be clarified.**
3. **Community ownership of renewable energy installations can lead to real benefits, both in terms of overcoming local opposition and by making people more careful about their energy use. The strategy should include measures to encourage co-operatives or other community – based organisations to set up their own local energy initiatives.**
4. **Large users of energy such as hospitals or universities may be well placed to develop wind energy projects.**
5. **The strategy must make clear who is going to lead its implementation.**