

## Transition Buxton (TB) Members Meeting May 9th 2023

1	<p><b>Attendance:</b> Jean Ball (Co-Chair) Frances Sussex (Co-Chair) Sue Kardahji (minutes), Farouk Kardahji, Robin Edwards, Ben Evens, Jean Todd, Michael Corcoran, Chris Hallam, Graham Winter.</p> <p><b>Apologies:</b> Veronica &amp; Ian Hawthorn, Jane Reynolds, Derek Bodey, Tim Ball</p>
2.  Q1 & Q2	<p><b>Zoom Meeting with Robert Largan MP – Chaired by Jean Ball</b></p> <p>Mr Largan gave permission for the meeting to be recorded for the purposes of minute taking. His responses are <i>shown in italic script</i>. We took questions that had been submitted in advance first, then opened it up to the room.</p> <p>Q1 and Q2 are combined as they cover the same topic.</p> <p><b>Q1 The recently published Government targets for improvement to river pollution, halting wildlife decline, etc are totally inadequate to meet the commitment to have 30% of land and sea protected by 2030. The Office for Environmental protection has reported that of the 23 targets 14 are “off track” and the remaining 9 cannot be assessed for lack of data.</b></p> <p><b>Is Mr Largan aware of this disgraceful state of affairs and how will it be resolved?</b></p> <p><b>Q2 Given your public statements of concern over the disgraceful state of sewage in water, do you think that the companies should be prevented from paying out dividends and bonuses until the issue is resolved?</b></p> <p><b>RL:</b> <i>Ok, the first thing to say is The Office for Environmental Protection is very new, only created last year by this Govt. in the Environment Act, specifically to hold the Govt. to account and we are going to meet our world-leading targets so I think it’s a very good thing that the office exists, that it is tracking these targets and is holding the Govt. to account on it.</i></p> <p><i>Obviously, there’s a lot more to be done. As the Q has highlighted, one of the key issues is lack of data, so that is something that is being addressed as we speak. The plan, in particular in terms of water quality, we’re already at record levels of water monitoring. Only 7% of our rivers and waterways were being monitored back in 2010 and we will hit 100% by the end of this year.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of the water that is covered in High Peak, I believe that Severn Trent already has 100% monitoring in place and it is over 90% by United Utilities and it is on track to hit 100% by the end of the year.</i></p> <p><i>So, that’s really good that we’re doing this monitoring and that we’re getting there on these points and, again, as I say, that the office exists in the first place.</i></p> <p><i>Also, we’ve seen massive improvements both in the monitoring and in the actual data of things like air quality. They’ve seen significant drops in levels of things like NO2, SO2. I think it’s probably worth going into a bit more detail on the point around water quality and sewage as that is the main thrust of the question and one that has attracted lots of attention and headlines and concerns. So, it’s something that I’ve talked about a lot, that I care about a lot, that I have previously voted against the Govt.on and was able to get the Govt. to strengthen the legislation, putting in a public duty on water companies to end the storm overflow discharges into rivers. So, as things are at the moment, the Environment Act has already put a lot of this stuff on a statutory footing and we’re going to go further with a whole lot of secondary legislation, which the Environment Act allows us to do, to put in legally binding targets.</i></p> <p><i>We’re introducing unlimited fines on water companies and also tighter controls on dividend payments.</i></p> <p><b>JB</b> “ I thought they were being consulted on? Have they been passed?</p>

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Q3

**RL** *They are in the process of going through. The House took a view and voted in favour of putting this stuff on a statutory basis, only a few weeks ago.*

*Just to throw some numbers at you; we've had 58 prosecutions against water companies since 2015, that's £141million raised in fines. That includes a £90m fine for Southern Water, that has a particularly bad record and the money that has been raised from that is being put straight back into our natural environment, a lot of it going into water quality but some of it going into other areas. Ideally some of it going into moorland restoration, which is obviously a really big deal in the HP and something that I've pushed for a lot. We've managed to get a tripling of funding for our restoration of moorland and also, we are requiring water companies to invest huge amounts of money into the infrastructure; £56 billions of investment they are having to make sorting out our water infrastructure to end storm overflows.*

*So, lots of positive stuff and there's lots more I'd love to see done but really good progress. The fact that there's monitoring going on. As I say, back in 2010 only 7% of our waterways above storm overflows were being monitored so, we genuinely didn't know what was happening and there was some really appalling storm overflow and sewage dumping going on. That is now being monitored and being addressed, which I think is a really important step forward.*

**JB.** *"The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the Q was whether the people running those companies and their investors should be rewarded until they've cleaned up their act"*

**RL:** *Yes, as I say we're bringing in those tighter controls around dividend payments. I am not a big fan of our water companies. I think that they have underinvested for decades and one of the reasons they've been able to get away with it is 1) because there was no monitoring and 2) because there wasn't any firm action being taken but since the Environment Act's been passed there's the requirement for monitoring, since the Office for Environmental Protection been introduced there's been an absolutely huge drive and massive public awareness and it's something I very regularly have conversations with both Severn Trent and United Utilities. I'm going to be having another meeting, on site, with United Utilities in the next few weeks with senior figures there and at one of our rivers to highlight the challenge and push for even further action. That's what we're doing.* **JB.** *I could do some follow up Qs but I'm aware we want to get through a lot in a short amount of time so I'll move on to:*

**The Climate and Ecology Bill is returning to Parliament, tomorrow, May 10<sup>th</sup>. Can we count on your support for the bill? Are there any elements of the bill that you are uncertain of or uneasy about?**

**RL:** *I'm not sure that it is returning to parliament tomorrow. I'm not sure what information you have that's saying it's returning to parliament tomorrow. It's certainly not on the order paper that I've got, so I don't think that's quite right.*

**JB:** *if it's not tomorrow it's likely to be very soon, it's coming back for its 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.* **RL:** *I look forward to that and I'll look at it very closely. I think it's worth noting that we do already have a world-leading reduction framework in place. We were the 1<sup>st</sup> country to introduce legally-binding long term emission reduction targets and we've got the 2021 Net Zero strategy and a Green (?bus) revolution and we have the Climate Committee who are monitoring a lot of the stuff when it comes to the net zero target, providing advice on how we're going to achieve it and constantly reviewing all that and there are lots of other things such as the Energy Bill that we're debating tonight, which I think may be one of your next Qs that's also worth mentioning and, as I say, I don't think it's quite right that.. tomorrow we're debating a piece of Northern Ireland legislation, not the Climate and Ecology Bill.*

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Q4 **JB:** It's quite possible that the information we've received is slightly inaccurate but that bill is certainly returning to the Commons for its 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

**RL:** *I will look forward to looking at it very closely when it does.*

**JB:** Can we count on your support for it?

**RL:** *Well at the moment I haven't actually seen a finalised wording of the bill. I think the initial wording was just a set of general principles so, the general principles of wanting to tackle climate change, improve our climate and ecology are absolutely things that I share those principles of. I can't commit to something before there's an actual... **JB:** In principle you're in favour of, but in practice you have to read it first? **RL:** *In principle I'm very much in favour of tackling climate change.**

The C&E Bill was raised in Parliament on 10 May under the 10 Minute

Rule <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001mdjk>

**Amendments 237 and 238 to the Energy Bill would introduce changes to the Energy market that would release the potential for community energy generation. Given that these amendments are based on the Private Members Local Electricity Bill of which you are a supporter, can we rely on you voting in favour of them.?"**

<https://powerforpeople.org.uk/the-local-electricity-bill/support/>

**RL:** *You're right in saying I've been very supportive of the idea of local electricity and all of that. From what I can gather and we're currently debating the second reading of the Energy Bill right now so we will be coming back to committee stage, where we look at the amendments more closely in the next few weeks. I will have to look very carefully at those amendments but I know already, having talked to energy ministers just this week, that the issues being covered by those amendments are being covered by the Governments wider review on this whole issue and a reform of the energy market and energy retail and the electricity markets in this ongoing consultation. So, I'm expecting those consultations to look really carefully at specifically this point.*

Q5 **JB:** Given that it's something you've supported before and you've seen most of the amendments, I didn't really get a concrete answer there.

**RL:** *Well, as I say, I'm very much in favour of the principle of local renewable energy schemes and what we're trying to do here. The ministers are going to consult on it and look at it very closely as we go on. Some of this depends on the technical drafting of the amendments. I have to remind you that something could be very good in principle but if it's drafted in a very poor way that might be unworkable. That's something I have to be very careful about. I can't commit to doing something before it's been really looked at very carefully and stress tested and that's why we do all of these extensive consultations. As I say, I've been very much in favour of the principles that covers.*

**The last decade should have been spent transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables. This has not occurred, leaving us exposed to the international fuel market. Renewables are now cheaper. Does Mr Lorgan agree the effective ban on onshore wind farms and the planning problems for solar farms should be reversed immediately?**

**RL:** *Well, I don't agree that we haven't been transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables over the last decade and the data certainly doesn't back that up. To throw some stats at you: Coal use for electricity generation was at 63.5% back in 1990 and was just 2.6% in 2020. Nuclear and renewables part of energy has gone from 22.2% in 1990 and most of that was nuclear, up to 56.3% in 2020. I believe it's either in the G7*

<p><i>or the G8 that we are the country with the biggest, most significant, decarbonisation of any of those countries. So, I think there is very very significant progress. We are now the world leader on off-shore</i></p>
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Q6

wind and we're moving forward to do lots more of that. However, the point about on-shore wind is a reasonable one. I would point out that there isn't a ban on onshore wind. In fact, the Govt. new Energy Security strategy; a big part of it is about developing partnerships with successful local communities who want to host onshore wind infrastructure in return for guaranteed lower energy bills in their local area.

**JB:** Should that not be the other way round as with other planning; you get the wind farm unless you object. Whereas this way you only get it if you plead for it.

**RL:** Well look, the premiss of the question is that there isn't a ban on onshore wind and we're actually putting a lot more resources now into trying to develop onshore wind alongside offshore wind. So, it's a good thing that we're doing all of that. Offshore wind, onshore wind, solar, nuclear, these all have to be part of the energy basket. Nuclear is really important in that, it's really important to stress because wind and solar both are intermittent forms of energy. You need that baseline of energy and that's why you need to have nuclear power. If you look at the countries that have, arguably, done worst and are most exposed to global energy prices is Germany, who decided to make the decision to decommission all of their nuclear power stations and they're having to bring back moth balled coal powered stations, which I think is an incredibly short sighted decision. While on the other hand, the French, who are much better placed and have had a generation of nuclear power stations across the country, which puts them in a much stronger position. We haven't built any new nuclear power stations since the mid 1990s. We have started commissioning new ones with more to come but, I think the fact that there was a lost 15 years from nuclear power was a big, big mistake in terms of our energy security and decarbonisation of our energy market.

A follow up question from the floor:

**On the question of nuclear power, the Government has committed to having a net zero energy strategy by 2035. In terms of renewable capacity, you are pretty much on track for that if you deliver on what you have declared. But if you're looking to nuclear power to act as the balancing technology, how much nuclear power do you think you are going to realistically have connected to the grid by 2035?** **RL:** That's a trillion-dollar question. As I say I think it's deeply regrettable that we've had this lost 15 years on nuclear power but it's one of the reasons why last year we passed The Nuclear Energy Financing Act, which is the big drive towards modular nuclear reactors. The question is we still don't know in terms of modular nuclear reactors; can they be built at scale and can so many of them be built and what will they generate. There are still a few question marks there but, what I do know is that if we don't do anything on this, we're going to have a really big problem where we're still going to be left relying on gas. You have to have nuclear in there because you have to have that baseline of energy. I would happily accept the criticism and challenge that we should have got on and done this sooner. I agree it was a big, big mistake of the Labour Government not to do any of them. Obviously, part of the 2010 – 2015 coalition; energy was part of the Liberal Democrat led policy and they didn't want to commission any new nuclear power stations so it wasn't until 2016 that things got started again so, I'll happily take any criticism on that point.

**JB:** Going back to the question; has there been enough done in the last 20 or more years towards renewables. We would certainly say -no way near enough.

**RL:** Ok, I can accept the challenge that we could always do more but I do think there's been very significant progress on renewables, on phasing out fossil fuels. So, I don't agree with the premiss of the question that there hasn't been transition from fossil fuels to renewables because the data absolutely shows that there has and we're probably one of the best in the world at transitioning away from fossil fuels of any major economy. So, by

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Q7: *any yard stick there's been very significant progress on that but I also accept there's more to be done and quickly and the area where we've most fallen down is nuclear. JB: ..need to invest in storage, energy storage technology, development at scale and there doesn't seem to be a lot of that going on.*  
*RL: There are absolutely huge sums of money being invested by the Government into energy innovation funds, which includes things like carbon capture, energy storage. There's a massive amount of money and research being put into that exact thing so, I wouldn't say that nothing's being done on that but, when it comes to those kinds of technologies, it's one of those things where – how long will it take to develop it? How long is a piece of string- no one can say precisely.*  
*JB: Renewables can be developed much faster than nuclear. In the same 10 -12 years we're talking about we can double our renewable ...*  
*RL: We have done massive growth on renewables and we need to do more renewables and we are going to but, as I keep coming back to this point, wind and solar are intermittent forms of power. If you can't collect solar energy at night, if the wind isn't strong enough or isn't the right kind of wind, then you can't generate wind energy. They often tend to be at the times when we need the energy the most and that's why you have to have a baseline of power to go along with that.*  
Q8 *JB: We are an island and we have wave power that we're not making any use of either. But I'll move on to the next question because we have very little time.*

**By 2020 there were 3.8 million people on Council House waiting lists. Last year the government built less than 6000 new social homes. Can you comment please?** *RL: Sure. Well, I mean, again, I will more than happily accept criticism that we need to be building more homes, including affordable homes. I've already talked about the lost sort of 15 years when it came to nuclear power. There's also certainly that when it comes to social housing. I mean, social housing stock between 1997 and 2010 fell by half a million. Since 2010 has been 2 million new homes built, including over 600,000 are affordable. But yet an awful lot more needs to be done in this area. That's why in the last spending review there's £24 billion for housing, including lots of money to unlock brownfield sites, which I think we'd all rather see being prioritised rather than greenfield sites. There's also, over the next four years or so, there is an £11.5 billion, I think I've got that figure right from my memory, affordable housing programme to build again hundreds of thousands of new affordable homes which are badly, badly needed. Also, we've reformed rules around things like Right to Buy, so the councils get greater freedom on how they can spend receipt from Right to Buy money so that they can deliver more council housing. Also, some of our reforms to social housing has seen 33% fall in waiting lists when it comes to how long people are waiting for social housing. So, there's a lot of improvement.*

**JB: A related question is: When does the government plan to make all new housing developments carbon neutral, as retrofitting them is short sighted and will be very costly?**  
*RL: A very good question and a very fair point. There is going to be the Future Home Standard. So, under that, the aim is to see new homes built as the term that I believe is being used is zero carbon ready. So, these are going to be homes that won't require retrofitting from 2025. So, it's just in two years. And under the future home standard, new homes will have to produce at least 75% lower CO2 emissions to those built to the previous 2013 standard, which is good.*  
**JB: Why are we waiting till 2025 to do that?**

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**Q9** **RL:** *One, that's only two years. And two, it's about giving, because the lengthy pipeline of houses that are being built, if you were to bring it in tomorrow, then there'll be houses which are almost complete, which would then have to go back to the drawing board and could bankrupt some developers. And good luck building the social housing that we needed, if we're going to bankrupt small developers, so there are practicalities in that. But of course, there's other things, like the Social Housing Decarbonization Fund, which is something that I've talked about a lot, about getting the extra funding to help retrofitting.* **JB:** *It's not a very big pot.*

**RL:** *Well, I mean, it's £6.6 billion nationwide. High Peak didn't apply in the original round. We have this time around and we have got money. I'd like to see more of that. I'd like to see us push more. I'd love to be able to work more closely with the Council on how we spend that. I hope it's done in a more sensible way. And, of course, there's the government's Building and Heating Strategy, all about things like developing heat pump markets. Also, we've got rid of VAT on energy saving materials such as solar panels and roof insulation and things like that, which is something that I specifically campaigned for and went to the then Chancellor and now Prime Minister and convinced him to put in his budget, which we've now done.*

**Derbyshire County Council is currently replacing the bus shelters on Buxton Market Place using plastic roofs instead of turf; an opportunity to support pollinators and improve air quality has been squandered. This illustrates the disconnect between government rhetoric and action. Procurement needs to prioritise the environment, social justice and the local economy. What can we do to close that gap? What will you do to close that gap? And are you familiar with the community wealth building work in Preston and elsewhere championed by CLES.**

**Q10** **RL:** *Okay, so on the bus shelter roof issue, I wasn't aware of that until you told me. However, I've written to DCC today on this to challenge them on it. Find out what's gone on there.*

**JB:** *Derby City is going around replacing their bus shelters with the turf roof ones. Well done, Derby. Why isn't the county doing it?*

**RL:** *Well, I've written to them to ask them. I'll see what can find out for you.* **JB:** *At a national level, why is anybody putting in an unturfed bus shelter? It's a simple little thing, but it's an example.*

**RL:** *No, it's a fair challenge. As I say, I've written to them to find out. But I'm a big fan of all of those sorts of things, particularly helping pollinators. I don't know if he's on this call, but I know that Dave Carlisle and the guys at Friends of Buxton Station are also really big on buzzing stations and doing things for pollinators. It all sounds really good. So, I've written to DCC on that exact point. On this work in Preston. I confess I'm not familiar with it, so I will have to look into it.*

**JB:** *There's a link to it on the list of submitted Qs that you received.*

<https://cles.org.uk/what-is-community-wealth-building/>

**RL:** *I will look into it.*

**JB: This Q was not received in advance. Do you have a garden and do you grow vegetables in it?**

**RL:** *I do have a garden, though it's a shared garden, I share it with the rest of my terrace. And, yes, vegetables are grown in that garden. In fact, we back onto the allotments as well. Though given that I'm Monday to Thursday in London, my level of contribution to*

	<p><i>the garden gardening is quite small. My next-door neighbours, Len and Len, both my next-door neighbours, are both called Len bizarrely, they lead the way on the gardening. But I'm very</i></p>
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Q1  
1 *fortunate that we have a little allotment out there and vegetables being grown and I'd love nothing more than to grow some more and to have a bigger garden.*

**Comment from the floor:** Good for the soul.

**RL:** *100%. During lockdown, one of the neighbours who shares our garden had a litter of Rottweiler puppies. So, during the first lockdown, being able to watch a litter of six rottweiler puppies grow up during that first lockdown was very good for the soul. Definitely kept me sane during those long weeks.*

**JB: What are you going to do to help the High Peak wean off our fossil fuels? RL:**

*Well, obviously, some of the things that we've already talked about, and that massive drive towards decarbonisation of the energy market and move towards renewables and nuclear, I think the single biggest, there are also lots of individual things that we can all be doing our own personal responsibility. My view is that the single biggest contributor to our carbon footprint in the High Peak are the quarries, which are hugely energy intensive industries. So, I can't go into any of the details, but I can tell you that I've been spending a lot of time talking to the quarries about what we can do to help decarbonise that incredibly energy intensive sector, and I'm hoping that we'll be in a position to say something really positive about that soon. So I can't go into the details, but it's something that we're really working on, which would make a very significant impact on decarbonisation and moving away from fossil fuels in our part of the world.*

Q12 **JB:** Thank you. So, Robert, has gamely attempted to answer the questions we had in advance and we've still got 23 minutes left. Let's try our best questions from the room. I'm going to go with Graham first.

**GW: I'll just follow up on that last question. In terms of the High Peak and what we might do in terms of getting off fossil fuel; do you foresee yourself supporting wind farms and solar farms within the High Peak?**

**RL:** *Well, I have to treat things on a case-by-case basis. I would note that there has been one solar farm application in High Peak in the last sort of 18 months, which was opposed by both Labour and Conservative councillors. But that was, I believe, based on the merits of that particular case, which I don't think was particularly well suited for a solar farm, which*

Q13 *is why there was cross party opposition to it. But it would all be on a case-by-case basis. As I say, I'm in favour of renewable energy and would certainly like to see them in a lot more places, but again, it does have to be treated on a case-by-case basis, particularly when you're talking about National Park landscape.*

**JB:** There are certainly some crops and sheep are perfectly happy to cohabit in the same field as solar panels.

**CH: Going back to housing, one of the problems Buxton is now suffering from is the rise of Airbnb taking over from private rental accommodation. Now, what is needed is regulation, because it's reducing the availability of rental accommodation to individuals, which is also pushing the prices up as well, out of the reach of most people, especially people who are on housing benefit, because obviously shortage will increase the price. What is planned to increase regulation to prevent this moving across? Obviously, landlords find it easy because it's less regulated, they don't do PAT testing, et cetera, and so it's far easy for them to convert to private rental. RL: I couldn't agree more. I think this is a really growing problem in Buxton and the rest of the High Peak and in lots of other places which are particularly popular tourist destinations. You really rightly point out the problems that that's having on the private rental market, squeezing them out and also, it's having a really big impact on some villages which are rapidly becoming completely and utterly unaffordable for local people and are just filling up**

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Q14  
Q15

*with second homes and Airbnb, short term lets. Some of them are in real danger of becoming theme parks and with no actual young families living there anymore because they simply can't afford to and we're seeing that in school role numbers. Some of these small village schools are seeing their school roles decline and decline at alarming rates and I think that that is a huge problem. So, you're 100% right, Chris, and that being a big concern. The Government completely recognised this and not long ago announced that we're doing a massive consultation on the whole issue of Airbnb, holiday lets, all of this, because there's a recognition that the free for all that's happened at the moment is not working. So, there needs to be a review of the regulation around this.*

*I'm not against Airbnb and holiday lets. Tourism and short term lets absolutely have a role to play in our local tourism economy. Tourism is a really important part of our economy, but we're at the stage now where they're just hollowing out the private rental sector to the huge detriment of local people. So, there's a really extensive consultation going on that was launched only a few weeks ago and I hope it is done as quick as humanly possible and we can get on and make some changes because this is a really big problem. **JB:** Will there be changes at a national level? I know that Derbyshire Dales has introduced a double council tax for second homes.*

***RL:** So, the double council tax thing; that is slightly separate, that is a reform which is part of the levelling up reform legislation. I've already written to High Peak and asked them to look at following North Yorkshire, another one who've gone down this route of double council tax. I've written to them, High Peak came back and said that they have no plans to follow suit. I think that it's something that they should look at again because I think it's a real problem, so hopefully they do. But no, that's a different piece of legislation. The consultation is specifically when it comes to things like airbnbs and short term lets. But, yeah, the point around double charging for council tax for second homes is a new power that the government are giving councils. I was slightly disappointed that when I challenged High Peak on this, they said that they weren't looking at it and they had no plans to look at it. So by all means, contact your councillor, tell them to have a look at it.*

**MC:** asking where RL's office is located in Westminster. RL responded. **GW: We have got lots of very old, large Victorian premises, as you be well aware. Many of them have rattly old windows such as sash, which are quite costly to replace. So, fortunately, I'm working but my utility bill in December was in excess of 400 pounds. How is a pensioner supposed to afford that?**

***RL:** Well, it's a big thing. As I say, one of the things we've done is cut the VAT on energy saving materials, which I think is a really important move to try and lower the cost of doing something about that. Obviously, there is the £90 billion that we're spending on energy support measures to some of the most specifically targeted at those unfixed incomes, the most vulnerable households. And of course, there's all the stuff about trying to have energy security so that we're not at the whims of what happens with foreign fossil fuels in future. It's a very difficult situation, there's no doubt about that. I'd love to see a lot more done, particularly on that point about retrofitting and sorting things like windows out. That's why we've made the progress on this VAT point. But there's an awful lot more to do on it. **GW:** The first quote I got for double glazing was £34,000.*

***RL:** That's obviously completely and utterly unaffordable for a lot of people. It's a good point, which is another one of the things that you really need to address. You'd say it's a green skill shortage, so there's a real need. It's all very well and good making lots of money available and cutting VAT on things like insulation and roofs and things like that.*

	<p><i>But if you don't have the skills and the workforce in place who are able to actually do the installation and do the work, the price is always going to be unaffordable. So, a large part of the</i></p>
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Q16 *Government's building and heating strategy is about trying to help foster and develop those markets so that there's more skills, more availability in place to try and get the cost down. And a lot of that comes down to sort of going back to skills and apprenticeships and vocational training as well. You got to take a long-term view on that stuff. £34,000 for doing your windows is just completely out of reach of your average person. In fact, it's out of reach for most of your above average people too.*

**JB:** The skills gap, that's something that we discussed quite a bit at our last meeting because we watched a little film about the offshore workers in Scotland and they're in a situation where there's people who want to retrain. They have the right engineering background but they want to retrain to work in renewables and they either pay for that themselves, and most people can't afford to take two years out and go on a course and not feed their family. But their employers have no requirement to cross train them or to support them through training and that seemed to us at our last meeting a month ago that that would be something government could do, is to require large employers to fund and support any of their employees who wish to transition in terms of their skills. **RL:** *It's not a bad idea. It's certainly one that's worthy of looking at. I know there's a lot of money and a lot of effort being put into really souping up training, apprenticeships, particularly in vocational and technical areas, to develop those green skills. There's a huge amount of effort and work going into this but it is not something that happens overnight. It takes a very long time to see the benefits of those changes and I do think that generally the policies have been far too fixated on the 50% university target at the expense of technical and vocational training, which I think we're really paying for. So, I think it's taking a long time to refocus on that. That point about retraining commitment to lifelong learning and helping people reskill is a really good one.*

*We're no longer in the era of people having one job for life. That certainly hasn't been the case for a good 20 years, 20-25 years or so. Now, people are often changing careers and changing their paths an awful lot more. So, it's really at least one more...*

**MC:** (Sound quality for this Q not great, may have misinterpreted)

**Just a couple of days ago, I provided DCC with a response to its Homes Fit For The Future Action Plan. It's clear that the issue that really needed to be addressed was the skill shortage. You will know that in 2012, something like 1.2 million houses received improvements in their insulation. Then David Cameron effectively put a stop to a programme that was initiated in the Energy Act of 2007. We have not, since 2012, done anything like that level of work in our housing stock. So much so that the contractors who were involved have not had the confidence to recruit or to take on apprentices because of the hesitant start and stop on the Government's programme. You have to effectively double the skilled workforce associated with building renovation and maintenance if it's to get anywhere near the programme needed. And that will have to be done by apprenticeships. It's not a question of reskilling people that are already in the industry. We need to double the number of people in the industry and probably over the next four years. On the fitted installation of low carbon heating systems, the situation is different. We have 120,000 gas qualified fitters in the UK that every year fit about 1.7 million gas boilers. Now, if it wasn't 1.7 million boilers, but 1.7 million heat pumps being installed every year, we would be making real progress. These people have essentially the same core skills that are needed to install heat pumps, but you're not going to get those gas fitters retrained until the industry knows that we're not going to continue with gas and we're not going to be using hydrogen for domestic heating. It has to be heat pumps. Unless you move on to heat pumps, you won't have a job in the future. And until they get**

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Q17 **that clarity, they're not going to make any progress. Lord ?? who's the only engineer that I know in senior ministerial service, has been very clear on this. RL:** *Well, I think you make some fair points there. I've certainly talked about the need to build up those markets, so that they can deliver those things. And you're right that the scale of the challenge is an enormous one and it's certainly a case that I'm making. So, there's a lot more to be done. It won't happen overnight, but the more that can be put into it, the more green skills that we can develop, the easier delivering all of these big targets will be. It's all very well and good to announce a target. It's all very well and good to announce millions in funding, but if you've not got the people to actually do the installation and the work, it's all just wishful thinking. So, a lot to be done.*

Q18 **CH: You mentioned earlier about being pollinator friendly. I noticed back in 2022, the government gave an 'emergency permission' for Cruiser FB, another noenicitinoid, which obviously kills bees. Now, they said that they hoped that the sugar beet industry would have transitioned to basically non neonicotinoid pesticides and crops, which are resistant, pest resistant crops. How close are we to having that happen this year? Because they said, 2023 they wanted it to happen. And also, what has the government done to help transition to these? RL:** *That is an answer which I'll have to look up, I'm afraid. Beet growers is not my area of expertise, so I have to find out more about that one for you.*

Q19 **BE: I came across an old newspaper cutting dated 2002 and it was full page, 50 Ways to Help Save the Planet. It's the same things we're telling people to do now, largely. You talked about how it is taking a long time to set up the reskilling and so on, but you talked about the long term. The long term started 21 years ago and even further back than that. Why hasn't anything really been happening? RL:** *Well, a lot has been happening in a lot of those areas. When you look at the progress in decarbonization, particularly the energy industry, it's enormous what's happened. I completely agree on the point on skills. As I say, I think that the policy decision to introduce in 1997 to strive for 50% going to university was a very well-intentioned policy and a completely understandable one. But the way things have panned out have shown that that really has harmed our development of skills in apprenticeships, technical, vocational training and it has really harmed us in a lot of areas of development of our workforce in this area that we need. And that is something which we're trying to correct, but that is a very lengthy process. But I think history has shown that that was a well-intentioned policy move, but one that has not panned out at all.*

**JT: I'm going back to modular nuclear energy. Could you say why we're not researching on the safer nuclear energy? Like China, with Thorium molten salt energy. ....(2 people speaking over each over)....produced by Rolls-Royce is still on the plutonium system.**

**RL:** *We're doing spending absolutely extraordinary amounts of money on energy innovation research, so we are doing huge amounts. It's worth remembering that we're one of the world leaders when it comes to university research and industry research. There's huge amounts of public and private sector and university sector partnerships going on in research in these areas backed up by taxpayers' money and backed up by huge amounts of private investment. So, an enormous amount of time, effort and money is being put into research. So that's something which is being worked on.*

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Q19	<p><b>JB: Final Q: Do you genuinely believe that our government is doing enough, with enough urgency, to give my four-year-old grandson a decent planet to live on when he's my age?</b></p> <p><b>RL:</b> <i>I would love to see the Government do more. I do think that they're doing an awful lot, and we've made very, very significant progress over the last decade, but obviously there's an awful lot more that needs to be done, and I'm one of the people pushing for more to be done. But a lot of this stuff also requires global multilateral action. And with a lot of these things, it's not just us, it's going to be the United States, Brazil, China, Russia, India, and we have to have that multilateral action. So, in fact, I think the UK is leading the world in putting a big focus of our diplomatic efforts on trying to drive action on this. So, there's always more to be done. I will always accept challenges, I will always accept new ideas and wanting to go further and faster wherever we practically can, because this is the biggest global challenge facing us as a species, and we have to rise to it.</i></p> <p><b>JB</b> thanked <b>RL</b> for his time and confirmed that Transition Buxton would welcome having another hour of his time in the Autumn.</p> <p><b>RL</b> responded: <i>Thank you so much for inviting me and patiently listening to me while I rambled on with my answers and for all the work that you at Transition Buxton do, trying to come up with new ideas and work together to try and to improve our environment. So, thank you very much for all that you do.</i></p>	
3	<p><b>General TB Updates – Chaired by Frances Sussex</b></p> <p>3.1 <b>Feedback from Spring Fair.</b> Went well, bike very popular. Didn't cover the cost of hiring the bike / Scalextric set-up. Good to be in partnership with Town Team &amp; BCA and also to share the costs of the bike Several people came forward as volunteers who haven't done so before, which is very positive.</p> <p>3.2 <b>Rotary Fair on June 3<sup>rd</sup> in Octagon, Pavilion Gardens.</b> This event runs from 10:30am to 4:30pm. The theme of the event is 100 years to coincide with the centenary of Rotary in Buxton. Very few volunteers have come forward to staff the stall. In some cases, this is because members of TB are also involved in helping other groups on the day. Jean expressed concern as she we don't have the volunteer capacity to prepare for and do this event. <b>It was agreed</b> that the display that was used for the Spring Fair will be set up alongside two other stalls that Frances is involved with; Guide Dogs and Grapevine but <u>the stall will not be staffed for most of the day</u>. <b>Farouk to ensure the placement of the stall.</b> This will mean Frances can keep an eye on the stall.</p> <p>3.3 <b>Plant Swap on June 10<sup>th</sup> Buxton Market</b> Robin Edwards reported that volunteers are still needed to help on the stall on the day. If you can help, please message <a href="mailto:orchard@transitionbuxton.co.uk">orchard@transitionbuxton.co.uk</a> Remember to plant extra seeds and bring along any plants you'd like to pass on.</p>	

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3.4	<p>Surfers Against Sewage <b>Plastic Free Status Award</b> will be celebrated in the Pump Room on <b>June 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30pm</b> organised by Derek Bodey. <b>All TB members are welcome.</b></p>	
3.5	<p><b>Repair Café.</b> The next repair café will be on Saturday May 27<sup>th</sup>. There will be one in June on the 24<sup>th</sup> and then a break until August. Please encourage people to bring in their broken items, there are now quite a few other Repair Cafes in the area so numbers of items coming into ours have dropped off a little.</p>	
3.6	<p><b>National Lottery Award for Wild Weeks.</b> Frances reported that £20K has been awarded for Wild Weeks in local schools. These will take place in the autumn and will include tree planting. Some schools have tree nurseries and are growing and nurturing their own saplings. 17 schools are involved, covering an age range from 2 years to 18 years. Frances also reported that another young people's conference will take place on November 16<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p><b>The meeting closed at 9pm.</b></p> <p><b>Next Transition Buxton Members Meeting, Tuesday 13 June</b></p>	