

Minutes of the 436th meeting of the County Executive Committee of Lancashire Association of Local Councils held virtually on 30th August 2025 at 10am.

Members present:

Alan Neal, Whitworth Town Council
Eileen Smith, Pleasington Parish Council
Phil Orme, Preesall Town Council
Darren Cranshaw, Brindle Parish Council
Gordon Smith, Treales, Roseace & Wharles Parish Council
Peter Collins, Newton with Clifton Parish Council

Keith Martin, Penwortham Town Council
Alan Yates, Great Ecclestone Parish Council
Jacqueline Hampson, Simonstone Parish Council
Pat Hastings, Broughton Parish Council
Glyn Stead, Little Ecclestone w Larbreck Parish Council

Officers present:

Debra Platt, LALC Chief Officer

Jessica Dibble, LALC Secretary

Speakers present:

James Tomlinson, Lancashire County Council (Parish Champion)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair, Pat Hastings, opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Apologies were received from Cllr. Iain Hamilton, Cllr. Jan Finch, Cllr. Graham Jones, and Cllr. Stephen Houghton.

2. Minutes of the 435th Executive Committee meeting held on 8th March 2025 circulated – to approve

Draft Minutes of the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on 12th August 2025 circulated – to action motions

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2025, having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct and accurate record.

The draft minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held on 12th August 2025, having been circulated, were also approved as a correct and accurate record.

Proposed by: Cllr. Keith Martin
Seconded by: Cllr. Peter Collins

3. Matters of Update

It was noted that the updated Constitution, as previously agreed, has been published on the website.

4. Lancashire County Council update – Cllr. James Tomlinson (Parish Champion)

Cllr. James Tomlinson (Parish Champion) began by noting that his family are deeply rooted in the local community and that he has always been impressed with the professionalism of Parish and Town Councils. He went on to highlight the Parish Champion Grant Scheme, reporting that 12 parishes had already been approved, and urged other parishes to apply for a Parish Champion Grants.

During discussion, concerns were raised regarding the sudden removal of Public Rights of Way and biodiversity (eco) grants for the current financial year, which particularly affects small rural parishes. Cllr. Tomlinson confirmed that the cuts had been agreed in February but had not been communicated to parish and town councils until recently. He advised that he had spoken with the Cabinet Member regarding the possibility of reinstating the grants; however, on further review it was found that fewer than half of parish and town councils had been making applications for the funding.

Members also expressed dissatisfaction with poor communication from LCC officials, with several constituent issues still unresolved. Cllr. Tomlinson committed to advocating for the reinstatement of grants and to pressing for improved responsiveness from Lancashire County Council.

Finally, Cllr Tomlinson urged all parishes to share the Lancashire Devolution survey which is anticipated to be circulated on Monday 1st September.

5. Lancashire Offshore Wind Energy proposals – Report from Cllr. Gordon Smith

Cllr. Gordon Smith provided an update on the offshore wind energy proposals currently affecting Lancashire. He explained that three major projects are being put forward in the Irish Sea, with plans to bring power inland via new cable corridors and converter stations, much of which would cut across Greenbelt land. It was noted that, while the scale of investment is significant, potentially over £12 billion with long-term jobs and skills opportunities, there are serious concerns about the environmental impact, disruption to rural communities, and the limited influence local councils have due to the national planning process.

He stressed that LALC must play a key role in coordinating parish responses, pressing for smarter, lower-impact alternatives such as the Stanah connection point, and ensuring that community voices are heard. He concluded by saying that offshore wind presents a generational opportunity for Lancashire but must be managed carefully to balance national energy needs with local prosperity and environmental protection.

The Executive Committee requested that a record of thanks be made to both Cllr. Gordon Smith and Cllr. Peter Collins for their work to date on this matter.

The Committee further agreed the following actions:

- A motion regarding Offshore Wind Energy Proposals to be prepared for the AGM by 29th September.
- Cllr. Smith to circulate maps showing the affected parishes.
- Cllrs. Smith and Hampson to prepare an impartial, reader-friendly guide for member councils.
- Cllr. James Tomlinson to provide LALC with an update on Lancashire County Council's position on offshore wind energy.

Full briefing available – see Appendix 1.

6. NALC matters – updates from Cllr. Alan Neal & Cllr. Iain Hamilton

It was noted that the NALC AGM will take place on 13th November 2025, with all motions to be submitted by 29th September. It was further noted that ballot papers are scheduled to be issued next month. Members were also informed that the next online assembly will be held at the beginning of October.

7. Area Committee Reports

The Chair invited the Area Committee Leads to provide verbal updates on activity within their respective areas. The following verbal reports were received:

Fylde:

Cllr. Glyn Stead provided the committee with a verbal report. It was highlighted that, through the Fylde Energy Committee (a subset of the Area Committee), work is ongoing in relation to offshore wind energy, with the next meeting likely to take place in October. It was further reported that the other key focus has been Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which will remain a priority until greater clarity on the matter is reached.

Burnley and Pendle:

Cllr. Alan Neal reported that the Area Committee AGM will be held on Monday 15th September at Burnley Town Hall. The meeting will include the election of a Chair and Vice Chair, together with the appointment of a new Area Secretary.

Blackburn:

Cllr. Eileen Smith reported that, as there is currently no Area Secretary in post, no meeting has been held. The Committee is also struggling to appoint a new Secretary but remains optimistic that this will change soon.

Chorley:

Cllr. Darren Cranshaw reported that the Chorley Area Committee will meet on 3rd November, with the Chief Executive of Chorley Council attending to discuss Local Government Reorganisation.

Preston:

Cllr. Pat Hastings reported that the Preston Area Committee is scheduled to meet on 25th September. The Chief Executive of Preston City Council will be in attendance to answer questions on devolution.

South Ribble Area Committee:

Cllr. Keith Martin reported that the South Ribble Area Committee have been confirming agenda items with the aim of covering all areas. Discussions have taken place with Cllr. Paul Flannery, lead member of Devolution and Local Government Reform.

Wyre:

Cllr. Phil Orme reported that the Wyre Area Committee have met twice since the last Executive meeting, on 30th April and 25th June. He advised that meetings are regularly supported by the local Police Sergeant, a District Councillor, and representatives from outside organisations. The Chief Executive attended previously to discuss Local Government Reorganisation and will attend again on 25th September. Presentations have also been received from the Monitoring Officer on how the District Council manages standards, and at the next meeting an officer concerned with food waste recycling is scheduled to attend.

Ribble Valley:

Cllr. Jacqueline Hampson reported that the committee has met a couple of times and is next due to meet on 24th September. While meetings had become largely clerk led, which has been positive, work is now underway to increase direct engagement from councillors, as the forum is their place to share information.

Cllr. Hampson confirmed that the next challenge is to broaden participation, with initial concerns that some information may not be reaching councillors where clerks do not forward updates. To improve distribution, Cllr. Hampson is exploring the use of 'Email Octopus' as a free tool for bulk emails to councillors; Debra will advise on GDPR compliance. Cllr. Hampson advised that she would also like to invite Cllr. James Tomlinson or another LCC representative to speak at their next meeting. No major issues were reported, though the viaduct and the pipeline project were noted as ongoing matters of interest.

8. Reports from representatives on outside bodies

Cllr. Keith Martin provided an update on the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). He reported that the organisation continues to receive praise for the Greater Manchester Ringway, a 300km walking and health route around Manchester with every terminus accessible by public transport. Work is ongoing on the Liverpool Ringway, alongside efforts to secure funding for the Sefton Nature project.

In respect of planning matters, CPRE did not oppose the White Moss landfill application but are pressing Lancashire County Council to impose strict conditions.

Other ongoing priorities include work on Hedge Lane and the creation of additional hedgerows, as well as the continuation of the rooftop solar programme.

Cllr. Martin raised serious concerns regarding Lancashire County Council's cuts to biodiversity and Public Rights of Way funding, stressing the significant impact these reductions will have on parishes and rural communities. He also reported ongoing difficulties in securing engagement with Springfields, who continue to refuse to communicate with CPRE.

Cllr. Phil Orme reported that the final judging for the Best Kept Village competition had taken place this week, with the presentation scheduled for 13th October at 2:30 p.m. at Eaves Hall. He advised that the sourcing of plaques is expected to achieve significant savings, but discussions with the Finance and Management Committee will be required. A question was raised regarding whether plaques or projects should be sponsored, which will also be considered at the next Finance and Management Committee meeting.

It was confirmed that Cllr. Stephen Houghton will serve on the Forest of Bowland Joint Advisory Committee, and they are due to meet in October. As Cllr. Houghton was unable to attend the most recent meeting, Cllr. Richard Vickers attended in his absence. The Chair requested that a report be provided following the next meeting.

It was noted that there is some uncertainty as to whether the Lancashire Strategic Hate Crime and Social Cohesion Partnership, and the Public Rights of Way & Lancashire Local Access Forum, remain active. Cllr. James Tomlinson agreed to make enquiries and report back to the Committee with an update on these bodies.

9. Regional Matters

The Chief Executive, Debra Platt, and the Chair of LALC, Cllr. Pat Hastings, attended the recent North West Regional Meeting and circulated the minutes to members. The Chair noted that one query had been raised but confirmed that it had since been resolved.

Cllr. Phil Orme enquired about the current membership of the regional group and the Chair advised that there were six members in place, although only four were required. Cllrs. Darren Cranshaw and Glyn Stead confirmed their willingness to stand down, and the membership was confirmed as Cllr. Pat Hastings, Cllr. Keith Martin, Cllr. Alan Yates and Cllr. Phil Orme.

10. Any Other Urgent Business

Cllr. Tomlinson was asked whether any funded finance training is available to clerks in light of the new requirements under Assertion 10: Digital and Data Compliance. He advised that he would look into this and report back. The Committee recorded its thanks to Cllr. Mathew Tomlinson for attending and remaining for the duration of the meeting.

It was further noted that arrangements for the presidential election are in hand, with the election pack currently being prepared. The Secretary was asked to ensure that finance is included on the next Executive agenda, together with the minutes of the last Finance and Management meeting.

Finally, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Finance and Management Committee will be held on Wednesday 1st October at 5.00 p.m.

11. Close

The meeting closed at 11:41am

Minutes drafted by: Jessica Dibble
LALC Secretary
04/09/2025

Finance & Management Committee Wednesdays at 5pm (Virtual)	LALC Executive Committee Saturday at 10am Virtual unless indicated
Wednesday 1 st October 2025	Saturday 1 st November AGM @ LCC conference to be confirmed
Wednesday 3 rd December 2025	Saturday 13 th December 2025

Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC) Executive Committee

Briefing Note: Offshore Wind Energy Development in Lancashire – Opportunities and Impacts

1. Purpose

This note provides an overview of offshore wind energy (OWE) development proposals affecting Lancashire. It highlights key features of the planning system, the scale of projects, opportunities for local benefit, and the potential impacts on communities, economy and environment. It concludes with suggested actions for LALC.

2. Background

The UK Government has committed to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with offshore wind central to renewable energy policy. Offshore wind is promoted to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, limit energy price volatility, cut consumer bills, and stimulate private investment.

3. Key Institutions and Processes

Projects of this scale are classed as **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)** and must progress through the **Development Consent Order (DCO) process**. This involves extensive consultation, environmental assessment, and examination by the Planning Inspectorate, with final approval by the Secretary of State for Energy Security & Net Zero. In practice, the presumption strongly favours development approval: historically, almost all offshore wind applications have been granted.

This framework can override Local Development Plans and Greenbelt protections, limiting the influence of local elected representatives in decision-making.

In addition to developers, investors, statutory consultees and impacted communities, environments and economies, the following are also key institutions :

- **Ofgem** regulates the sector, reporting to Parliament.
- **National Energy System Operator (NESO)** plans and coordinates the electricity system. It now operates independently of, but with staff largely transferred from, **National Grid PLC**.
- **National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)** - part of National Grid PLC - maintains and operates the transmission network and determines connection points for new generation.

OWE developers are commercially motivated to minimise delays, as late connections undermine their business cases. Once built, transmission assets must be sold to an **Offshore Transmission Owner (OFTO)**, which recovers costs from consumers. Developers' incentives therefore lean towards expedience over minimising lifetime consumer costs.

4. Offshore Wind Energy Projects in General

Modern OWE projects are comparable in scale to nuclear stations, generating power at gigawatt (GW) levels. Key requirements include:

- **Undersea and onshore cabling**, often 30km or more, with a swathe width of 35–120m.
- **Converter stations**, 6–8 hectares in extent, up to 30m high.
- **Construction works** spanning several years, often with repeated disruption.

While offshore arrays last approximately 35 years before decommissioning, land-based infrastructure may remain beyond that period.

OWE operates at an average of 40% of “nameplate capacity” due to wind variability, requiring integration with storage and other generation forms to provide a resilient energy supply.

5. Offshore Wind Development in Lancashire

Lancashire has nearly two decades of offshore wind activity, primarily around **Walney Island with landfall principally around Heysham**. Since 2012, **the Walney 2 OWE project**, has hosted its converter substation at the **Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone (HTEZ)** in Wyre and connects to consumers via the National Grid **Stanah substation**.

Three major current proposals are:

- **Morgan Offshore Wind Project** (1.5GW, by JERA Nex, bp and EnBW).
- **Morecambe Offshore Wind Project** (0.48GW, by Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners).
- **Moor Vannin / East Irish Sea Transmission Project** (1.32GW, by Ørsted – from Isle of Man waters).

All three currently propose connecting routes of some 30km inland to **Penwortham substation, Preston**, meaning multiple new cable corridors and converter sites, with substantial Greenbelt incursion.

Historically, however, **Stanah/HTEZ has repeatedly been prioritised as a more efficient, lower-impact connection point**, with significant land availability and streamlined planning status. This obvious alternative has not been adequately revisited under the Government's **Holistic Network Design Review (HNDR)**, leaving concerns that transmission planning is neither efficient nor coordinated, nor economic, contrary to the duties set out under the Electricity Act 1989.

6. Opportunities for Lancashire

- **Investment & Supply Chains:** At least **£12.8bn in construction investment**, creating opportunities for Lancashire firms.
- **Jobs:** Up to 200 operations and maintenance jobs per project for 35 years; further potential in construction, decommissioning, and port/aviation support.
- **Skills & Education:** Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre College has relevant training capability & capacity.
- **Strategic Industry:** OWE could support hydrogen storage, new energy-intensive industries, data centres, and advanced materials sectors, especially around HTEZ.
- **Local Power Use:** Proximity of generation to industrial users could reduce energy costs, aiding competitiveness of local employers such as Victrex and AGC. Hydrogen could provide supply resilience.
- **Clean Energy Hub:** The Blackpool North and Fleetwood MP has promoted the vision of a “Gateway for Clean Energy,” using HTEZ and surroundings as a base for growth while remediating historic contamination.

7. Impacts and Risks

- **Environmental:** Offshore arrays can affect birds, marine life, navigation, and radar.
- **Community Impacts:** New land corridors and converter stations risk large-scale development on Greenbelt, disruption to rural landscapes, noise, electromagnetic interference, and traffic during construction.
- **Economic Risks:** Existing sectors (agriculture, aerospace, tourism, transport) could be adversely affected.
- **Democratic Deficit:** The DCO process reduces local ability to influence siting and cumulative impacts.

8. Suggested LALC Actions

- **Coordination:** Facilitate knowledge exchange among parishes already affected (Fylde's Energy Working Group, Wyre's potential group).
- **Influence Policy:** Use the collective weight of LALC and NALC to press for a reassessment of transmission options, especially revisiting the Stanah/HTEZ alternative as faster, smarter and £1.5bn cheaper..
- **Support Communities:** Ensure parishes are supported in understanding both opportunities (jobs, investment) and risks (landtake, amenity loss).
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Engage with Local Development Partnerships, councils, colleges, and MPs to align skills and inward investment strategies with OWE opportunities.

9. Conclusion

Offshore wind offers Lancashire a generational opportunity for inward investment, skills development, and new clean energy industries. However, without critical engagement, the current plans risk unnecessary environmental damage, loss of Greenbelt, and higher consumer costs. LALC has an important role in amplifying community voices, ensuring alternative options are properly considered, and securing a balance between national energy objectives and local prosperity.