

Bristol Parks Forum

Public Forum Statements for Full Council Meeting 14th November 2017

Below are the public forum statements that were copied or forwarded to info@bristolparksforum.org.uk This is not the full list of those submitted to the meeting, in total over 60 statements were submitted.

Statement on behalf of Barton Fields Trust

Save the Parks Funding

Without funding from the city council Barton Fields Trust will not be able to operate. The Trust manages the field on behalf of the community and sport and has done so since 2004.

In this time the Trust has transformed the fields from a treeless, barren, clay topped site to an attractive field for all the community.

It has transformed the pitches, added benches, trees, pathways and obtained many grants toward the enhancement and development of the field for everyone.

It has organised many events to try and raise money for the maintenance of the field but would find it impossible to raise sufficient funds to continue without the funding from the council.

Without funding all community involvement and social development will be lost immediately.

A loss of finance for the field would mean a collapse of management by the Trust who would be unable to continue.

I write in support of Victoria Park, Bristol. I have lived opposite this park for 33 years. I use it daily for exercise, dog walking with friends. It is a real community hub in that so many people use the park for exercise, walking playing with children meeting friends commuting through the park. It is extremely well used and loved by everyone.

We have an amazing community cafe Mrs Browns which is a busy meeting place for many people.

There are sports training groups, young Mum's groups, children's park run weekly, local schools use it for exercise and sports days, football, walking groups as well as the public.

I am currently in hospital with a rare cancer, I am allowed home for a couple of hours at the weekend it is always the park I want to see and walk in again, Victoria Park feeds the soul.

Consequently please do not do anything to damage or destroy this valuable resource. Our park warden is also essential working with VPAG keeping the park looking beautiful.

Kind regards

Paula

Dear Council
Park, open spaces like Bedminster Green by Bedminster Station, tree lined roads are what make this city so special. Not everyone has a garden so even though people do not necessarily notice these things, when they disappear they do!

Green spaces help the air quality, life quality so are very cost effective as people live a better life.

Please continue to look after our parks/Green spaces & trees/tree lined streets. I appreciate it every day.

Yours sincerely
Jilly

As Friends we support the 35 Acre Eastwood Farm Conservation Area.

This is the largest riverside conservation area south of the river - four miles from the city centre, crisscrossed by paths and populated with an abundance of wildlife.

Our volunteers help keep this space beautiful by mitigating the effect of littering and fly tipping (photo attached of our recent Rubbish Blitz).

We are critically dependent on the expertise of the Parks Dept in managing this 35 Acre Site. While we have the capacity to collect rubbish and keep many of the paths open, but without the advice, expertise and heavy machinery of the Parks Dept., we would be swamped by the scale of the annual maintenance task.

Derek
Chairperson/Secretary
Friends of Eastwood Farm

Statement on Bristol's Parks and Public Gardens:

Public parks and gardens were instituted for the benefit of people living in cities who could not otherwise enjoy the beauties of nature. The idea was to give the urban poor as good a natural landscape as the landed gentry enjoyed on their estates in the country. The best landscape gardeners were employed to lay out the first parks and gardens for public use, and the example of thus aiming high was set for the many future parks and gardens.

As was understood then, people need green space; they need trees and flowers; they need wildlife. They need solitude in beautiful surroundings. They need fresh air and the scent of nature. Children need to play and run around.

But these things are not automatic. Once instituted, the parks and public gardens need care and protection. This is not luxury; this is not waste. It is lifting up future generations, benefiting their health and fitness, teaching them about nature, and feeding their sensibilities. It is also preserving wildlife in the unenvironmental surroundings of the city.

If central government had thought that councils might one day countenance dispensing with parks maintenance, I am sure it would have been made a statutory requirement. But the very idea must have been unthinkable.

Yours truly
Nicolette

Hello, I am writing with reference to the plan for Bristol City Council to withdraw all funding of our public parks from next year. I am a 37 yr old mum of 2 little boys, aged 5 and 2. We use our local parks all the time! Our nearest park is Oldbury court which is amazing. Our children really benefit from access to these green spaces, the play equipment, and we see people of all ages enjoying the space. I go running in Oldbury court regularly as I started the

run 4 life couch to 5 k course last year. I regularly take my kids to different parks over Bristol such as Blaise estate, st George's skate park, fishponds play park, eastville park, st Andrews etc etc and they are full of people! . Parks are an essential part of what makes Bristol a great place, having green spaces available is good for mental health and having fun safe play equipment available means that kids can enjoy themselves and learn through playing without their parents having to spend any money. The truth is that to sustain these spaces they do need some continued investment to keep them safe, the grounds / trees / equipment etc to be maintained . The citizens of Bristol deserve these spaces, I truly think it is essential to continue funding them and would be incredibly short sighted to cease.

Yours sincerely,
Martha

Protection of Parks.

The parks play a distinctive role in the infrastructure of Bristol, they act as a social focus for the young children and the many flat dwellers providing open space, safe recreation areas. Further they soften the city, providing the much needed green spaces vital to the mental well being of our citizens and contribute much to the good feel of the city. They in their way are as vital as refuse disposal and street cleaning.

If one considers the consequence of not maintaining the parks they will deteriorate very quickly, no longer provide the amenity that is so needed in this densely populated area. Further litter will accumulate converting these open spaces to 'no go' areas occupied by the homeless destroying the amenity and ultimately will cost more as these problems have to be resolved.

I have considered the option of handing the parks over to park volunteers, and I am sure that in some areas that might work. However there are two problems with that, almost inevitably the volunteers will start to 'own' their area possibly excluding some from the parks and second there is need for agricultural machinery to cut the grass and maintain the trees to a safe and sensible standard. Some volunteer organisations may be able to afford contractors many certainly will not either way it will inevitably lead to a gradual decline in overall standard.

I am only too conscious of the need to balance the budget and this may be a tempting target, the impact on public health and welfare may well be significant and in this overcrowded polluted city this act will only contribute to its decline. It is a thoughtless attack on the bleeding stumps os easy savings. eat effort needs to go into economical working not this easy stuff.

Dear Sirs,

The loss of parks in Bristol would be incredibly bad for families and those who enjoy the sporting activities that take place there. Relatively few families can afford to join private leisure centres for sporting purposes - our parks are a vital asset in this respect.

Generations of families have used these green spaces to inform, educate, exercise and amuse their children. Where else will these activities take place without them?

As we all get older we are encouraged to keep active. Playing tennis or bowels, or simply walking or jogging in a park, are a great ways of doing this.

Our youth need somewhere to go to let off steam, even it's just kicking a ball around. Green spaces play a key role. The lack of them can lead to anti-social behaviour and crime, if there is no-where for our young

people to go for recreation.

Green spaces are good for the environment, encouraging wildlife and helping to cut down pollution.

Bristol prides itself on being one of the greenest cities in the country as well as being a great place to live. How does closing down parks contribute to this?

It's truly mystifying that closure could be considered. There must be very many other services that could be cut if necessary - ones that affect relatively few people - or are simply 'nice to have'. Cutting the still bloated Council bureaucracy should be given really serious consideration.

Regards

Ken

I am writing this email to stress how essential our local parks are to the health of the population. There is considerable evidence that access to the natural environment is necessary for the physical and mental health of humans.

For instance a Guardian article from 21 March 2017 cites a study by 11 researchers at the Institute for European environmental policy (IEEP), who spent a year reviewing more than 200 academic studies for a report, which is the most wide-ranging probe yet into the dynamics of health, nature and wellbeing.

The report makes use of several studies that depict access to nature as being inextricably linked to wealth inequality, because deprived communities typically have fewer natural environments within easy reach.

"The evidence is strong and growing that people and communities can only thrive when they have access to nature," said Robbie Blake, a nature campaigner for Friends of the Earth [Europe](#), which commissioned the analysis.

We all need nature in our lives, it gives us freedom and helps us live healthily; yet deprived communities are routinely cut off from nature in their surroundings and it is suffocating for their well-being."

And from 'Frontiers in Psychology' an article entitled 'The Great Outdoors? Exploring mental health benefits of natural environments' (David Pearson and Tony Craig. 2024 Oct 21):

There is growing evidence to suggest that exposure to natural environments can be associated with mental health benefits. Proximity to greenspace has been associated with lower levels of stress (1) and reduced symptomology for depression and anxiety (2), while interacting with nature can improve cognition for children with attention deficits (3) and individuals with depression (4). A recent epidemiological study has shown that people who move to greener urban areas benefit from sustained improvements in their mental health (5). (See reference details below)

I understand the financial pressures on the council at the moment but urge you to take into account the wide ranging impact of our parks on the physical and mental health of the people of Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Sue

Protect our parks!

Here's one reason to protect parks funding in your budget, Marvin.

Green space in a city is hugely beneficial to people who otherwise wouldn't have access to recreation, fun and the enjoyment of freely moving and the positive effects of exercise.

It might seem like parks are something that can be run by volunteers, but I think it says something about Bristol if we solely focus on the purely economic outputs of our citizens. Private charity and voluntary good will are sticking plasters and they are not sustainable.

Please work with the Bristol Parks Forum to find a better solution, if you can!

Rob

Statement for Full Council – 14 November 2017

Urban trees are our best friends. They stand beside us and over us without fuss. The *older* they get the *better* they get, at pumping out oxygen, at filtering our filthy air, at providing shade, at soaking up the run-off from increasingly powerful rain events, at improving our mental health, and at making our urban landscape more beautiful. Yet we've tended to take them - *and* the parks and open spaces in which they live - for granted. We need to speak out on their behalf more urgently than ever.

Austerity has put the council in a hugely difficult position. We all understand that many worthwhile causes are competing for dwindling funds. However I strongly believe that Bristol City Council must remain committed to the public funding and management of parks and open spaces. It is a false economy to think otherwise.

These spaces are too precious to be farmed out to private contractors, who will manage them for short-term goals, and they are too vital for our citizens' health and well-being not to be considered in the same breath as housing, welfare and social justice. Ecology and Economy share the same root; from the Greek word 'oikos' for house. We need to put these concepts back under the same roof. Parks, open spaces and street trees aren't luxuries. They are fundamental to our lives, and they are economically relevant too. Their continued funding is a long-term investment in the city's future prosperity.

Here is a gentle reminder of why we *need* these 'green lungs' more than ever:

- 1) Parks, open spaces and street trees aren't here merely because they look nice, or because they're somewhere to walk the dog. Without the oxygen which plants generate, we die.

Simples. Policy makers need to urgently get back in touch with why we cannot live without looking after nature.

- 2) Research suggests that mental health can be improved, and dependence on pain-killers and anti-depressants can be reduced, through direct engagement with nature. There is strong evidence for this from Avon Wildlife Trust. Also: Japanese research has proved that people with insulin-dependent diabetes, who walk through wooded areas each day, require half as much insulin and therefore have better health outcomes, than diabetics who don't engage with nature. Trees release phytoncides, which have been proven to boost the immune systems of people who walk through woods. This means less cancer and other diseases. We've evolved alongside plants, trees, insects, birds and mammals, and we remain deeply attached to it, in spite of our largely urban lifestyles; 'Biophilia' – a deep connection to/love of nature - is a profound physiological and psychological need. Nature Deficit Disorder – the failure to meet this need - is a real phenomenon too. Direct access to well-managed natural space is a co-remedy for spiralling costs to the NHS and other public services. So there are down-the-track savings to be gained from careful stewardship now. It is our right as citizens to expect the council to heed this, and offer good-quality open spaces for everyone.
- 3) On the nuts-and-bolts front, mature trees and other plants perform vital ecosystem services. As well as pumping out huge amounts of the oxygen we need, they filter dirty air, control the run-off of rainfall, regulate air temperature, and they improve the view. Trees aren't 'expensive to maintain' when you balance this with what they do for us, free of charge. Yet we take their vital air-conditioning services of plants – and the support network of animal life - for granted. Ironically, because there's no price attached to it, we under-value it. We've over-monitised certain things at the expense of what really matters. Living things need to be factored into balance sheets (and there are academic papers on how to do this). They are good investments.
- 4) We have a responsibility to other living things. However, direct connection with nature is faltering and species extinction is accelerating. A duty of care for nature arises out of direct experience with it, and not merely by watching it on TV. Many kids don't get their hands dirty anymore; indeed some children spend less time outside than prison inmates. It really is at a very young age (and in an increasingly narrow window) that this sense of curiosity is ignited. It is only when you pick up a worm, or experience an ant running over your skin, or break a stick, or listen to birdsong, that your senses are aroused, and you start 'getting' and caring about nature. Engagement with nature - through access to carefully managed parks and open spaces - encourages language, cognitive development, and confidence.
- 5) Taking and sharing a responsibility for nature makes us more open-hearted. Experiences in natural settings – even if it's being stung by nettles - helps children deal with the ups and downs of life; at a basic level it helps them put words to human experiences. Compassion and respect for living things tends to make us more compassionate and respectful towards each other. Access to quality natural space should therefore be an absolute priority.
- 6) On a purely economic front, it's bonkers not to factor in parks and green spaces to the future prosperity of the city. Studies show that when CEOs consider re-locating their businesses the 'green-ness' of a city plays a big part in where they choose to live. If a city looks after its trees and open spaces, it's a sign it's probably going to look after its children well, and that the schools will be good, and that citizens will be well-adjusted and thriving. The management of parks and open spaces links economic investment, health and well-

being, education and respect, compassion and social justice and therefore mustn't be seen in isolation. Increasing the tree canopy could be the route to raising everyone's standard of living.

Please put good heads together from a wide range of disciplines, in order to find creative ways to close the growing gap between nature and experience; and to factor the cost of maintaining parks into keeping Bristol a sane place to live .

There's a real danger that a poorly thought-through decision by BCC could have dire consequences. Sheffield residents are currently protesting against a private contractor cutting down old trees. In some cases, these trees are war memorials to the fallen in World War One, and have an even deeper value to the community and to communal memory. The Sheffield City Councillor who is responsible for the 'environment and street scene' (if his recent letter to the Guardian is to be believed) equates new trees with old trees. The notion of 'Tree replacement' can lead to an unfortunate misunderstanding of ecology. New trees are not the same as old trees. Old trees offer established homes for birds and insects (many of which pollinate city gardens and allotments), and offer a wider support system to the growing environment. New evidence is emerging that trees communicate with each other chemically, via their roots and via their leaves. They may help nourish each other and protect each other against disease. I urge BCC members to read up about this. We need our local authority to understand the science, and to make decisions appropriately – not capitulate to the short-term or narrow interests alone.

Many assumptions need to be challenged, and particularly those around the cost of 'older' trees, the notion of trees being 'dangerous' and the so-called risk they pose to the public. What is the risk of branch or tree falling on us, compared with the risk of being hit by a car in the city? Other than dangerous hurricane events, how many people have been killed by falling branches? Could cutting down mature trees actually increase the risk of disease spreading to other trees? Does the history of public parks, and assumptions about what they are 'supposed' to look like, weigh too heavily on us, and get in the way of thinking creatively about their form, use and – importantly - their funding? Could a park be messy, and less manicured?

There are fantastic initiatives in Bristol, which are trying to encourage our connections with nature and with food-growing and I feel the council should be backing them to the hilt. We absolutely NEED to re-remember how nature impacts on our lives and re-think our love for what's right under our noses.

In February 2017, Julia Thrift, Projects and Operations Director at the Town and Country Planning Association, told the House of Commons Select Committee into Parks and open Spaces ".....somehow (we) have to get parks and green spaces out of this very marginal local authority leisure place, and right up to being really important national strategic infrastructure".

Please heed her words. Please go climb a tree to feel their power. Please take your responsibilities to trees, parks and open spaces very seriously.

Thank you.

Susan

Statement to Full Council of 14th November 2017
from Friends of Troopers Hill regarding the Protect our Parks Petition

Friends of Troopers Hill support the Protect our Parks petition and ask that Bristol City Council permanently withdraw its proposal for making the day-to-day management of parks cost neutral. In effect this proposal is a £4.5 million cut to the Parks budget, the total running cost for parks across Bristol, with the expectation that funding could be raised from other source.

Part of that cut was proposed to be made good by volunteer effort. Speaking as a volunteer group who have raised nearly £200,000 since 2003 for capital projects on Troopers Hill, we have the experience and knowledge to say our volunteers are stretched to the utmost already:

- Running and funding all public events held on the site
- Carrying out conservation work complementing the work of Bristol Council staff
- Fundraising for specific capital projects including an £80,000 play area last year and this year working on a Heritage Lottery Fund application to protect the site, carry out surveys and revise the management plan
- Frequently acting as the first point of call for the public reporting issues about the Hill or want to carry out activities there
- Working with Bristol City Council to ensure the actions shown in the site management plan are carried out
- Publicising the valuable aspects of the site and the care it merits

We have neither the resources, the funding nor the will to:

- empty dog and litter bins
- hire or buy tractors and cutting machinery to do grass cuts and hedge cuts
- operate heavy machinery to carry out winter works
- use chainsaws
- regularly trim all paths on the site to keep them clear
- plus all the other tasks that Bristol Parks staff regularly carry out

An exclusion in most grant applications is running costs and if they are included it will be only for a short period while a project starts and then it is expected to become self-sustaining. So even if we were willing to take on any of Bristol City Council's work we would have no funding to do. There is no property on the site to provide an income and to imagine that local people and businesses will donate sufficient funds to care for the site is a flight of fancy.

We recognise that Bristol City Council does not have a statutory duty to care for Parks although it does have to keep them safe. We understand that government cuts mean difficult choices have to be made but the cost neutral approach is just not achievable, therefore, as a matter of urgency we ask that Bristol City Council work closely with Bristol Parks Forum to identify practical ways and realistic timescales to continue to maintain our parks for the health and benefit of the people of Bristol and preserve the wildlife that needs many of the habitats provided by our green spaces.



Mina Road Park is a small, formal, Victorian park in St.Werburghs, an inner-city area, and is some 150m from the M32. There are two other, smaller, parks in the area as well, and all of them have play areas of different sizes and quality.

Local housing is mostly late 19th, early 20th C, the majority being small terrace houses. Some are flats, some in multiple occupation, some houses, and very few have gardens of useable size. There has been a large increase in the amount of children locally, and this will increase further with the imminent development of the Brooks Dyeworks site, which is 100+ units.

Local parks, green spaces and play areas are consequently very heavily used, and also serve an immensely important function as "lungs" for one of the most seriously polluted parts of the city; there are many mature trees in Mina Rd park itself.

Maintenance by BCC has declined drastically over the last 2 or 3 years, and now consists of infrequent grass cutting and regular bin emptying; there is also a response team which deals with drug paraphernalia left in public spaces. There is no scope for further maintenance cuts without endangering the safety and usability of these spaces. Mina Road Park Group is now looking after the shrubs, weeding, and doing various other tasks, but we do not have the tools or the capacity to do much more.

MRPG is well aware of the drastic cuts imposed on Bristol by central government, and also of the fact that parks are in crisis nationwide. We welcome Bristol's attempts to raise funding elsewhere, but have two main concerns.

1. We can't see how it can be possible to do so within the extremely short timescale proposed.
2. We are concerned there will be public pressure to spend money generated by parks events in the locality where these events are held, and also in higher profile and larger parks. We believe it's possible small, uncommercial, local parks may be overlooked in future.

Hugh Holden.
Chair, Mina Road Park Group

Statement to Full Council Meeting on Tuesday 14 November 2017

Statement in Support of Agenda Item 11: Petition Debate – “Protect our Parks”

I contend that the whole ethos of the proposals to make Bristol’s parks “cost neutral” is flawed and does not stand close scrutiny.

This is demonstrably illustrated in Parks’ own published budget proposals that were presented to the Parks Forum last month. These show that the requisite “budget balance” of savings plus income will only be achieved in 2017/18 and 2018/19. Thereafter, the neutral budget target is woefully short in 2019/20 - to the tune of some £1.6m.

Just how will this £1.6m shortfall be “neutralised”, in approximately 15 months’ time?

The obvious options are more cuts, or more income - with the latter option being the least likely, based on current income estimates.

From my involvement with the Council’s Parks function over the last 15 years, the Parks Service has slowly declined as a result of under-investment. This has been most marked by both the slow and relentless reduction in routine maintenance activities and reduced capital investment. Until the recent, unfortunate, demise of the Neighbourhood Partnerships, there was at least the local facility to direct Council funds into capital projects in local parks and green spaces. Sadly, this very useful source of funding has now been withdrawn.

As a city, Bristol should be investing more, not less, of its Council Tax receipts in the Parks’ Service. What ever happened by way of any significant capital investment in permanent, memorable, projects with the £12.6m raised through Bristol’s European Green Capital 2015 programme? Where can any lasting legacy be seen?

Unfortunately, the current round of budget proposals is just “kicking the can down the road” until 2019/20 - when the huge budget shortfall will have to be readdressed. Meanwhile, the level of routine parks’ maintenance will decline still further, as another sacrifice to any major investment in Bristol’s Parks’ Service.

It is about time that the funding for some of Bristol’s political minority-interest “sacred cows” is re-examined and the funding redirected to investment in the city’s Parks and Green Spaces, so that these can be enjoyed by all the citizens of Bristol - in perpetuity.

Continued underfunding of our parks and green spaces is denying Bristol’s citizens the health benefits that come with easy and free access to the “urban lungs” across the city, in order that they may pursue their healthy recreational and leisure activities.

Alan Aburrow
Past Chairman, Friends of Badock’s Wood
Member, Bristol Parks Forum

Statement to Full Council – 14th. November 2017 on behalf of Friends of Brandon Hill

Friends of Brandon Hill, since our inception in 2008, have worked tirelessly to maintain and enhance this historic space which has been owned by the city since 1174. We have lobbied, raised money for projects and gardened and are dismayed that Bristol City Council is proposing to withdraw funding other than that generated through income, from Brandon Hill and all other green spaces and parks in the city. Brandon Hill in particular provides:-

- A respite from the severe pollution which threatens the health of those living and working nearby.
- A place for free recreation and much needed exercise for all ages.
- A major draw for visitors of many nationalities who, when they visit the hill and see the city from the top of the Cabot Tower, also bring much needed revenue to Bristol.
- A haven for wild life in the middle of the city.
- Access to open space for the many local residents who have no gardens.

We share Deputy Mayor Asher Craig's delight that Brandon Hill is one of 8 parks in Bristol nominated for the Fields in Trust award for Best Park 2017, but wish to point out that this historic park is unlikely to win, while the following major problems persist.

- Graffiti defaces the entrance to the hill from the bottom of Jacob Wells Rd. This is particularly disappointing after extensive renovations have been carried out using funds from the community infrastructure levy accessed through the local Neighbourhood Partnership.
- Camping by rough sleepers continues to blight the former bowling green, which was renovated following our successful application to Groundworks Community Spaces for the funding. This is especially dispiriting as our volunteers planted and regularly maintain the herbaceous border running along one side.
- The water feature has not been functioning for over a year. Visitors and local residents frequently complain about the appearance of the stagnant water and although we received 5 stars this year in the RHS 'It's Your Neighbourhood' competition, the judge commented that renovation of this feature was a key element in the attractiveness of the hill and therefore a priority.
- No horticulture is carried out, apart from the weekly efforts of our volunteers and the ParkWork team.

While we understand that the Council is under severe financial pressure and must make savings, we find it hard to comprehend how the Deputy Mayor can celebrate the success of Bristol's parks and green spaces, while supporting the proposal to terminate the budget for their maintenance. We implore the Council to reconsider its decision to take this step.

Full Council Meeting 14th November 2017: Parks Petition Statement

Introduction

We are an informal group which monitors the wildlife and habitat of Badocks Wood Local Nature Reserve Southmead including birds, invertebrates in the Trym and meadows, botany etc.

Support for Parks Petition

We are very concerned about the current state of the Council's management of the Wood which is not complying with the extant Management Plan 2012-2017..The Council is only carrying out basic activities such as removing trees which are not meeting essential health and safety requirements and doing one meadow cut per annum.

The Management Plan requires that:

- trees and scrub should be managed on a annual basis removing excess trees to reduce the canopy and so allowing light to reach the woodland floor and stimulate plant growth essential for insects and birds. This has not been done for the last few years.
- Saplings such as sycamore, ash and horse chestnut are growing in abundance in the Wood and these are not being managed at all, again resulting in scrub and young trees shading out the woodland floor.
- The meadow areas are required to have 2/3 cuts per annum to allow flowering plants to compete with rank grasses and provide food for insects..Only 1 cut per annum is currently being undertaken and this year, one meadow has been omitted from the cut regime presumably by mistake. We understand that the Council, via Avon Wildlife Trust, cannot support volunteers in future who have carried out an additional meadow cut for the last two Springs.

Given that the situation is so dire at the moment, the cost neutral approach to the Parks Budget currently proposed will have even worse effects on Badocks Wood and other designated nature reserves across the City. These are nationally designated reserves winning their accolade for providing high quality habitats for wildlife and for people to enjoy.

We fear that this unachievable budget strategy will make the situation worse for these reserves and their biodiversity will reduce drastically over time, losing the unique qualities that they were designated for.

Is this what the Council is aiming for in its wildlife policies ? Please reconsider this proposal and support well-loved nature reserves which are enjoyed by so many local residents; and work with your partners such as the Parks Forum and local groups to develop a realistic long-term alternative.

Siân Parry on behalf of the wildlife monitoring group, Badocks Wood Southmead

Protect Our Parks

Badock's Wood – A Statement from Friends of Badock's Wood to Bristol City Council for 14th November 2017

Badock's Wood is a public open space and a designated Local Nature Reserve. It is a valuable community resource which must continue to be cared for using public funds and we see no possibility of it being self-financing nor part of a cost-neutral plan for Bristol's Parks and Open Space.

Badock's Wood is a public open space in Southmead / Westbury on Trym situated next to Henleaze Lake. It covers an area of approximately 10 hectares. It is a small, semi-natural, broad-leaved woodland situated in a limestone valley (with adjacent areas of grassland) in the north-west of Bristol, between Henleaze and Southmead. It therefore provides a wildlife haven in an urban setting. To the north of the site, in an area of open grassland, is a Bronze Age burial mound (tumulus). The latter has been classified as "Middle Bronze Age, constructed about 1300BC" and is sometimes referred to as the "Southmead Round Barrow".

This open space was provided for public benefit through an agreement between Sir Stanley Badock and Bristol City Council in the 1930s.

Friends of Badock's Wood has worked very closely with the City Council, particularly the Parks Department, for the last 20 years to enhance and improve the open space, resulting in it being awarded Local Nature Reserve designation in 2008.

It is an invaluable free-to-access open space, not only for wildlife but for the local communities in particular residents of Southmead, Henleaze, Westbury on Trym and Horfield wards.

Badock's Wood is an asset which contributes to the public's health and wellbeing. It requires investment from the public purse for this public benefit. This wood (and wildflower meadows) is not a "cash cow". It cannot be exploited commercially. There is no suitable venue space for concerts or other significant revenue raising, profit making events.

What it provides – amongst other things:

- An educational environment for formal and informal learning. Forest Schools are held there. Local primary and secondary schools use it as an outdoor classroom.
- A peaceful, quiet space to be.
- A free place to run around rather than sit indoors.
- All-weather paths which have been way-marked as a 1km Walk for Health – vital for physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Walking and cycling routes to schools and work – reducing reliance on cars.
- A place for people to exercise. A place for people to exercise their dogs. This needs Council funds to manage dog waste as well as for the dog warden
- A haven for wildlife in an urban area. 40 species of birds resident and migratory are recorded in Badock's Wood annually. Two rivers run through including the Westbury Trym that the village is named after. Three wildflower meadows thrive thanks to the Council, FOBW and local residents and wildlife groups all working together. These play host to large numbers of invertebrates including many butterflies and moths which are in serious decline in the UK. This needs council funded maintenance using professional workers and cannot be done solely by volunteers.
- Ancient trees, veteran trees, hundreds of years old – which need to be actively cared for by trained arboriculturalists – not local volunteers.

It has a long history to tell. Not just its ancient history (there is a Bronze Age Burial Mound which needs to be cared for) but its more recent community, cultural history. It was an allotment site during the Second World War. It was home to people bombed out of their homes during WWII thanks to prefabs being built across what are now the meadows. Horses grazed on what has most recently been a playing field. Local people have many memories and stories to tell. Anyone who grew up nearby has played in the wood. It is an important part of their lives and needs to continue to be so. But no one has talked to us about how the Council plans to continue to look after it if there are insufficient funds allocated to the Parks Departmental budget.

What it needs is guaranteed funding. Not further budget cuts. It is already at the limit, with less management and maintenance funded by the Council than ever before. However local people cannot make up the financial nor the professional short fall. This must be provided by the Council. Badock's Wood cannot and never will be self-financing. It just is not possible.

PROTECT OUR PARKS.

I would like the Council to look at ways it can work in parks and green spaces and improve them for wildlife. This could include simply leaving areas of grass, bushes and undergrowth uncut or untrimmed, which could also save money. We have tried this in Hartcliffe and are waiting to see the results.

Planting areas of wildflowers and more trees could also help, especially if they are food plants for butterflies and insects etc, and provide safe habitat for all kinds of wildlife.

Perhaps in future one way to assess the value of a park would be to look at the variety of wildlife in it.

I've attached a pdf called the Nature of Bristol I wrote in 2013 for Bristol Green Capital, but it makes some points that are still relevant today.

Regards

Keith

It's a little dispiriting to feel the need to make a case for the crucial importance of properly funded and maintained public parks and other public green spaces in a twenty-first century city. I use one park—Victoria Park—on an almost daily basis; but am well-acquainted with three others. All are well-used but Victoria Park is particularly so, highly valued by walkers, parents with dependent children, people exercising, in groups or individually, runners, cyclists, older and unaccompanied children, dog owners, elderly men and women, adults and children engaged in games and sports. I frequently cross the park in any one of two or three directions, depending on my destination, and sometimes sit there for extended periods, reading or simply thinking. I'm perfectly well aware of the therapeutic benefits of such an environment, as are—quite evidently—a great many others.

Cities are increasingly uncomfortable places in which to live, work and, especially, walk. There is a worsening, unchecked tendency for motorised traffic to occupy pavements as well as roads; for good and bad reasons, cyclists also make walking a hazardous affair; and pedestrians, as ever, are at the bottom of the food chain. This makes our public parks ever more vital. As attested to by countless individual testimonies as well as numerous academic studies, our parks are important aids to physical and mental wellbeing. Many people have no gardens and very little, if any, recreational space in their homes. It's impossible to overestimate the value of being able to walk across—or simply sit and look at—extensive areas of grass, to walk among trees and well-kept flowerbeds, to enjoy play areas and networks of paths, away from the noise, the immediate sources of pollution and the threat of motorised traffic. I believe that people who can benefit from the environment of such calm, unthreatening green spaces are not only happier and more relaxed but they are also more productive and more creative.

It is, I think, absolutely essential that the provision and thorough, professional maintenance of public parks and other green spaces is viewed not as an optional extra or a 'soft target' for budget cuts, whatever the iniquities of central government funding, but rather as a fundamental part of civilised life in a major city, indispensable to the physical and mental health of its citizens.

Paul

Dear Mayor and Councillors

The Northern Slopes are three informal green spaces between Knowle, Bedminster and Knowle West.

The Northern Slopes Initiative are a group of volunteers involved in maintaining and enhancing the Slopes.

The Slopes are part of the “lungs” of Bristol and bring a health and well-being benefit to the City, as acknowledged in the Draft Corporate Strategy.

In his recent 2017 State of the City speech, we believe that the Mayor missed a trick, by leaving out parks and green spaces from the list of positive influences, bringing hope to the City.

For not only is there health and well-being benefits – there can be economic, social and cultural benefits as well.

Green spaces maintained properly and where practical being inclusive can:

Be an example to other cities in the world

Improve educational achievement in some individuals

Add value to surrounding properties

Increase tourist footfall

Provide areas for wildlife, which then supports bees which pollinate plants and crops in our gardens and fields

Provide something different to look at other than buildings

Reflect the history of an area – eg: for the Slopes - The Bommie for WWII, the Redcliffe Pipe Walk and field boundaries that date back centuries.

Finally, we would urge Cllr Craig to think carefully about unintended consequences of reducing maintenance expenditure – and leaving it with other organisations to do things.

If something doesn't happen in terms of maintenance the area becomes unloved and unvisited. Once that happens there is a downward spiral leading to the point where the area cannot provide its green space benefits to people and Bristol; and we all suffer when those services are lost.

We know this because this has happened to us. We have lost green space from the Northern Slopes.

We ask the Mayor and Councillors to support the Bristol Parks Forum petition and drop the proposal to leave Parks and Open Spaces with no maintenance money by April 2019.

Please say no to zero.

We would like to speak to the meeting if at all possible based on a reduced version of the above.

Thankyou.



Bristol City Council meeting 14 November 2017

Protect our Parks: statement by the Ramblers

The Ramblers is a national organisation with two charitable objectives:

- i. to protect the places where people walk; and*
- ii. to promote walking.*

The Bristol group has over 700 members and is part of an Avon area with over 2000 members

1. Bristol's parks and wonderful green spaces are vitally important for walking in Bristol. Bristol Ramblers and other groups organise guided walks there, and most residents of the city visit independently, some every day and others for special occasions. Places such as the Downs, Blaise and Ashton Court attract walkers from outside the city too. People enjoy these places whatever their class, age, gender or ethnicity, to the benefit of their mental and physical health.
2. We therefore support all the points made in the petition from the Parks Forum. Our green spaces need to be maintained as attractive and safe places for people to walk. It is not clear that enough revenue can be raised from events and other activities to ensure this. In addition, many events are likely to limit the space available for walking. They may reduce its attractiveness too, for example by generating traffic and damaging the grass. Other revenue-raising activities - such as food and other sales concessions - are likely to be intrusive.
3. We urge the council not to make cuts on the scale proposed.

**Bristol Ramblers
12 November 2017**

from: Redland May Fair Committee (part of Redland & Cotham Amenities Society – Reg charity no 268848)

Background:

The Redland May Fair is held each year on May Day on Redland Green BS6. It is a free, local, family-focussed event which provides over 100 stalls, children's games, refreshments and family entertainment – over the last 40 years it has become a much-loved regular event for friends and family. Typically, around 4,000 people attend during the course of the afternoon, most walking from the surrounding areas; many of the stall holders are charities and local small businesses – the aim is to make the Fair as community focussed as possible. Each year, there is normally a bucket collection with the proceeds going to a nominated local charity.

The Fair is organised by a small committee of hard-working volunteers; the feedback that we have received about the Fair – atmosphere, range of stalls, organisation - is all excellent.

Our concern is:

The recent increases to licence fees for outdoor events in the city will make many events such as ours financially unviable.

As a community event, we qualify for a 50% reduction and, for our next event in 2018 we have also successfully negotiated a further reduction of 40%. However, this still represents a massive increase over previous years – increasing from £36 in 2014 to £504 (incl VAT) for 2018 with the prospect of an increase to £840 (incl VAT) in 2019 if the discretionary reduction is not retained.

This raises serious concerns as to whether the May Fair will be financially sustainable in the future.

In summary:

Across the city, we fear that the recent exceptional rise in licence fees will lead to a reduction in the number of outdoor events such as ours and strongly expect the Council will not realise the expected increase in revenue - a 'lose-lose' situation!

At a time when the Council is looking for greater community involvement in supporting local parks and green spaces, we must also question whether local goodwill is being properly recognised.

**Statement for full council from
Redland and Cotham Amenities Society.**

Redland and Cotham have two parks within the ward boundaries. This is an area of high population density, and limited provision of local parkspace. (R&C has approx. 5 square meters per person against a recommended Bristol Standard of 18 sq m per person: *2009 figures* and a large part of our area does not have access to children's playgrounds within the current minimum distance standards set out in the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy).

The RCAS has funded many parks improvements, such as the provision of new and replacement of play equipment and the fencing to enclose the two children's playgrounds, as well as bench works and tree and shrub funding.

Green space is highly valued in our area, and the levels of satisfaction are high, despite the low level of provision. There is a small band of volunteers in each park, who carry out parks improvements such as graffiti removal, litter picking, work-parties for planting and maintaining bulbs, flower beds, trees and shrubs.

Over the last 2 years we have seen maintenance standards fall, and, despite our willingness to support reinstatement of parks infrastructure, through funding and workparties, we find that there is already no capacity in the Parks department to take advantage of the support and funding on offer.

For instance: We have been in discussion with Parks officers about a bench reinstatement project in Cotham Gardens and Lovers' Walk (Redland Grove open space), which we have confirmed has full funding, for well over a year with no action yet on the ground.

The Redland May Fair held annually in early May on Redland Green, is organised by the May Fair committee, part of RCAS, and is a popular and highly valued community event. The May Fair committee have made a separate statement setting out the issues faced by the volunteers in continuing to organise this event in the face of increased costs and council requirements.

The local schools' continued expansion means an increase in numbers using the park, especially after school, leading to more litter and general issues arising from the large number of people of all ages using the park and its equipment and infrastructure at any time. Drug use and rough sleeping is a problem here too, as in many parks across the city.

Our parks are used by local schools, which have little green space of their own, and by the many people living locally in accommodation without private greenspace. This use continues to intensify as more accommodation is built in back gardens and houses are converted to flats and HMOs, and as schools continue to expand by building on open space on their own sites.

We have no parks buildings to generate income; our area has very few community buildings.

We protest at the proposal to remove the funding of parks by April 2019. The budget proposals fail to take account of the full impact of stopping maintaining our parks on the local community and the impact on local services, such as health, which removal of parks funding would affect.

We ask the council to withdraw this proposal and to embark on an exercise to identify what level of investment the council will need to continue to make in order to continue to provide good parks in Bristol.

The 2017 Corporate Strategy sets out the aspiration to make Bristol a 'Liveable city': the definition of Liveable is that the city centre and neighbourhoods are great places for people of all ages to live, work, learn and play.

A city without parks or with poorly maintained parks cannot be called Liveable.

Bristol needs good parks to achieve that aspiration.