

Minutes of Bristol Parks Forum held Saturday 16th May 2021

Present: A list of all those present is held by the Secretary.
Notes by Frances Robertson (BPF committee)



1. Introductions

Chair of the Forum, Mark Logan, welcomed everyone. There were too many people to go round to introduce themselves and they were asked to introduce themselves when the speak.

Rob (Secretary) explained that the Forum does keep a record of attendance and people tend to send apologies in advance which are also noted but doesn't put them in the minutes usually. The minutes generally only record names of those who speak at meetings.

Jo (St Andrew's Park) said John had asked for his apologies from St Andrews Park to be noted.

Apologies from Jon James, Head of Parks were also noted.

2. Items arising from February meeting

Action Items not on the agenda:

Cllr Afzal Shah had not been invited to the Parks Forum as he had not been re-elected in the recent local elections so was no the Cabinet Member for climate change and ecological emergencies. Once the new Cabinet was announced the Forum may invite his successor to attend.

It was noted that Cllr Asher Craig was present and she confirmed that she continues to be the Cabinet member with the portfolio that includes Parks.

3. New Parks Groups and Forum Membership

Forum Secretary, Rob Acton-Campbell, reported that a number of new groups formed and other groups restarted including Dovercourt, St Anne's Park, Arnos Court, Mina Road Park (relaunched).

He asked all groups to please check your group's entry on the Parks Forum website that it is up to date and correct.

Action: ALL

4. Volunteering in Parks

Ella Hogg, BCC Volunteer Co-ordinator

Ella shared this presentation - www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPF150521VolunteeringUpdate.pdf

Please read the presentation for details.

Discussion

Q Regarding Bristol waste and Parks relationship, how do people get the right agreements and contacts for waste collection?

A Ella explained that litter picks and litter collection should be pre arranged with Parks and it doesn't matter which bags are used Bristol Waste or plain will still be collected. However, groups must talk to Parks before they undertake the litter pick.

The Litter picking guidance is different for the two different organisations. For Bristol Waste (street litter picking) you must sign a disclaimer. However in Parks, whilst no training is required for individuals to litter

pick on their own, if it being undertaken as a Friends group they must have a H&S trained leader and have it the risk assessment signed off by Parks beforehand.

Q How do we contact Joe ([ParkWork](#)) and get quotes

Ella - Joe's daily rate is £280 . If he hasn't responded to emails it is best to call him.

Q Parks Nursery at Blaise is still not peat free which is not good and they have said they don't have good results without peat. Many of us are long term peat free gardeners, can we help? Was surprised they were not already peat free and thought that was Council policy for a long time.

Ella explained that the community plants scheme did use only peat free compost as it was a scheme requirement that 100% of the plants must be grown peat free.

Jon – St Andrew's Park

How do we get in touch with Area Coordinator / Operations Coordinator?

In St Andrew's Park there is an issue with waste collection. They are fortunate to have a mini recycling centre which is good way of redirecting waste to recycling rather than incineration However they are having problems getting in touch direct with Bristol Waste to deal with it.

Although the recycling has been there for years there are problems because Bristol Waste tend to leave it uncollected if the recycling has been contaminated. It would be good to have a Bristol Waste connection.

Cllr Asher Craig explained that Bristol Waste does have a community engagement team but Jon responded that the FoSAP have to go through customer services which is more indirect.

Jo – St Andrew's Park agreed with Jon. It is a real issue – hundreds/1000s of visitors on a summer's day. They leave waste / recycling beside the bins because they are full but then it is not collected. Need a direct link with Bristol waste – if they are providing a service we should have a phone number. We take photos and grid ref and say please collect bins and maybe nothing happens. Jo was concerned that this was not only messy but unhygienic to have all these full bins. The waste bins are emptied by Parks and that is another system. The system doesn't work in the summer. Would like a real direct link with Bristol Waste. If a can has been put in glass for example they won't take it at all.

Ella said she would check in with Bristol Waste communities team and ask for contact. **Action: Ella Hogg**

Concern was raised that the litter picking resulted in piles of bags which it was not always clear were waiting for collection and not fly tipping. Susan (Troopers Hill) suggested that they put a label on the bags stating that it is due for pick up by Parks or Bristol Waste.

Len (BPF committee) said he was never clear on Council's / Bristol Waste approach to providing litter bins On Northern Slopes only one location has bins, and on another volunteers are putting bags out to substitute for bins.

It was noted that most of waste generated and put in bins in parks is collected by Parks officers not Bristol Waste.

Mark explained that waste was an issue that had come up quite a bit recently and been noted by the committee. He said that there is a need to have discussions both internally and with BCC and Bristol Waste about waste management and parks in Bristol.

He said the committee may be sending out a questionnaire to find out about what groups know about what happens with waste in each park and to find out what groups' experiences are. It would only be a short survey and members were asked to keep an eye out for it.

Action: ALL

5. Climate & Ecological Emergency

This is a standing item on the agenda as a really important issue.

Reports from groups on actions related to this item.

i) RHS and Pesticides use

Susan, Troopers Hill, was continuing discussions with RHS and had recently received an email which stated: *"I am pleased to say that the RHS has decided to take a much stronger public stance on pesticides. We will be asking people to avoid using them whenever possible to reduce risks to ecosystems and will be issuing press-releases to that effect. This public clarity feels fitting for an organisation like ours that has so much influence on people's gardening practice. "*

They were changing their website to explain that pesticides should not be used except where no other options available, e.g. targeting invasive non-native species.

Susan was thanked for her perseverance and it was a great outcome.

ii) Love Nature, Love Your Park – 20th March

Rob reported that BBPF had held this event using an online conferencing platform – Hop-In. This has been a good event and they had received good feedback. There had been useful sessions on a range of topics from hedgerows to meadows and a speaker from Liverpool who they would have been unable to invited had it been a live face to face event. It was felt that there had been some advantages of electronic conferencing.

iii) Manor Woods Valley

Martin reported that 800 trees had been planted in the nature reserve with One Tree Per Child and local people and very pleased. This is a major contribution to tackling the Ecological Emergency.

iv) Trym Valley Open Space, Southmead

Frances, Badock's Wood, reported that 100s of trees had been planted on the Trym Valley Open Space which is upstream of Badock's Wood. Sustainable Southmead and other local people had been involved. There was a community orchard, a "tiny forest" – a Japanese concept, riparian woodland and some other areas of tree planting. One Tree Per Child were involved in this along with funding from other sources particularly for the Tiny Forest.

v) Eastwood Farm

Jo from Eastwood Farm also reported that they had had tree planting via one tree per child – with a new woodland on an old tip. As well as thanks to One tree per child, thanks were also due to Network rail and 100+ woodland plants were also planted.

vi) Troopers Hill

Rob, Troopers Hill, reported that they were actively working to protect the heathland on the hill which is a very special habitat

vii) Stoke Park

Mark welcomed the introduction of cattle as part of the management regime at Stoke Park and thanked the Council. He explained that it should help reduce the need for mechanical grass cutting

viii) Old Sneed Park

Eileen reported that they had lost virtually half their flower meadows due to sewer works followed by a large increase in people visiting. This has been a set back and there will be a lot of work to do to restore the meadows going forward.

Martin, Manor Woods Valley, asked whether there would be an update from Richard Goldthorpe who had previously talked to the Forum about Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy and also wondered how Forum members would be able to contribute to the process.

Rob explained that Sara Jackson is the Council's officer who is dealing with the Ecological Emergency Strategy and he has a provisional date for 1st Saturday in September for bringing to the Forum the ecological emergency action plan. They are keen to talk to Parks Forum at that stage.

Caroline, Arnos Court Park, was reflecting on the recent election hustings. She explained that at WECA level there had been a hustings on the environment but Dan Norris (who is now the WECA Mayor) didn't attend. She thought it would be good to hear a statement from him on climate and ecological emergency.

Mark agreed and we will look into this.

Action: Forum Committee

6. Bristol & Bath Parks Foundation

Rob who is also Chair of the Foundation updated the meeting and gave apologies from Charlee Bennett, CEO of BBPF

Presentation

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPF150521BBPFUpdate.pdf

Rob explained that it had been a busy month as they had been able to start doing things again in parks. The Foundation is working across Bristol & Bath.

The presentation outlined the 5 Goals and their work in Quarters 2 and 3 this year.

Please read the presentation for details.

Discussion

Cllr Craig queried whether they were working with local communities?

Rob said that they were citing one example where the Foundation is working with local Somali community. He said they are also aware of asset transfer concerns re Netham and they do keep explaining the actual situation.

Cllr Craig explained that she had been re-elected and her responsibilities have not changed and she has still got the same portfolio. She said she was really looking forward to working with the Parks Forum and Tree Forum. She congratulated everyone and said that she continued to be impressed and thanked everyone for their continued contribution to the Parks.

Eileen, Old Sneed Park, commented that an enormous amount of energy and money goes into litter picking in this country. She wondered about a campaign in schools to tackle litter as she felt it always seems best to work through children who then tell their parents what they shouldn't be doing.

Rob explained that the Parks Foundation looking to work with schools. Bristol Waste is also working with schools.

Mark agreed and said that the waste industry does a lot of education about waste and litter so he hopes that the next adult generation will be better.

Sarah – Eastville Park – said that whilst Bristol Waste do undertake campaigns in schools it has been found that littering can be part of teenage rebellion. She said there is a group called Hubbub who do environmental engagement work. She thought that one successful scheme is deposit scheme where people can receive a token to spend locally if they deposit their waste / recycling and that might be something worth asking Bristol Waste about.

She explained that she is involved as her household is taking part in a Zero waste family scheme.

John – St Andrews Park – commented that there is also the Greta Thunberg effect which is the opposite of those rebelling by not bothering about e.g. litter and there is an opportunity to take advantage of those who DO care, and it would be worth putting up signs saying “please take your recycling home”.

Frances – Badock’s Wood that that was a good idea and one that all the parks groups could do for the bins in their parks, as a contribution to the emergencies.

Martin – Manor Woods Valley – explained that their group had offered litter pickers to their regular litter pickers and they now have a virtually litter free LNR because these people regularly do their litter picking when they are out walking. This has been very successful and they will carry it on and may not need group litter picking sessions every again. Rob said Friends of Troopers Hill had done similarly.

7. Cycling & Walking Infrastructure

Len explained that the Forum is trying to come up with a position statement on new and improved cycling and walking infrastructure. He explained he was outlining what had happened with the Parks Forum members’ consultation and what is happening next. It is not going to be a position statement but an information pack.

Please read Len’s Presentation - www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPF150521C&WUpdate.pdf

Steven – Greville Smythe Park – apologised for not having responded to the consultation. One point he thought is important is to make a distinction between destination users and transient users – e.g. those passing through on a bicycle are only in the park for a short time. Riverside parks cycle users for example might have strong views but are only there for 12 seconds compared with local people playing e.g. with their dogs for a lot longer

Fraser – Castle Park – put up an example of an active travel hierarchy on the Zoom chat

Mark asked that members please respond to the next consultation round when they receive it. **Action: All**

8. Future Parks Update

Rob explained that there had been discussions including a review of what the Project had been doing and what they should do next. Expressions of Interest are going live in summer 2021 – with a pilot in 5 or 6 parks

Sarah – Eastville Park – explained that Eastville Park will be one of the first 6 parks
She said that the Future Parks Project idea was huge and was meant to help a lot but she considered that it had over promised and under delivered.

The intention was to draw up a Spirit of Place document – or soul of the park using volunteers - 15-20 people from the local community to come together in workshops to capture what it means to them socially, emotionally, the wellbeing aspects etc. This would be happening in June

Louise is the Future Parks contact for this and the Friends group has handed over list of groups that should be contacted. However Sarah said she would be very surprised if happens by August.

Sarah felt that there will be some groups who have professional staff who are slick and speak the words and can put in strong EoI. But there will also be voluntary groups who do not necessarily have that expertise but at the same time such groups can have access to funds that others cannot access. She hoped there would be support for them to help them participate e.g. from BBPF. She said that the Friends of Eastville Park are hopefully stress testing as they go through the process

Rob commented that Sarah had summed it up very well.

Cllr Craig said that she really wanted to say how frustrating it has been and felt like the FPA has another hidden agenda that the Council is not clear about. The FPA is trying to dictate how the Council should project manage, they felt our 27 parks was too ambitious but she said the Council does not think that it is. She said it feels like a tussle between David and Goliath. Cllr Craig will be meeting with Jon James and the Strategic Director to discuss feedback from FPA. She said that the plan is that whatever happens Bristol Parks is planning to deliver that programme as they see fit and will kick off around August with first 6 sites. There will be an internal meeting and with Future Parks Board.

Sarah told Cllr Craig that the Friends were struggling with lack of communication and engagement.

Cllr Craig responded by stating that it is difficult to do comms when the funder trying to put kybosh on what Bristol is trying to do. They move the goal posts and she had had strong discussions with FPA. She said that the Council manages multi-million pound projects and knows how to do this. If they say they are going to take the money back, Cllr Craig said she will find the resources to make it happen because the Council hasn't come this far to let it stop.

Rob has had email correspondence with Jon James about it and there will be a separate Parks Forum meeting about it.

Frances - Badock's Wood – queried what was meant by an Expression of Interest in this context.

Cllr Craig explained that it is not about running a park, not a competition as they may be able more than one to have as looking for collaboration if more than one EoI. Not commissioning, not telling people to take over running of the park. Could be anything really. E.g. what just came from Eastville is a project we would seek to support.

Action: BPF Committee to arrange separate meeting

9. Update from Parks Groups

Rob reported that the Committee had had a discussion about surveys of parks users and maybe monitoring numbers of users.

Martin – Manor Woods Valley – reported that their group had undertaken a survey using Facebook and in their newsletter. They received just under 200 responses and the responses included information on ethnicity, age group, interests etc. They have produced a report of the results which is on the Manor Wood Valley Group website <https://manorwoodvalley.org/>. Martin said that there were lots of issues and probably more questions than answers. There is a summary of the survey report on the Parks Forum website www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/MWVGSurveySummary.pdf

Rob noted that the survey had picked up that it is predominantly white people using Manor Woods Valley.

Roy Kareem – Black and Green Ambassador

Roy introduced himself and explained that the Black & Green Ambassadors scheme had been set up during Bristol 2015 and initially had 2 ambassadors in 2016. There was then a break then last year they raised funding for ambassadors for this year. There are 3 Black & Green Ambassadors including Roy. His funding is for research and his work is on urban park users. He is doing audio interviews, podcasts, and a radio show for Ujima. The target audience is to speak to black and brown park users.

Roy invited Parks Forum members to get in touch - roy@blackandgreenambassadors.org.uk or there's a short survey here to make contact: <https://du2wx66mpnn.typeform.com/to/UvISjJdL>

The other 2 ambassadors are Olivia Sweeney who is looking at air quality, and Asia Yousif who is looking at cultural diversity and sustainability practices and how they intermingle.

10. AGM of National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS)

Rob attended this AGM representing Bristol Parks Forum. It was notable that most Parks Forums are at the same stage as us and like us working on Zoom but that has been helpful in getting national parks groups together. They are experiencing the same issues e.g. keeping going and getting volunteers involved. Rob will write a note of the meeting for the Forum. **Action: Rob**

11. Future meetings

- a. BPF Sat 16th October – almost definitely on Zoom as centres are not taking room bookings at present
- b. Future Parks Briefing – zoom date tbc
- c. Parks Climate Ecological Emergency Plan Briefing – provisionally Saturday 4th Sept tbc

Please email info@bristolparksforum.org.uk if you have any further comments on queries.