

Minutes of the Bristol Parks Forum Meeting held on Sat 16th October 2021 via Zoom



1. Introductions

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

2. Minutes of BPF Meeting held 15th May 2021

Accuracy:

Item 5. vi) Troopers Hill – it says actively working to protect heathland on this hill etc. Following up on that Jo C wanted to make the point that planting trees everywhere is not the answer we should not be planting trees everywhere and should be looking at that and not e.g. planting on the wrong soil type – e.g. the heathland.

Item 7 Steven Wickham – should be Sylvia Park Cumberland Basin instead of Greville Smyth Park He also added that willy nilly planting trees is not the answer and that there also is a need to plan for the long term size of the trees and the impact on views in a designed landscape not just a Biological Point

Item 6 John from St Andrews' Park should be Jon.

Item 8. Paragraph 6 – Cllr Craig – it was clarified that FPA is the national Future Parks Accelerator project

Matters arising

- i. Parks groups asked to update their details with the Forum and Rob has checked.
- ii. Ella was to let us have Bristol Waste contact. Rob to remind her. [Jo St Andrews Park noted that she has since contacted someone at Bristol Waste and the problem they had in St Andrew's Park has been resolved]
- iii. Committee had an action to look at having a chat with Dan Norris (WECA Mayor) about preparing a statement on the climate and ecological emergencies. This has not happened but falls well within the agenda item on Ecological Emergency Action Plan
- iv. Cycling and Walking infrastructure. This is on the agenda and Len to talk about it
- v. Future Parks separate meeting has not happened but Rob's update to the meeting is on agenda
- vi. National Parks Forum. Rob had an action to write something about the AGM he attended. He will look at this again and see if anything about it has gone out in the BPF newsletter or is still needed.

3. BPF Waste in Parks Survey

Frances Robertson, Committee Member

Frances outlined the main findings from the survey which were:

- i. 22 different groups responded
- ii. The complete lack of consistency in terms of waste / litter bin provision. No two parks or open spaces seem to have the same arrangements. Waste bin options ranged from no bins at all, through a mix of segregated or joint dog and litter bins to a few sites which had segregated and joint bins, as well as recycling bins.
- iii. Unhelpful situation that public (and some groups) do not know who deals with waste and flytipping inside and outside parks – having two separate reporting systems through the Council website is unhelpful. One respondent suggested we need a "One Council approach to reflect the One City concept". It should not be for the public to work out the boundaries between Parks and Bristol Waste responsibilities so need a single waste and flytipping reporting point and then for the Council to direct the report to the appropriate team.

- iv. There is an appetite for more recycling bins but tempered by the reports that if recycling bins overflowing or there is mis-binning of items, they won't get emptied at all.

Frances will anonymise data before making report public but noted that specific bin requests for the Council to address would not be anonymised when discussing these with the Council.

Action:

- Written report of survey to be published.
- Committee to take up findings with the Council.

4. Cycling & Walking Infrastructure

Len Wyatt, Committee Member

Len has prepared an information pack to try and raise issues that Parks groups find important. He is intending to update the document within the next month. He feels that it now needs someone with design skills to help with designing the document – he is seeking a volunteer. He stated that the document needs to be sent by the end of November.

Len noted that there has been a long and controversial history especially around conflicts between Parks Groups relating to new infrastructure for cyclists, walkers and other users.

Mark (Chair) thanked Len who is very busy with lots of development issues in South Bristol.

Action:

- Volunteer designer to contact Committee / Len to help design final document
- Len to publish revised document by end November

Jo C – St Andrews Park reported that this week Bristol Walking Alliance held a meeting on the impact of e-scooters and using cycle paths. Len was also there. There was a good turn out from a range of disability groups, cyclists, walkers etc. The point was raised that personal mobility is going to change in the future and that we need to reflect this, especially with car use being discouraged.

Mark (Chair) explained that Len has been to many groups with many different views. The intention was to understand all the other viewpoints so that we don't start from a point of lack of knowledge of other groups, creating more conflict etc.

5. Future Parks & BCC Parks and Green Space Strategy

Rob Acton-Campbell

Rob explained the history of Future Parks national scheme which has been noted at previous meetings. Bristol is going forward no longer as part of the national scheme but as a Bristol scheme funded by the City Council and under their own control as to how they do things and what they do. 5 Parks sites are listed for Expressions of Interest to be submitted. Rob urged everyone to visit the new Future Parks website – <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/web/bristol-future-parks>

Rob is on the panel assessing the Expressions of Interest (Eoi) and he will be ensuring that Parks Groups are involved, particularly with anything controversial from Parks group point of view. The intention is to roll the project out to other sites across Bristol, subsequently. There is a lot of useful information on Future Parks site about the 5 sites chosen, e.g. Eastville Park and Blaise.

Bristol City Council's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy was also part of that initial project. That has now been separated and work is going on developing the Strategy and the Bristol Parks Forum has been invited to be a member of the Steering Group. The new Strategy will be more than just about areas under Parks Department management and control but also involving other Council Departments. The idea is that the Strategy should cover all BCC owned green spaces – e.g. roadside verges. It will also be looking at any opportunities to increase green space especially through the Planning processes.

Tessa Fitzjohn, VPAG member and Councillor for Bedminster reported that she is working on using arts to develop an understanding of history and development of Victoria Park. She explained that her priority as a Councillor includes looking at green spaces and public rights of way so is very interested in these two initiatives and how they are going to be taken forward, but she is finding it difficult to find out what is going on.

Rob responded that the Strategy workshops will involve different interested parties including public organisations and he understands that there will be briefings for councillors.

Noted that Mary Jane Wilshire in Parks Dept, who is part of Richard Ennion's team, is working on the Parks Strategy. She is hoping to start work on this in the next couple of months.

6. Bristol City Council Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP)

Sarah Jackson, Ecological Emergency Project Manager

The EEAP can be downloaded from [the Council's website here](#)

Sarah explained that she has been a year in post at Bristol City Council and the post was created following the City's declaration of an Ecological Emergency.

The One City Ecological Emergency Strategy was launched in September 2020.

She explained that there had been a lot of work undertaken at West of England (WoE) level including a Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy and West of England Nature Recovery Strategy. Having mapped WoE nature recovery opportunities, local councils are now undertaking more detailed "ground truthing" – i.e. checking the accuracy of the mapping used by use of other data or going out on site to ensure accurate.

She agreed with Jo's point regarding "right tree right place" as there are obviously places we do want and don't want trees.

Sarah's role is to coordinate work across Council Services and is working with One City Partners with regards to the One City Ecological Strategy. Her role is not operational but to coordinate and connect council services work. She noted that the council is complex and can be hard even for officers to be aware of what services are working on.

Bristol City Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan was launched in September 2021. The Appendix has 75 different activities that are the focus of its activities, but that is not to say that other things are not going on as well.

Page 5 repeats the Goals from the One City strategy – 30% of land should be managed for nature - so connects with the Council's Green Space Strategy and looking at what the Council can do with their land. Sarah has been collating baseline data. 24% of Council land is designated at either national or local level for wildlife. 15% of the whole of Bristol is designated for wildlife. However, it is recognised that whilst land may be designated ecological management of the land may not necessarily be as good as it could be. Sarah is working closely with Becky Belfin (BCC Parks Nature Conservation Officer). They have surveyed all SNCIs in Bristol ownership and a report is expected. There are 86 SNCIs across whole of the city and BCC is responsible for 54 of them.

The BCC Action Plan includes actions with One City partners, so the first stage is to map the ecological network; what is designated, look at connectivity, how well does it work for wildlife moving around the city, flood maps etc.

Parks Dept is looking at how council can improve land for nature in parks, where we can change the management to benefit nature. Work that parks is setting in motion.

Another key area of Sarah's work currently is coordinating a One City Working group to develop a Wildlife Index. This work will identify which species we want to monitor.. Looking for reliable data and monitoring that can continue over time.

One City Ecological Emergency Strategy has 4 key goals

- 30% Space for nature
- 50% reduction in Pesticides
- 100% of waterways to have water quality that supports healthy wildlife
- Wider footprint – reduce impact on health of wildlife and ecosystems

Council's Procurement Team working on sustainable procurement policy and guidance to be aware of procurement impacts and to look at also limiting impact on wildlife elsewhere e.g. through timber products, peat etc. and that suppliers demonstrate minimal impact on nature.

Key to their work is the Environment Bill. The Government has committed to passing this Bill by the start of COP26. *Note: now the Environment Act*

EEAP Page 13 – has a summary of aspects of Environment Bill relevant to ecological emergency. This includes mandatory biodiversity net gain – 10%.

When Parks Department looks at the Green Space Strategy one issue will be how to manage the forthcoming legal requirement for developers to achieve biodiversity net gain (BNG). Developers will be able to contribute funds to the City Council if they cannot provide mitigation and benefits on their development site. The council is developing a framework for how it will implement BNG - see EEAP A4 page.

One City Pesticide Amnesty is taking place on the weekend of 23rd / 24th October. An opportunity for residents to bring pesticides that they maybe have in their sheds for disposal. This is also linked to a University of Bristol project looking at pesticides across Bristol. This project will be looking at the types of pesticides that get returned through the pesticide amnesty and also carrying out some soil sampling.

Q Len queried with Sarah whether the 24% referred to before or after the land/green space earmarked for development in the 2011/14/18 local plan is taken into account?

A The figure (24% of council land is designated for wildlife and council has target of achieving 30% of land for nature) is land already designated . [See Bristol PinPoint to see area designated for wildlife.] The figure is taken from GIS analysis which looked at total area of land mapped by Council.

Q Martin, MCVG - will the SNCI report be put into the public domain and when?

A Sarah will ask Becky. It will definitely feed into their ecological network mapping and having a shared platform where people can see it. Also looking at how can councillors respond in their constituencies. When met with city councillors their message was need to communicate with councillors and their constituencies.

Q Are you in consultation with network rail?

A Sarah herself is focused on BCC but One City partners, Ian Barrett from Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) and Savita Wilmot from the Natural History Consortium are working with major landowners e.g. Network Rail, NHS etc. and undertaking a range of activities.

Key point to note is that BCC has produced its own action plan and others in the City need to produce their own.

Q Susan, Troopers Hill With pesticide reduction policies, play areas are no longer being sprayed. New play areas are being built with safety surfacing less affected by weeds. What is being done about existing safety surfacing where you cannot weed by hand without pulling up chunks of surfacing and leaving the weeds will break up the safety surfacing?

A Bristol Waste is trialling a machine that pulls up weeds and inspecting the results to see if it has damaged surfacing – e.g. cobbles. This is not just a Parks Department issue but also other Departments such as Docks, Cemeteries and Crematoriums, Highways etc. The Council now has baseline data and are now

developing a 3 year pesticides reduction plan.. The City Council also looking at land management in combination with this target to look at changed management to reduce need for pesticides. Also looking at what are the alternatives and seeking information from pesticide companies on alternative products.

Sarah noted that the Council gets more complaints regarding not spraying rather than spraying.

Parks Department is looking at changes in land management – for example can it be non hard management, can it be wild meadow not short grass. Housing Department is considering can they have green space not hard surfaces. A new staff post has been created to look at pesticide reduction and land management options

Sarah explained that there is a cost to replacing hard surfaces where they haven't been sprayed so it is not a quick win just to stop spraying and do nothing. The Mayor and Cllr Beech very committed to meeting the Pesticide target

Peter MWVG – 24 or 26% has ecological designations. What proportion of land area

Sarah – clarified 24% designated for wildlife currently and target is 30% for wildlife and council own approximately 43% of all land in Bristol.

Peter was concerned that BCC was putting too much pressure on itself especially if other partners do not do their bit. Pesticides is one such area.

Sarah said that commitments have been made so they have to do their best to get there.

For businesses, urban heat effect and flooding are key issues not just to their businesses but also their employees and social responsibility. When managing their own estate they do realise there is a need to mitigate climate and ecology impacts. For example, Southmead Hospital has made greenspace investment on their land. There is a need to set targets otherwise urgency not there.

It is challenging to officers especially with no additional resources. Internal discussion on the definition be land for nature or land managed for nature and how it is to be monitored. BCC Parks already creating new meadows and trees work – need to map baseline to monitor change.

Peter, MWVG agreed because the base lines issue not set 18 months ago. Time is running out – no longer 10 years to 2030 now is 8. Every year that something doesn't happen there is more to do the following year.

Len explained that when the Parks Forum committee met he had queried in what way the Action Plan was relevant to us if this is the Council's plan does it that mean it is nothing to do with us so we have no role in it?

Sarah explained that the Forum and its members are already contributing to the Green Space Strategy for example, and this is the direction for the City Council and Services but most of those will involve engagement with different groups.

Sarah's work on coordinating the wildlife index includes a community representative, Ben Barker, who is on the working group. She explained that they will then want to ground proof the outcomes of the action plan. Have we captured it? If we do our modelling – will we have covered everything? There will be things coming to you through that.

This is very much a working internal document but published for the public so everyone can see it. Work council do links with West of England Nature Partnership (WENP) Nature Recovery Network– Bristol Urban Network is one of those and have flagged up as needing resourcing. BPF and groups do have a role even though it is not a document targeted at the groups. Good you know about the pesticide reduction plan, need to have conversations and pilots with groups. Want to take friends of groups with us.

Tessa Fitzjohn, said this was fantastic news. She thanked Sarah for her clear presentation and she said she felt really positive about the work that Sarah are doing. Tessa sits on cross party local plan group. Because the Joint Spatial Plan was thrown out Bristol does not have a completely up to date Local Plan so she would be

interested in Sarah's comments on working with the local plan. She said that a lot of what Sarah had said is very new. Cllr Beech is leading on this work. Green Party and Conservatives put forward a motion to halt building on green belt and green spaces. Tessa said she would be interested to know how useful Sarah thinks that is and will there be any changes at all?

Sarah stated that a lot of developers are addressing biodiversity. She cannot comment on Green Belt as she has not seen the document. Sarah works closely with Colin Chapman on the Local Plan. She will get back to Tessa.

Frances, Badock's Wood, queried why wildlife surveys had been undertaken in nature reserves such as Badock's Wood without the Friends Group involvement, especially as our groups have a lot of data from monitoring over the years.

Sarah explained that the SNCI survey she referred to were undertaken across the councils SNCI's by a consultant using a consistent methodology. West of England Nature Partnership had also funded the survey of priority habitats.

Frances also flagged up the lack of protection for wildlife corridors even those on Pinpoint and they were often disjointed and didn't include rivers such as the Trym. The Forum had previously expressed concern about the lack of protection for the green and blue wildlife corridors.

Sarah explained that wildlife corridors are set to get stronger protection in the Environment Bill. BCC had drafted a response to Government consultation on Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Regarding rivers there work has started on a Bristol Avon fish recovery plan. Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership has little data and eDNA surveys to be undertaken to get data. The harbourside area has very little greenery but in the EEAP there are actions to focus on creating habitat as part of wildlife networks..

Frances commented on the point of the role and contribution that the Parks Forum members can do, that a lot of the push to do things that are in the EEAP have come from Parks Forum members e.g. pesticides reduction, river monitoring etc.

Sarah said they are looking at creating a Bristol Nature Recovery Portal – where these sorts of things can be shared.

Sarah explained people can contact her via email sarah.jackson2@bristol.gov.uk

Mark concluded the item by thanking Sarah and noting that with time ticking on the sooner we can help her to do this the better.

7. Your Park Bristol & Bath

Rob Acton-Campbell, Chair of Your Park Trustees

Due to time constraints Rob did not show his slide show but a copy of the full presentation he had prepared can be found on the Parks Forum website - www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/YourParkOctober2021.pdf

Rob explained that the Bristol & Bath Parks Foundation had been set up 2 years ago and now it was officially called **Your Park Bristol & Bath** or **Your Park** – no longer mention "Foundation".

Your Park has been using "Park Activators" in Netham in Bristol, who are particularly working with the Somali community and also in Brickfields, Bath.

Your Park is currently applying for a £250m National Lottery Grant

7.1 Your Park Projects

Love Your Park Community Fund

This project had offered the opportunity for groups in Bristol and Bath to apply for small grants and the award winners will be announced on Tuesday . The awards are spread across Bristol & Bath but more grants were awarded to groups in Bristol. There was a range of projects. This was only the first round of grants from this Community Fund.

He reported that they have also had some brilliant feedback and it has shown that there is need for these sorts of grant money and they hope to get corporate funding to support future grants.

He said that for unsuccessful groups who had applied for funding it was not the end of the story, YourPark would look for other ways to support groups and aimed to run another round of funding.

Cathedral and College Green

There is a project outside the Cathedral involving planting wildflower areas and bulbs around the edge of College Green and the Cathedra. Your Park has been working with volunteers from Hargreaves Lansdown – a local company with 1800 employees - and it is hoped that more of their employees can get involved in this and other projects in other areas.

7.2 Get Together for Park Groups and Volunteers - 29th January 2022

Following a successful online event earlier this year another one is scheduled for January.

Invitations and online registration <https://www.yourpark.org.uk/sample-page-3-2/projects/volunteercelebration/> will be published in due course

Any questions about Your Park's work, contact Rob rob@yourpark.org.uk or Charlee Bennett (Your Park CEO) charlee@yourpark.org.uk or visit the Your Park website - <https://www.yourpark.org.uk/>

8. Bristol Parks Forum AGM

8.1. BPF Finances

It was noted that, largely due to the pandemic, there had been no expenditure because most is on room hire but been none this year . The only income was from the two Parks Groups who make annual donations of £10 to the Forum. So the income was £20.

Accounts can be seen here: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFAccounts2021.pdf .

8.2. Elections of Officers

Election of BPF Chair

Mark Logan has agreed to stand as Chair for one further year. No other nominations have been received.

Proposed by Rob Acton-Campbell and Seconded by Frances Robertson

Mark was duly elected by show of hands.

Election of Vice Chair

No one had stepped forward and no nominations received. It was noted that this post can be appointed from within the Committee if needed.

Election of Treasurer

Derek Hawkins is the current Treasurer and he had agreed to stand again. No other nominations received.

Proposed by Mark Logan, seconded by Rob Acton-Campbell

Derek was duly elected by show of hands

Election of Forum Secretary

Rob Acton-Campbell had agreed to stand again and no other nominations have been received.

Proposed by Mark Logan and seconded by Jo Corke

Rob was duly elected by show of hands

Rest of Committee

Mark Maggs has offered to stand as a member of the Forum Committee.
Proposed by Rob Acton-Campbell and seconded by Mark Logan.
Mark Maggs was duly elected by show of hands

Other existing Committee members

Frances Robertson

Sarah West

Len Wyatt

Had all agreed to continue as members of the Committee and were elected together by a show of hands.

Tessa Fitzjohn volunteered to be a member of the Committee as she is both a Councillor and also a member of VPGA, but after a little discussion the Forum concluded that it was not suitable for a serving Councillor to sit on the Committee as much of the conversations the Committee has about Parks and Green Spaces was with officers might also include lobbying of the Council which would be difficult with a Councillor on the Committee. However, Tessa was thanked for offering but it was agreed that the Forum would not have a councillor formally on the Forum Committee.

8.3. Review of BPF Terms of Reference

Some suggestions for updates and additions to the BPF Terms of Reference have been received and will be written up and circulated to members for comment . There is no separate constitution

9. Groups

Friends of Eastwood Farm has produced and is selling a Calendar which they say “rivals Countryfile’s calendar” – and is cheaper.

Please contact Friends of Eastwood Farm via Facebook or www.friends@eastwoodfarm.org.uk if you would like a calendar. £8 each.

10. Future meetings

The format and frequency of meetings for 2022 was considered.

The Forum will organise an in-person meeting for the end of February and will probably aim for June and October for other dates

Action: Rob to survey membership to see if occasional Zoom meetings are wanted.

Alison Bromilow flagged up that with the forthcoming Parks & Green Strategy there might be a need for an EGM and this was duly noted.

11. AOB

Peter, MWVG queried whether the Council’s Battery powered tools are being used by Friends groups. Jo from Eastwood Farm reported that they had been told they can’t use them anymore even though they have trained users.

Rob said he understood there was an issue with the training that had previously been given and whether there was anyone suitable to train volunteers going forward. He will check with Ella Hogg, who organises Volunteer Training for Parks.

Action Rob to check with Ella Hogg about training for battery power tools.