

**Bristol Parks Forum Committee:
Statement to the Communities Scrutiny Commission.
17 November 2022. Item 10 – Update on City Council’s Ecological
Emergency Action Plan (EEAP) – Managing More Green Space for
Nature**

The Bristol Parks Forum is the only community voice that is dedicated to all publicly owned parks and green space in Bristol. We work with Bristol City Council to ensure our spaces are well looked after and to help local groups to enhance their green space. More information about us can be found at <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/>

The Forum has a vision for all publicly owned parks and green spaces in Bristol by 2030 which can be seen at: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/vision

This Statement has been prepared by the Parks Forum Committee.

Our Statement is based on four major issues:

- The delivery of the EEAP is treated as a priority, that delivery will be speeded up, with sufficient resources being allocated to enable its timely delivery.
- The EEAP is aligned with the ongoing development of the Bristol Local Plan and its associated policies, and therefore subsequent decisions.
- The role of consultation and collaborative working in the future
- Broadening out delivery of the EEAP into the wider population.

DELIVERY OF THE EEAP

We welcome the progress that is being made with the EEAP. We are very concerned that the EEAP may not be considered as equally important as the Climate Emergency Plan.

We are particularly concerned with the scale of budget cuts being proposed and currently being consulted on. Should these cuts be implemented to the services which are affected by these cuts who are involved in the EEAP (such as the Parks Department), then the current EEAP may not have the sufficient resources to continue. At best we believe that actions will be taken forward; but the speed at which they are taken forward is seriously reduced.

Our view is that this cannot be allowed to happen. Green Spaces managed for nature, and can further, support us in providing many benefits including but not limited to improved health and wellbeing, pollution and climate change amelioration, water storage and flood prevention, resilient ecosystems, cooling effect (mitigation to urban heat) and healthy soils in which to grow food.

ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRISTOL LOCAL PLAN

Reassurance is needed that any improvements to green spaces as proposed in the EEAP, are not going to be undermined by the ongoing development of the Bristol Local Plan and its associated policies. The aims and aspirations of the EEAP can only be realised if the Plan and policies align, and is translated into planning decisions.

THE ROLE OF CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING

We welcome the commitment under next steps (Para 21) that the Council needs to talk to local communities and move to implementation of the proposals. We are concerned that there is statement in the report about the need to find a way to talk to them etc. There are already channels to local communities which can be used, including the Parks Forum and discussions with existing Parks Group. However, we always welcome improvements to better consultation and collaborative working arrangements.

We also recommend that the links to and from the EEAP are shown clearly in the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy currently under development and due for consultation. Not to do so would seriously undermine the ability of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and the EEAP to achieve their desired outcomes.

It is important that volunteers are involved in actions from the EEAP relating to site management, but they cannot be expected to take on the liabilities of the Council as landowner and land manager; and it should be understood they may be unable to sustain any commitment in the longer term. Volunteers should be seen as the “cherry on the cake” rather than the “cake” itself.

BROADENING OUT DELIVERY OF THE EEAP THROUGH THE WIDER POPULATION

In the One City Ecological Emergency Strategy there is an exhortation, calling on the people of Bristol to:

“restore the natural systems on which we depend – to protect and restore our ecosystems alongside climate action.”

There is plenty of information on wildlife friendly activities generally, but is there a need for a more focussed, pan-organisational approach to the wider public to involve more people in the delivery of the EEAP?

To sum up, we seek reassurances that our concerns are addressed and welcome a coherent fully funded and resourced EEAP which can be delivered at pace.

The Parks Forum supports the need to develop and build upon the work officers and communities have already undertaken and will continue to engage with officers to help ensure a successful outcome for nature in our parks and green spaces.

Thank you.