



**Notes of Bristol Parks Forum held
on Saturday 18th May 2019
at Summerhill Methodist Church, St George**

Present: A list of attendees was taken.

Meeting Chaired by Mark (Snuff Mills Action Group) Minutes by Frances (Friends of Badock's Wood).

1. Matters arising from February meeting

Any matters arising are covered by the agenda.

2. Local Plan, Green Space designations, update following meeting on 2nd May

Drop ins had been attended by several Forum members. Noted that consultation ends on **24th May**

It was noted that "Incidental Green Space" was the new name for what was previously called "Unidentified green space". There are not listed in detail. Frances noted that these spaces are often important parts of wildlife corridors linking designated green spaces but they lack protection so she felt would be disjointed corridors. FoBW will be asking for all the green spaces in the River Trym Wildlife Corridor to be given LGS designation as wildlife corridors are one of the criteria for designating a space "Local Green Space".

Nick, St George Park, asked whether the Forum had seen anything surprising in the plans or discussions. Rob, Cttee & Troopers Hill commented that he is surprised by how much space has been allocated LGS designation and felt that there will be some pressure for other organisations, maybe developers, to reduce the areas that are LGS. It is important that we and our members write to support proposals for green space designation as well as to object to things we do not support or want to change.

Stephen, Ashton Meadows & Sylvia Crow, thought that there were positives in relation to the New Avon Cut but still real issue with the Western Harbour.

Len, NSI and BPF Cttee flagged up that people could make more of the Green Infrastructure when commenting on existing spaces. The strategic green infrastructure network and the need for the Council to produce a schedule and map of all the green infrastructure including LGS, ROS, etc because it is not all in one space at the moment. [Green Infrastructure policy is one of the retained policies in the Retained Policies document]

Alison, Cotham Gardens, explained that the policies retained in the existing plan dealt with wildlife corridors (DM19 for example) and there was information in the retained policies document including a wildlife corridor map [See Green Infrastructure section for this map]

Len, NSI, flagged up Housing Development Policy H3. The issue is that the designation of ROS allows for development on that land depending on certain conditions including "community led" development but this is not defined.

Jo, Friends of St Andrews Park, was concerned that she had only had an acknowledgement for one of their 2 responses and she was advised to resend it as it may not have been received.

Hugh, Mina Road Park, also flagged up issue of ROS's potential to be built on. Allotments are given the ROS designation and some are statutory allotments with the additional protection that gives them. However not all allotments Council owned / statutory allotments and it is important to note this as their protection may be less.

3. Vision, Next Steps

Len introduced his Delivering the Vision document. He explained that at the last meeting it had been agreed that the committee would come back with 2 things: i) position statements and ii) actions for delivering the vision

The meeting discussed the list of position statements and its prioritisation (document [here](#)).

Frances, Friends of Badock's Wood, felt that sustainable management should be top priority as it is important particularly in light of the climate emergency.

Louis, Redland Green, raised the issue of intrusive cycleway signage and it was also noted by ?? that someone called Jennifer had recently been to Bonn.

Stephen, Sylvia Crow Park, reminded members of the impact that cycling has had in Victoria Park where a 2 lane road has effectively been created for cycling and additional desire lines are being created in the grass where corners are cut.

Martin, Manor Woods Valley Group noted that the Bristol Equalities Charter has existed for organisations in Bristol to sign up to.

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/3009059/Bristol+Equality+Charter.pdf/559ce331-9434-2dc1-e9cd-7a596c723a5a>

He suggested that the Parks Forum sign up and that each Parks group should also consider signing up as well.

Russ, Castle Park, felt it was essential that the Forum has a cycling / footpath position. Where paths are not designated he described it as a free for all on paths.

Someone suggested canvassing for opinions from Park forum members via Facebook.

Gill, Friends of Canford Park, considered that "free access" and equality very much tie up. There is a need to be careful how many money making activities there are because these can affect the ability of local residents to freely access their green spaces.

Mark, Chair, agreed that the Equality Charter was an excellent idea. He noted that the vision says we want excellence in Parks and we support the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces <https://www.natfedparks.org.uk/> He also explained that BCC does not need to apply for Green Flag Status but should manage to those standards.

Hugh, Mina Road, felt it important to write in that political support for the Vision is essential.

Action

Len to

- **Remove priority numbering**
- **Circulate Section 1 with additional definition of excellence**
- **Change equalities section to state "sign up to BCC Equality Charter"**

Delivering the Vision – Len outlined how the vision statement can be used.

He noted that the Green Party had made a statement in support of the vision but this was needed from the rest of the Council.

Hugh had spoken to the Bristol Mayor, Marvin Rees about it in passing in the street and Louis noted that the current Lord Mayor was very interested, though she will step down this month. It was also noted that she might be helpful in encouraging BAME communities involvement in Parks groups and the Forum etc.

Action

All Friends groups to let Forum know if they have sent the vision to anyone and received any supporting responses.

4. Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation

Rob explained that the Constitution of the foundation has been agreed and their bank account set up. The website is almost ready and the Foundation will be formally launched during the Festival of Nature in June – being held in Bath and Bristol.

The aim of the Foundation is to obtain donations for improvements and maintenance of Parks.

Rob had visited Leeds with the Foundation team on a fact finding visit. Leeds had found that people are more likely to give to specific projects and individual parks. With this in mind B&BPF will have a Give Money to Your Park campaign via a website they have set up called YourPark.org.uk. In addition to this website there will be a [corporate website](#) as well. Some concern was raised that whilst charities do not necessarily have to spend income on what they have raised it for, e.g. a specific park or project, if they have worded their campaign in that way, but it could be tricky. Rob said that would be up to the Foundation to determine how they proceed in due course. They will also be deliberating on how the money they raise is spread around the Parks in Bristol and Bath.

Later in 2019 the Foundation will launch a main fundraising drive.

Nick, St George's Park, queried whether the Foundation would be a funding body to apply to and Frances asked if they would be giving grants. Rob explained that they would potentially have a match funding role.

Sarah, Eastville Park, counselled that they should make the process for applying for these funds as easy as possible as it can be a time consuming task for volunteers in the Friends groups.

The Foundation was due to interview for Trustees the following week after this meeting. They have had a range of good applicants with wide experience. The Foundation was seeking Trustees with experience of working for other charities and in governance and communications. There is plenty of existing Parks experience on the Foundation, in the Council and the Forum.

Mark emphasised that the Foundation's work is to help fund general maintenance not just projects as project funding is available from other sources. Rob also noted that this would not be reflected by Council budget cuts but would be additional monies. Hugh recommended that income from the Foundation be spent on specifically targeting horticultural training for Parks staff.

Bristol Festival of Nature – Sat 8th and Sun 9th June 2019

This year the festival is being held both in Millennium Square and in Queens Square. The Parks forum and the Foundation will have a presence in Queens Square and volunteers are needed from Parks groups. Please volunteer (and encourage your members to do so too) and let Rob know when volunteers are available so he can organise a rota.

Future Parks Accelerator Fund

There had not yet been any public announcement of the outcome of this bid, but we are hoping to have good news in June.

5. West of England Nature Partnership & the Nature Recovery Network

Heather Elgar www.wenp.org.uk

Heather gave a [presentation](#) looking at

“How we embed and include the value of nature in decision making.”

- Spatial planning
- Public Health (including prescribing natural solutions e.g. forest “bathing”)
- Restoring nature
- Economic Development – how we can we help local government to recognise the value of natural capital and its benefits

Wider contexts – parks have a huge critical role in solution of issues including:

- Loss of species
- Mental health
- Reducing inequalities
- Climate emergency

“A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to improve the Environment” was published by the government and updated in May 2019 – see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

Heather talked about a Nature Recovery Network for the West of England – a spatial plan for nature’s recovery. Connectivity such as wildlife corridors, is important for this. They are working closely with Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) and other trusts.

South West local Nature Partnership have agreed underlying principles.

The West of England Joint Spatial Plan includes Green Infrastructure Plan commitments – e.g. not severing key wildlife corridors.

The government plans to introduce new Environmental Land Management Schemes.

Parks are at the heart of nature recovery but gardens, verges etc are very important in the connectivity role.

Heather advised that when responding to the Local Plan consultation it was always important to stress the multiple benefits.

She was asked if the West of England Nature Partnership had written in to the Local Plan consultation. She replied that the local authorities are aware of their modelling and mapping work. This work is not yet in the public domain but will launch on 6th June. She will provide the Forum with a link to this.

Responding to a query regarding places in Bristol on the ecology map in her presentation she said she would send a version of it to Rob for the Forum. Mark thought this would be useful and the Forum could add it to their response. Heather said that the Ecological map is an evidence base that is being incorporate into the Local Plan and that local authorities are taking board many of the Nature Partnership’s Key aspirations.

[Online version of map](#)

6. Volunteering in Parks

6a CanDo Bristol

Sarah West, Friends of Eastville Park, had attended a meeting about this. It is a way of connecting people with volunteering opportunities. Has previously been trialled in Torbay. There is a website and online presence and is a collaboration between Bristol City Council and businesses. They are looking at how to make volunteering by business and opportunities from groups like ours more accessible. One suggestion was to have champions who could act as go-betweens for other organisations.

They are considering ways in which they can share information with the wider Bristol community e.g. via inserts in to the free newspapers such as the local Voice and Bristol 24/7. Keith Houghton’s team at the City Council are leading on it.

Rob reported that the website is still being improved and they are looking to get some volunteer opportunities listed on it before giving it a bigger launch. Rob will circulate the link to the Forum members once the updated version goes live.

Susan, Friends of Troopers Hill, reported that they have a volunteering link on their website which includes a pdf with volunteer info – see - <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/volunteering/Corporate.pdf>

6b BCC Volunteer Coordinator

Ella Hogg has been appointed as the new Volunteer Coordinator for the City Council. In future she plans to come to BPF meetings but she was not available for this meeting.

Richard Fletcher, Parks Services Manager, outlined her role.

Ella is on a 2 year fixed contact with the intention to gear up Parks Services offer of professional support to Friends groups. She has previously worked for Sustrans.

Richard shared Ella's diary plans for the coming month which showed she is already actively engaging with parks groups and other key individuals and organisations in Bristol. She is talking to Parks groups about how they can be supported and what is needed.

She will be making sure that BCC staff are tread and trained and then that volunteers are trained too. Richard will pass the description of her roles and responsibilities to the BPF secretary.

Action: Richard Fletcher

Rob commented that one of the things he had noted on his fact finding visit to Leeds was that there the Parks team have about half a dozen park rangers working alongside volunteers in their parks.

Lois flagged up that it will be good to have regular H&S training sessions to ensure we have enough trained volunteers. Hugh put in a plea for the Council to extend the insurance cover to volunteers working on allotments.

Once the H&S documents are updated and the volunteer charter is drafted they will be brought to the Parks Forum.

7. Parks update

7 a Parks Review, who now does what

Richard Fletcher, Parks Services Manager, confirmed that the latest staff reorganisation had finished and that he head up Parks services and Sharon Radnedge is Parks Commercial Manager. Their manager is Gemma Dando in her role as Head of Communities.

Richard showed the meeting an organisational chart to help us understand who does what in the Parks teams. He teams deal with area grounds maintenance, allotment, tree management, asset management, Parks strategies etc. Sharon deals with the cemeteries and crematoriums, cafes, concessions the nursery etc.

It was noted that Becky Belfin had been returned to her previous role of Nature Conservation Officer and this was welcomed by the Forum who felt that this role had been lacking.

Richard considered that the structure that had emerged a couple of years ago had been found to be missing some staffing. This should now be the framework for the forthcoming years and whilst some additions might be made it was not intended to be any major changes.

Richard to let Rob had a copy of the Parks organisation chart.

Action : Richard Fletcher

Susan, Troopers Hill queried whether the Play and Projects Manager would be the person to go to regarding Play Areas and Richard said that Gill and that person between them should be able to offer advice and sign posting.

Sarah, Eastville Park, flagged up that for funding bids such as HLF bids, the landowner has to make the application and who would do that for Parks. Richard stated that in the first instance he would be looking to Andrew Gordon, Heritage and Estates Officer. However, it was noted that Andres is very busy with Stoke Park. The Parks Development Team should be able to help with non-commercial funding.

Alison Bromilow flagged up that the Bristol Heritage Forum on things such as HLF felt there was a need for Parks Dept and other parts of the city council to be coordinated to ensure that people are not bidding against each other. Richard said that Pete Insole is to be the lead and the conduit and to help Bristol be more coordinated. It was also noted that HLF have recently changed their programmes. Mark and Alison flagged up that if Heritage was an area of interest to a particular Friends or Parks group that the Heritage Forum was something they should attend as they are looking for more participants.

Susan, Troopers Hill, advised that when making a small NHL (HLF) grant – i.e. under £50K – her group had found it easier to write the application and then Council officers and Councillors wrote confirming their involvement and support.

7b Sports Facilities in Parks: Consultation

Richard reported that this consultation will run from May – July 2019. <https://bristol.citizenspace.com/management-of-place/parks-sports-facilities/>

Rob queried if a club leased a pitch whether it would remain part of the park and open to the public. Richard thought so but would need to test this. Mark also raised if the pitches were not used e.g. football fields during the summer, would they be open to everyone then. Richard felt this was why it is important that the Parks Forum responds and makes it clear where their “red lines” are. Rob also asked if there could be other uses – e.g. bowling greens not in use and Richard said yes, absolutely. The Mayor’s office is keen that they should be used for sporting use by not all bowling greens, for example, are being used to there may be an opportunity for multi-use suggestions. He felt that a football club might be more likely to have a good business case for multi-use of a site.

Mark emphasised that it is important that all Parks groups should look and participate in this consultation, and that of course not all their responses would be negative.

Richard also confirmed that patches of grass where there are informal games and football goal posts would continue to be maintained by the Council on the same basis as at present.

In response to a question about supporting older people’s groups to apply for leasing etc, Richard said he would look to give people support.

Richard stated that 75% of football pitches are paid for by the Council so fees to support their use would increase fourfold.

7c CIL / S106 Projects

Richard explained that they had a first stage list. Council is considering this list and then will go to Stage 2. As yet there is no feedback as to which may go through to the next stage.

8 Any Other Business

8a Parks By-laws Review

Susan, Troopers Hill, asked how the Parks by-laws review was progressing and Richard suggested that there should be an item for the next Forum meeting on by laws and enforcement.

8b Lessons learned from Parks projects

Len, NSI, mentioned that there were lessons to be learned from the Filwood Quietway / Greenway project. He outlined the Northern Slopes Initiative (NSI) Group's experience. For example, there had been no prior flagging up of how long the construction would take nor how much the construction site would spread. He felt these were the sort of things that should be learnt and most importantly communicated. Whilst officers might know about them, the public did not.

8c Thanks from Friends of Redcatch Park

Gary, Redcatch Park & Cllr, thanked the forum for its support and advised they had got the money freed up under Parks, but unfortunately the work was yet to be undertaken.

8d 3 Lamps

Gary report that there was land next to the 3 Lamps which was being sold and he hoped that money will be made available for Parks use and not for other purposes.

Next meeting Saturday 19th October 2019 – Venue tbc