



**Notes of Bristol Parks Forum Meeting held  
Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2019 at the Greenway Centre, Southmead.**

**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 October Forum Meeting**

Weed killer use

Since this had been raised last year, a working group has been set up by the City Council to tackle herbicide use and the Forum is waiting to see the outcome. However, the issue of the poor use – e.g. being used in areas where wildflowers are being encouraged rather than targeting essential areas – was flagged up again to Richard Fletcher, Bristol Parks Department who was present.

**2. Bristol City Council Local Plan and Green Space Designation**

Colin Chapman, Local Plan Team Manager, Bristol City Council

Colin gave a PowerPoint presentation about New Protection for Open Space. Copy of this presentation can be found on BPF website -

<http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/LocalPlanBPFmtgFeb19.pdf>

**Note:** the map has been updated since the meeting.

He outlined that the consultation would open in March for approximately 10 weeks regarding the approach to green space in the Local Plan. He recapped what the Local Plan is. From Feb-April 2018 there was a Local Plan consultation not just about Parks but also housing development sites, etc.

In March there will be a detailed draft Local Plan document which will be approximately 150 pages of planning policy plus a section on Open Green Space. The Local Plan is a formal document and so will be issued formally later in the year for public comments and then go to Examination In Public. It is anticipated that the final Local Plan will be adopted in Late 2020.

A Bristol Parks Forum meeting may be held in April just to discuss the Local Plan during the consultation period.

National Government has introduced a new designation of Local Green Space – which will be given status akin to Green Belt. It is intended for sparing use for the most important spaces.

Other local spaces will still be quite well protected but this new designation is stronger.

In BCC we already have this in some Neighbourhood Development Plans, e.g. Lawrence Weston and Hengrove and Whitchurch.

Open space includes

- All open space of public value
- Sports pitches
- Open areas in development
- Linear corridors

In Bristol Local Plan there will be 2 main designations but also a 3<sup>rd</sup> for other spaces.

1. Local Green Space – protection in perpetuity like Green Belt.
2. Reserved Open Space – protected for green infrastructure and recreation role.
3. Unidentified Other Space

Details of what the criteria are for these designations are in Colin's presentation which you can download from the Bristol Parks Forum website -

<http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/LocalPlanBPFmtgFeb19.pdf>

In response to a query regarding cemeteries' designation as Reserved Open Space, Colin explained that Planning does not override any statutory designations e.g. statutory sports legislation.

Regarding the Western Harbour which was not clear to members on the map, Colin explained that the intention is for a transformation of the Cumberland Basin / Western Harbour area including remodelling the road system and building development.

Concerns were raised that this looked to be extending beyond the previous built space – e.g. the roads – and into existing green spaces. Colin explained that initially his team had anticipated it would be designated LGS but as part of the Western Harbour project it has become “grey” land. In response to a query regarding why the Local Plan was not guiding this development and protecting that green space, he responded that the Western Harbour development is a special case. There will be something in the forthcoming consultation about the Western Harbour.

Colin explained that looking at the amount of open space in Bristol, half or slightly more will be designated LGS and the rest ROS. Where any designation is contested it will be important to understand the communities' views to underpin that designation.

Some sites remain undesignated and are difficult to designate and these fall into the “unidentified Open Space” category – e.g. where there is a small pocket of land.

Forum members are advised to get involved in the Local Plan consultation. The consultation is scheduled to run from 18<sup>th</sup> March until 24<sup>th</sup> May 2019. It will include:

- Proposed development strategy
- Proposals for new and updated policies
- Development site allocations

All of the documents will be online. Drop-in events will be held for the public. There will be a meeting at City Hall for the Bristol Parks Forum.

Members should respond where they support the proposed designations, not just to ask for changes. Evidence of public support for LGS designations will help the argument that they are special to the community.

Details of the Local Plan process are on [www.bristol.gov.uk/localplanreview](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/localplanreview)

Specific questions from members were as follows:

Rob, Troopers Hill

He was pleased with the map and the LGS sites which seemed to include traditional and multi-purpose parks. In terms of small play areas would they be classed as LGS? Colin said probably not. Because the LGS has to have a broader function.

Jane, Walk for Health

Regarding allotments being designated ROS. Is there not a statutory requirements for allotments per head of population but Bristol has not met those? Colin said that allotments are ROS because they are allotments so must be protected and could not lose them.

Alison, Cotham Gardens / Redland Green

Alison queried whether designations need only be for City Council owned land. Colin explained there are areas in private ownership that have met the designations.

Alan, Friends of Badock's Wood, queried whether the tightening up of the criteria – especially for private gardens might “sterilise” it for the owner. He also wondered why the land east of Wesley College had been changed from designated to undesignated land.

Colin explained that if an area had green open space designation there would have to be a justification for its being kept in perpetuity and have to satisfy the Planning Inspector. Wesley College example, the land had previously been thought to be important open space but the planning inspector had deemed it was not a space of value though it might have conservation area status already.

Cheryl, Friends of Stoke Lodge

She was shocked by how many sites were designated ROS not LGS and asked what had changed in the past year.

Colin said that there were no views at the meeting a year ago but they have now looked at all the sites and are for consultation. The public needs to say if they have got it wrong. However, ROS designation should not imply that it is not important.

Tony, Friends of Badock's Wood

Queried whether the list of sites added to the LGS designation (from the responses document) were a sample. Colin explained that the list was of those sites about which they had received representations and had been specifically asked for.

Keith, Dundry & Hartcliffe Wildlife Conservation Group

He was concerned that a massive area of Dundry Slopes was not shown and only seemed to be half of Wilmott Park which includes an SSSI.

Colin explained that the map fails to show existing Green Belt designated land and therefore Dundry Slopes is not shown. Also SSSIs remain as in the current plan at the moment.

Russ, Friends of Castle Park, queried the absences from the list e.g. Castle Park. Colin confirmed that Castle Park is to be designated LGS in the new Plan.

Rob asked about the ROS protection and reminded Colin that at a previous meeting he had stated it was similar to the previous designation of Important Green Space but now there is an additional designation of LGS on top. Is that similar?

Colin said yes but with the caveat of checking the wording. ROS differs from current Important Green Space in that local communities are permitted to rethink their use of that land – an example of that being the proposals for Glencoyne Square, Southmead. [Details on the Southmead Development Trust website - [www.southmead.org/southmead-regeneration-project/](http://www.southmead.org/southmead-regeneration-project/) ] Frances, Friends of Badock's Wood, queried why emails to the Bristol Local Plan generic email address were unacknowledged and not answered. Colin was not aware of this and asked for such emails to be resent.

### **3. Bristol Parks Forum Vision Update and Adoption**

Len, Northern Slopes Initiative and BPF committee member, outlined the process of arriving at the version of the Vision document being presented for adoption by the Forum at this meeting.

Bristol Parks Forum (BPF) will write position statement where clarification is needed – e.g. what constitutes appropriate or inappropriate development.

The wording of the Vision document was approved by BPF unanimously.

Gill, Friends of Canford Park, put a vote of thanks to Len for all his hard work.

The photos being used on the front of the Vision document were then discussed and it was agreed to make a couple of amendments to the photos and then publish the Vision on the BPF website.

Next steps:

- Vision and background information will be added to the BPF website
- Position statements will be prepared and committee will come back to the Forum with a list
- Vision to be enabled by sharing skills and knowledge of the Forum members

More at the next meeting.

### **4. Parks Foundation update**

Rob, Secretary BPF, sits on the Bristol & Bath Parks Foundation partner group and reported to the Forum.

Many meetings had taken place to sort out the constitution as well as communications workshops run by Savita from Bristol Natural History Consortium (BNHC)

The Foundation is applying to the Charity Commission for Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status.

Bristol City Council (BCC) is providing a volunteering coordinator recently recruited and expected to start on 21<sup>st</sup> March. Details of the post holder will be made public once they take up the post.

The Foundation will be launched at the Festival of Nature in June.

Trustees for the Foundation CIC will be recruited.

Sam, Friends of Horfield Common and Vice-Chair of BPF, queried how the Forum integrates with the Foundation and whether the focus of the volunteer coordinator is going to be working with parks groups. Rob thought it was more going to be getting processes sorted such as H&S training and

working with Joe at Parkworks. Bath has a part time post and they are already getting processes sorted so the BCC appointee will follow what they have already done.

A Director and Trustees will be recruited soon.

The Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation website will promote giving (donations) and volunteering in Parks. The name of the website will not focus on the Foundation.

The Foundation will be asking for general money but also for funds for specific projects in Bath and Bristol which must be something that would appeal to the public. Any ideas please let Rob know.

#### **4. Parks Review – Issues and Budget**

Richard Fletcher, Interim Parks Services Manager, Bristol City Council

Richard explained that it is expected that the Parks Review would be completed by 19<sup>th</sup> April.

Within the Parks Service some jobs are changing, some jobs are at risk, etc. This is all part of their journey to generating income for most of the operating budget.

Richard outlined the provisional structure which would have three teams under the Head of Communities (Gemma Dando).

1. Strategy & Development
2. Commercial – responsible for Cemeteries, cafes, concessions, trading
3. Parks Service – responsible for Parks Maintenance, Tree Management, Allotments, Assets and Infrastructure.

Referring to CIL Projects / Area Committee and Parks Programme Delivery he noted that people were frustrated by the time it takes but there are currently only about 9 officers.

The Parks Asset Manager will most probably be Keith Chant.

They want to build in more resource to allow them to go out to contractors to deliver works to reduce the time.

There are also some vacancies, for example Richard Stransom is leaving (by choice) and it will take time to fill that role.

The budget position is outlined on P184 of the Council's budget consultation which will go to Full Council in February to approve the budget.

There is still a significant "savings" target of £778,000 for 2019/20.

The service will still be very minimally funded but there is a hope that the focus on income generation will help improve the funding situation. Gemma Dando is keen to access strategic CIL funds.

Richard outlined the implications of savings and budget reallocation.

He is also trying to build volunteer support into the job descriptions of a range of the parks staff new job descriptions where appropriate.

It was noted that insurance cover is different for litter picking groups if they volunteer for litter picking with parks groups or with Bristol Waste. Bristol Waste Company require volunteers to sign an indemnity form whereas in parks if they are led by a Parks trained H&S leader and risk assessment approved by Parks they should be covered by the Parks insurance for volunteers.

As there is a move to increase volunteering Richard and colleagues are talking with insurers about appropriate cover.

Concern about older age cover not being in place. It was noted that many parks group volunteers are older but also current insurance for Parks volunteers is up to 80 years of age.

Keith queried by Bristol Waste was not dealing with waste in parks such as fly tipping. Richard explained that Parks and Bristol Waste are in discussion about Bristol Waste taking on Parks waste and clearing. These are not concluded yet. Meanwhile BCC is looking at fitting a fill monitor to bins – particularly for example for dog poo bins; and also at a proposal for compacting bins – but those would not be for dog poo but more for areas with larger bins and would need a different emptying regime.

Keith also asked about clearing of paths and similar work that Parks volunteers could undertake. Richard explained that the Park Manager would need to agree this work and it would need to be undertaken by trained volunteers, led by Parks trained volunteer and a specific risk assessment agreed. There is an ambition that in the future there may also be some capacity for Parks to release an operative to work alongside / lead volunteer activities.

#### CIL Projects

Richard explained that the CIL spreadsheet list of projects is a live document covering £2.25 million.

He talked about ways in which opportunities might arise such as to bundle projects together that all need similar works to improve finances.

Most of the projects on the 2018/19 are being done this year.

#### Future Parks Accelerator Fund – HLF & NT

Bristol has applied for one of 8 available grants and has made the shortlist and had been invited to a meeting in London. Rob (BPF secretary) reported that he is attending the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March in London on behalf of BPF and B&BPF.

There are £10m of resources (not necessarily cash) over a two year period.

The Bristol proposals include wanting to market Bristol Parks and Green Spaces through a Prospectus – out to the widest variety of partners and investors. They need to build a framework to manage this. There would be a co-design phase with partners including BPF. This Prospectus is working off the back of the Bristol City Leap Prospectus.

Richard Ennion was the main architect of the proposal and the bid. Rob Acton-Campbell reported that he had done a brilliant job of this.

Sam, queried Bristol & Bath Regional Capital's involvement in this and whether there was a moneymaking role for a broker in this and Richard supposed so.

Hilary, Friends of Canford Park, asked if companies are putting money in and hoping to make money would that mean that things might happen in the Parks that people will need to pay for.

Richard explained that for example if golf at Ashton Court was operated separately you would have to pay and the Council would have an income. It would not affect public free access. However, whilst free access remains there may be activities that you would need to pay for.

They had looked at the idea of a Parks Trust but the Council is not pursuing that.

### **AOB / Reports from Parks Groups**

#### Stoke Lodge

Derek, Friends of Stoke Lodge, outlined the history of the Stoke Lodge and the open green space around it. It has been open and used by the public since the 1920s and owned by BCC since the 1940s.

In 2012 Cotham School took a long lease on the playing field and applied to fence it and this was turned down. However last December the Council changed its position on the listed property issue and said it was allowed under permitted development rights.

Derek explained that there is a We Love Stoke Lodge group which is trying to get a sensible arrangement about access and the group also has a Facebook page which people can look at for more information.

#### National Parks & Green Spaces Federation

Roland from Mina Road Park Group is the SW voluntary representative for National Parks & Green Spaces Federation. He explained there is a Parks Action Group engaging at Parliament level.

This is a meeting coming up whether they are expecting items to come up nationally on Parks & Green Spaces and advised the Forum to keep an eye out.

Roland is trying to set up a SW Network of Parks Forums in the Region. He noted that there was a new South Gloucestershire Parks Forum just started up and representatives from that Forum were present today and Forum welcomed them.

The Federation / Parks Action Group is doing more work on developing networks and regional conferences. There is a lot going on a Regional Level.

Rob includes links to their newsletter in the BPF email updates.

Roland noted with sadness that since he got involved with parks we had lost 3 good friends of Bristol's parks - Alan Barber, Richard Bland and Peter Wilkinson.

#### University of Bristol Access to Lab Resources

Hugh, Mina Road Park, reported that UoB Geography Department had offered undergraduates to undertake projects for local groups and many Parks Groups had taken up this offer.

Mina Road Park had commissioned the students to look at soil and water pollution levels to see whether the closure of the public toilets had resulted in higher levels of relevant pollutants though their project results did not show evidence of this, but that could be due to levels or rain or being undertaken in the winter season. Frances outlined that this was the second year that they had had such student project in Badock's Wood and valued the data they gained as a result.

However, what has come out of this link between Parks Groups and UoB Geography Department is that their laboratories are under used between May – October every year. They are prepared to train people up to use their facilities to measure sample.

Hugh also said there are opportunities for longer studies.

Action: Rob to include information in email updates.

#### Coming up:

Love Parks Week

Keep Britain Tidy Litter Week

Walking Festival – deadline for submission of walks is beginning of March

There is a continued need to prove the value of parks to people through publicly visible activities.

#### Walk for Health

These walks are a great use for parks but the Council is stopping funding their Walk for Health scheme at the end of the financial year. It was noted that the new GP contract coming in had a greater focus on social prescribing into which Walks for Health fit well, but no funding apparently forthcoming.

#### RHS Pride in Parks Awards

Susan, Friends of Troopers Hill and Sam, Friends of Horfield Common would be attending the RHS Spring event at which the RHS pride in parks awards would be awarded.

#### Bristol Parks Forum funds

Park Groups are asked where possible to make an annual contribution of £10 where group per year. This was now due as we are in a new Forum year. Donations can be made by cheque or cash at meetings, or email [info@bristolparksforum.org.uk](mailto:info@bristolparksforum.org.uk) for our bank account details for payment by bank transfer.