



Bristol Parks Forum

representing resident led parks groups and city wide organisations
involved in protecting and improving Bristol's green spaces

Minutes of the meeting held 31 January 2015

at Windmill Hill City Farm

Agenda Item	Discussion Points/ Outcomes & Actions	Actions
1	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>Jonathan - Friends of City Gardens, Bath is visiting to see how we operate and hopefully Bath will have their own Parks Forum soon.</p> <p>Rob had a special announcement to congratulate one of our members, Eileen Stonebridge of Old Sneed Park was awarded a British Empire Medal in the New Year's honours list.</p>	
2	<p>Invasive Weeds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neil Green from the Avon Invasive Weed Forum - this is a project run between BCC, Bristol Zoo, and the Environment Agency. • What is invasive non-native species? Anything that is native like bindweed (<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>), is not included so we are looking at things like Japanese Knotweed (<i>Fallopia japonica</i>), Himalayan Balsam (<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>), Giant Hogweed (<i>Heracleum mantepazzianum</i>), all the aquatics like Parrots Feather (<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>), Water Fern (<i>Azolia filiculoides</i>) and we are also looking at Crayfish, Killer Shrimp, Quagga Mussle and Zebra Mussle. • Our main aims are to raise awareness, survey, map and control. The cost to the Government is 1.8 billion and for local authorities the cost is increasing each year for spraying plants. The budget has got so big that it has now gone out to tender. DEFRA are reducing funds. The budget for Neil runs out the end of August 2015, the forum will still run, but possibly not with a full time person in place. There are ten sites which AIWF pays for. • BCC has a good scheme in place and Neil liaises with Adrian 	

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	<p>Pennant, Bristol Parks. Council land is sprayed at least once a year with the aim to be three times a year, but the tendering system had delayed things a little.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of control and awareness, Neil did 33 events last summer, 22 the season before and only half the season before that, so in total 66 events and there have been more that Neil did not attend. Neil also attends events such as Bristol Festival of Nature to inform the public. 200 Council staff and contractors have been trained in identifying. • There is a 60% reduction of Himalayan Balsam, and Japanese Knotweed is under management. There is a rust fungus from India that attacks Himalayan Balsam which is proving effective that has been an eight year study. It will not kill it completely, but reduces the growth enough for native plants to grow. • If you see an invasive weed on council land, report it to either AIWF or BCC • The other big development you may have heard of is the Quagga Mussle which has come into the lake systems in and around London near Heathrow. It is in all the reservoirs and the Thames. It is a bio-engineer, so basically it's tiny and the accumulation of them is amazing, found around sluices, pipework, bottom of boats etc. It can be spread by boats, anglers etc. It is a game changer and a real problem. It is transported in larva stage and is already costing millions. There is a lot of work going on with bio security and agencies do not want this to spread to other parts of the country. • Water Fern and Floating Pennywort (Hydrocotyle ranunculoides) have been found and are being managed by local groups one in Downend and Winterbourne. Lots of works has been done in Brislington Brook with regards to Himalayan balsam. Lots of great work being done by the local groups. I have some equipment available such as waders, slashers, gloves, first aid kits etc for groups to use. • What is now needed is surveyors. I have been using Richard Bland, Ray Dickens and one other for the last few years, but I need surveyors that I can train up, supply tools to, GPS units and such, to walk around in open areas and report findings. So if you know anyone who would like to do this please contact me. • I also need groups. In the summer I use groups from BCC, EA, Lloyds, Europa. We get together to clear Himalayan balsam and is really good, easy fun. Anyone can come, basically 16 years and over. I am looking to run 40 events this year and need lots of groups, so please spread the word around. I have some leaflets if anyone wants one and I am on Twitter. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If anyone knows how to create word press websites, we need help to tidy up our website please. • Q&A. Q. Does the introduction of Otters in the Frome and Otters/Beavers elsewhere help reduce invasive species such as crayfish? A. Yes definitely and probably also with Quagga and Zebra mussels too. Otter sprays have also been found around Brislington Brook. <p>Q. If you have a neighbour with Japanese Knotweed does the Council help? A. It's not really a council issue, but the best course of action would be to write them a letter explaining you would assist in helping them to get rid of it or direct them to the BCC website where information is available. Because of the damage it does, it affects mortgages and such.</p> <p>Q. What about the Bristol & Avon River Trust? A. Yes I am working with them and on several projects.</p> <p>Q. There is a huge infestation on network rail land, particularly along Severn Beach line - do you work or get cooperation from them? A. We have tried to get in contact and involved with them. In their defence they spend 15 million spraying their railway tracks and they work with defra.</p>	
3	<p>Green Capital Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Len Wyatt – There is a Green Capital related initiative, called Bristol South Skyline Walk • This started as a discussion at a Bristol Parks Forum when someone from Destination Bristol discussed walks on their website around east Bristol and we thought what a good idea. • Our aim is raising the profile of South Bristol Green Spaces, showing the health/wellbeing benefits, wildlife, history, facilities, and people. We initially had two types of routes in mind. There are now thirteen groups with different levels of ease and fitness. We look to encourage all sorts of people, including mothers with pushchairs, tourists etc. • There will be a launch on 9th May 2015 at Bristol Temple Meads Station at 2pm, which coincides with Bristol Walking Festivals. • We have funding from Green Capital and had lots of support from people, including Filwood/Knowle/Windmill Hill Neighbourhood Partnership and Quartet. 	
4	<p>Incredible Edible Bristol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara Venn – Project lead. In February 2014, inspired by the success of the Incredible Edible movement in the UK, and by the values and example of the global urban edible movement, the 	

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	<p>seeds for an #EdibleBristol were sown in a Twitter conversation between professional horticulturist and gardener Sara Venn and human rights and the environment scholar/activist Anna Grear, quickly developing into a vision of Bristol as the UK's first edible city.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At present we have worked with twenty community groups and we are putting together a schools programme. Our aim is to work with the community and to bring food growing into areas that are basically unloved, so spaces where there might be antisocial activities going on. • With that in mind we have been given a Green Capital Grant and to set up a trail. • The trail will run from Temple Meads, past 100 Temple Street, along Redcliffe Way, through Queen Square and into Millennium Square, and will show growing of all different types. We are working with two other organisations, one called Grow Bristol who deal with aquaponics (fish, water, no soil and growing food) and Bee the Change who are bee specialists, who don't just place managed hives, but also put wild hives where you may not want to harvest the honey. The trail will hopefully start in March 2015. • Another trail we are working on this year is a trail that will go up the Severn Beach Line. Each platform will have two containers full of food, being worked and maintained by local community groups and schools. • The concept is that we put food out into the community and it is there for anyone to take and use. 	
5	<p>UWE 2015 Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sam explained that this project came about in October last year, after discussing the Green Capital at the Parks Fourm. • Sam works at UWE, is the chair of a park group and they were wondering how to join those two things together. The project is called Bristol Park Hive and was set up to involve students and staff out into the real world and supporting civic outcomes. • Sam introduced several people, including David Smith, who is a member of Victoria Park Action Group, but also teaches and a web 'geru', Hugo who is a recent graduate and Sammy who are all working on this project and are being paid by UWE. • We are going to create a new app. After discussions at the last BPF about joining up walking platforms across the city, there were all sorts of walking routes being set up at that time for 2015, so thinking about open spaces city wide, we do not have an app for downloading for residents or visitors saying where is 	

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	<p>the nearest park, river, play area, where can I go if I want a cup of coffee in a park, how do I get there, whereas a lot of other cities, and certainly internationally, do have these apps. So we are going to create a city wide app, creating a digital photographic archive celebrating Bristol's parks and green spaces in this year, so in terms of publicity some of photos will feed into that app so that people will see images of local parks not just destination parks, but smaller local spaces. What came through time and again was what about the smaller parks and areas and have might we be able to join things up a bit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We would like volunteers to have some input into the data, such as information of park's, films, history of a park, talks, maps, events, etc and we would do this at UWE, where we have all the equipment available. We have posters available to be put up in parks. • Bristol 2015 have funding for a series of workshops that are about volunteering in a general sense, about how to recruit and retain volunteers etc. • The big park draw is being run by David Smith in Victoria Park, along with Julia Greg, who is a local artist, Charlotte Murray from Barton Hill, and volunteers. It is an attempt to encourage people, particularly adults, to rediscover the joy drawing in a park. We have a gazebo, near to Grahams Café, on several Saturday's throughout the warmer months of the year. Maybe some of the pictures could be put on the app, or sold to raise funds. 	
6	<p>Managing Bristol's parks & green spaces – Tracey Morgan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As from 1st February 2015 the South and Central teams are back in-house. On Monday there might not be a lot of activity as there will be an induction day for health & safety training etc. • We have spent a lot of time working out the cut regime and everything else is going to be, and how we will be operating that. In Spring time, and on, we will be holding meetings with neighbourhood forums and sub groups to discuss what that will mean in your areas, and to get your views. • Green Capital were disappointed that they could not support more of the parks bids through that process, so what they have asked me to do is to look at any of those bids and two we are looking at are volunteering and recycling in parks. • Q&A Q. At the last meeting were concerns about the lack of park keepers within the new structure and that there would be a role for the park keepers and renamed - could you explain that please? A. We deleted the park keeper role within the BCC structure and what we have been looking at is we need 	To produce a proposal for recycling in parks

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	<p>some site presence. The services that were taken back in from Central and South have the same terms and conditions and are continuing in the same roles so there is no change in those areas. So in your area (North), what we had previously was a park keeper that covered a number of sites, so what we are now looking at is how do we still cover and do all the things we need to do on those sites, and we have had teams doing that work. We will talk about this when we come out in Spring to the neighbourhood partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q. So will this only be discussed with the neighbourhood partnership and not at the parks forum? A. We always have to go through the neighbourhood partnerships, but it will be discussed at the parks forum. • Q. John, from Friends of St Andrews Park - same thing really, park keepers. We had a very full discussion about the consultation exercise in our meeting back in December, which I understand has now been deferred. Our response was that we don't care about anything else, all the questions you asked, all we want to know is will we have a park keeper in the future? A. (Tracey) Yes, as your service is in the central area, this will continue as before. One of the things I have to be clear on is that I absolutely hear that view on park keepers, so we have to factor in, making sure that we can deliver the service that you are asking for in the best way, in some cases that may be a site presence, and in some cases in other ways we deliver that more effectively across the city. So it's not that you are not getting a service, but about the best way in delivering that. (John) The real thing that is obvious is that our park keeper has an allegiance to the park, knows everyone, and they know him, all that kind of thing and we don't want to lose it. (Tracey) That is a key issue. What we have to get is the whole of our parks teams that are working on a number of sites, they will have to be the face and ears of the service, to have the allegiance and to be able to deal with the public, and we have to spread that more and this is our challenge. • Q. The main crux of the matter for us is communication. Who do we ask for information and who do we contact? Also rubbish collection - we have volunteers who collect rubbish and we can't get rid of it? A. I will look into it. • Q. André Coutanche - This follows on from the previous questions - What is a park keeper? Who do we talk to? What is the structure and where is the back-up? It says on the agenda that we will know who is doing what now, vacancies etc and I'd really like to see that. A. Apologies, I know we have made available the structures and names that we have at managerial level, and we have given that out, but what we 	<p>To circulate a structure chart from</p>

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	<p>haven't given out is the structure down to team leader level, and we will aim to get a full structure out to you within three weeks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q. Gary Hopkins – We had a discussion about this the other day, about who to contact etc. and it creates huge amount of more work. I had a discussion recently with George Ferguson and there was a complete lack of understanding that park keepers are not only nice, but essential for keeping costs down. I was around before we increased the park keepers and the vandalism costs were horrendous. Park keepers actually reduce costs, as well as actually making the parks better, and that needs to taken into account in the budget. We have Avon & Somerset coming along to Redcatch to do a case study of how their time and money, and ours, have been saved by coordinating things together, and the park keeper is an essential part of that. A. Tracey – Groups that have park keepers absolutely love them and don't want to lose them, but in other areas they are saying what is a park keeper and can we have one. What we have never had is that parity across the city. We still have to reduce budgets, but I still believe that we can deliver the majority of what we have to do, but we need to deliver it more effectively. If you have a park keeper at the moment doing stuff that a team coming in every day can deal with, that is one issue, if having a site presence about communication then that is another It is a dilemma that we have and now that the other two areas have come back in house I need to look at it as a whole. I know it is important to you and we need to look at how we address it. • Q. One thing we would like to see is a copy of the bids that were made. Communication is a big problem. Is it a computer technology problem, in that can your people access all the information to answer our questions? I understand that there are tiers of access, and if you have people sitting at desks that can't access the information required, it that why we don't get responses back? If an email it sent about a problem, you don't hear back. A. I don't think that is the case, I don't think access is a problem, the information is there. I believe that because we have gone through such a big change, and people are now in post, and drawing up the neighbourhood partnership scheme, it's the whole thing about who you contact and we are looking at it. • Q. It is obvious that some parks need park keepers and that small spaces can be managed by teams, but the concern about the new structure is that specific teams rigidly doing specific things, is that there will be gaps in the middle, particularly communication, that they can fall down, and we go back to the 	<p>service manager to chargehands</p>

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	<p>old thing of 'it's not my job mate'. A. I share that being a concern and it's a conversation that the management team have to have to make sure all the right things are in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q. Susan Acton-Campbell, Troopers Hill Nature Trust – we were lucky in that we were told who was taking over (Pete Staddon) and we know who to call, as our park keeper took VS. As a local nature reserve, there should be been a lot of week going on between November and now, so we have a lot of faith that Pete knows what needs to be done (previously done by a park keeper). But the concern is that do other nature reserves know who to contact and what management should be being done during Winter? A. I need to check on that and get back to you. • Q. What is happening about dog walking? A. We have had a number of complaints about dog walking and what are the rules. 75 complaints received about dog bins, 16 about dog fouling and only 5 about dogs in parks. We have an update which we will pass around the meeting. 	
7	<p>RHS Parks Award Scheme - Jon Wheatley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RHS is doing a community outreach and we, in Bristol, are working in partnership with Yorkshire • There are three criteria's – communities, maintenance through development and environment. • There will be no cost involved as the work will be done by volunteers. What we are asking from you is community involvement including fund raising events, programmes and site development plans, with a view to developing a long term legacy. • There will be an achievement award, as well as Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. • When the assessors', who are unpaid volunteers, do go around we will ask a member of the community to go round with them. It's not a blind judgement, but an involvement with the community. • Entry forms are available. • July and August are the assessment months. • This award will be consistent around the country. • Q. St Andrews park has had several Green Flag Awards in recent years – would we be better going for a RHS Award instead? A. I would do both, however Green Flag has backroom/admin costs involved. We have 10 Green Flag Awards currently, but with the new RHS scheme we could potentially have 100 horticultural awards. We have to decide what is the best thing for the future and being able to sustain going forward. • Troopers Hill applied for both Green Flag and RHS awards last year. The RHS process was simple and a very good positive 	

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	experience.	
8	<p>Park Work Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have been given £100,000.00 funding to do an exciting new project named Park Work. • We need during the process of this year with BCC, Bristol Parks Forum and Land Use Consultancy to come with a method of keeping this project sustainable. This is another way of keeping our green spaces to a high standard. • It's one of eleven projects in the UK and it's a fifteen month pilot project involving volunteers. It's all to do with the crisis in parks, keeping the funding in parks and how communities can help, rather than giving all the money to councils. • The projects objectives are to enhance the resources available for management and keeping the standards of parks and open spaces, creating, with BCC, of a city wide management plan document. This document will be available soon, also in a shorter public version. • This is about enhancing what is above basic maintenance, supporting our parks, implementing management plans where they go over and above what BCC already do whether they maintain them to the next level up upwards is where the funding comes in. It also delivers social benefits, providing new skills and training. • There will be projects, which will be decided by the Park Works Operations Manager, who has now been appointed. We have over seventy ideas from BCC, and we need ideas from the Parks Forum and park groups. • The first project due to start soon, although yet to be confirmed is over at Ashton Court. This is an easy pilot project before is it rolled out city wide. • Some of agencies involved in supplying volunteers are the Princes Trust and Points West, whereas tools, PPE, mini bus and a camper wagon are being procured at the present time. • Q. Could we see the list of the seventy projects BCC have put forward? A. Yes, although BCC may not get all those asked for. • Q. How will this fit in with Neighbourhood Partnerships, because each one is different? A. This is a top up, but is not there to service Neighbourhood Partnerships, it's there because it's recognised that there is a standard maintenance regime across the city and Neighbourhood Partnerships will be able influence the projects and the funding. 	
9.	<p>Green Capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New round of funding £75,000, applications in to the cortex by 27th February 2015. All the criteria are on the Bristol 2015 website. Smaller projects have more chance of getting funded. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We did not get any of our bids for the Green Capital and we have asked for fed back on why we did not get them. 	
10.	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We now have a bank account. Nature Reserves. BCC wants to designate some new nature reserves and there will be guidance on how to apply/nominate for that. They are looking for four this year. West of England Strategic Partnership have asked for consultation on green space sites, allocating land for redevelopment i.e. warehouses, houses etc. We will be issuing a statement that we do not have any green spaces available. <p>Dates for future meetings in 2015 – 18th April, 27th June and 10th October.</p>	
	<p>If you can't make any meeting but would like your points to be considered please email info@bristolparksforum.org.uk Bristol parks Forum – www.bristolparksforum.org.uk</p> <p>Date for next meeting – Saturday, 18th April 2015, 9.30-12.30, Windmill Hill City Farm</p>	