



Bristol Parks Forum

representing resident led park groups and citywide organisations involved in protecting and improving Bristol's green spaces

Bristol Parks Forum: 28th April 2018

Attendance: 29 people representing 23 parks and other groups

BPF Committee: Mark Logan (Chair), Fraser Bridgeford, Rob Acton-Campbell, Hugh Holden, Len Wyatt

BCC: Gemma Dando (Parks), Colin Chapman (Planning), Rob McGovern (Planning)

Apologies: Committee: Siân Parry, Sam Thomson, Derek Hawkins, BCC: Cllr Asher Craig

Notes taken by Frances (Friends of Badock's Wood)

at Summerhill Methodist Church, St George

1. Matters arising from February meeting

Rob Acton-Campbell briefly outlined the information and discussions from the previous meeting and flagged up the page on the Parks Forum website -

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/contacts/support/

1.1. Foundation bid update

The Foundation bid team from Bristol have visited Bournemouth Foundation to meet their team and see what their foundation was doing. They are not currently raising lots of cash but running a kiosk and toilets on an LNR and focusing more on volunteering.

50 applications were made to the programme. Bristol is one of 17 applicants who have made it through Stage 1 and on to Stage 2. Bristol representatives attended a meeting in London with Nesta who were happy with the bid content and were not asking for lots of changes or additional information. However a more detailed budget was needed at Stage 2. 7 groups are expected to be funded and the Stage 2 submissions were due into Nesta the week after this meeting. The outcome will be known by June. [Post meeting update – outcome to be announced in July]

1.2. Annual payment to BPF from groups

A voluntary donation of £10 per group had been suggested and this could be by cash, cheque or bank transfer (if the latter ask BPF for their bank details). Individuals also welcome to donate. The charge would cover costs such as meeting room hire. It was suggested that a request for donations should also be added to the BPF website.

Action: Add donation invitation to BPF website.

Member groups to donate if they can.

1.3. Data Protection – General Data Protection Regulations – GDPR

Following the GDPR mail out there were approximately 230 people / organisations still on the BPF mailing list. This had meant that people who had long stopped being involved were no longer on the list but members are reminded to ensure that they / their organisation has signed up.

2. Bristol Local Plan – Designating Green Spaces

Colin Chapman/Rob McGovern, BCC

See presentation: <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/280418OpenSpacePlan.pdf>

Colin outlined what a Local Plan is and that the Plan period will cover up to 2036.

1st Stage – Consultation: Feb – April 2018

2nd Stage – Consultation: Late Oct – Dec 2018

Local Plan to be published in April 2019. Submission to Secretary of State in September 2019.

Examination in public January 2020. Adoption July 2020.

The second stage consultation will be significant for Parks and Open Spaces.

From Late October – December 2018 there will be a 7 week consultation on the Draft Plan, Site Allocations etc. The policy will include protections for green spaces.

Rob explained that the review of Open Spaces is being driven by the changes in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – see slide.

Local Green Spaces will get strong protection “in perpetuity” beyond the period of the Local Plan. Reserved Open Spaces would be reviewed.

Currently there is a designation of “important open space”. Current open space designation includes private gardens but not in future. PPG17 had been changed and there is a new definition – Local Green Spaces are “spaces to be protected in perpetuity; development only allowable in very special circumstances”

How “local community” is defined depends on the site.

Sites have to be “demonstrably special”.

Reserved Open Space designation is more broad and a third designation is “Unidentified Open Space”

Noted that Local Green Space (LGS) designation gives more protection than current Important Open Space designation.

SSSI and SNCIs would not change. They would potentially go into the first category.

BPF Members raised concerns about issues in terms of newly designated sites such as Cumberland Basin and Spark Evans Park and the impacts of CDS4 and CDS 3 respectively. It was confirmed that if some open spaces fall for example into development sites they will be looked at in terms of the new designation.

Colin reported that the 1st stage consultation had provided a lot of information about areas that are valued. If people are concerned that areas may be missing they should let the team know about special places. Do not wait for the consultation. The team are happy to receive information early to help them build the list prior to 2nd Stage consultation.

Asked how this related to the Historic gardens designation and Avon Gardens Trust collation of 20th Century standouts such as Sylvia Crow, the meeting was told that decisions on which designation a site falls under will depend on the criteria for the 3 categories of open space.

There is a Local Plan working group of 13 councillors and all councillor briefings are held prior to the start of each consultation. The next briefings will be in early October. Noted that the Local Plan is a decision of Full Council and at publication stage has to be approved by a meeting of Full Council.

BPF members considered that the 3rd designation of “unidentified” sites covers sites that are immensely important for their amenity role and queried what protection they will receive. The meeting was advised that there will be policy wording about amenity and locally valued land that will be in the local plan and would need to be taken into account in planning decisions. BPF members queried whether Highways Section would be aware and it was hoped that they would be.

Concerns were raised about the wildlife value of open spaces and wildlife not having its own designation, wildlife corridors etc. The current status of land – including wildlife corridors – can be viewed on Bristol pinpoint <http://maps.bristol.gov.uk/pinpoint/> Current Local Plan designations are at <http://maps.bristol.gov.uk/policies/> Mark suggested that members make a list from that now. However there was no explanation of whether wildlife corridors would be noted or protected, etc in future.

Concern about the lack of ability to restrict uses on public open spaces that adversely affected wildlife such as numbers of visitors, dog walking etc. and a request was made for some site to have restricted access to protect wildlife. Wildlife is also being lost where sites are being developed with mitigation proposals that are either not carried out or are unsuccessful and the wildlife is lost.

BCC officers are happy to come back again to a future BPF meeting.

Action: BPF members to notify BCC of any valued local spaces for the Local Plan. The team can be emailed at blp@bristol.gov.uk

3. Parks Consultation Update – Gemma Dando, Bristol Parks

Gemma had returned to the meeting to report, in particular, on the qualitative results of the Parks Consultation following her report at the last meeting on the quantitative data.

BCC have been analysing the free text responses. There was a large number of views and information received through the consultation which Gemma felt they will probably be using for years to come.

The free text provided more information to amplify or support the answers to the closed questions. Two things came out strongly:

- i) People do not like the idea of advertising in parks, especially massive bill boards and adverts. They felt less strongly about low key advertising.
- ii) Some supported charging small businesses for being in parks, such as fitness instructors, dog walking etc but the impact on those small businesses and the administration and whether it would affect their survival was also raised.

BCC has talked to quite a few fitness and dog walking businesses. As part of the team’s research they had looked at small business and noted that small businesses generally spend 30-50% for business premises so Parks have decided upon 10% of turnover as the figure they will use for charging. The income will not provide additional services such as additional dog bins but will be used to back fill for cuts. Dog poo bins and collections, for example, are already provided by the Council.

Enforcement of this payment would be through by-laws. By-laws do not allow this use without the Council’s permission and they already have a lot of information about who is using open spaces for these activities. There is also a self-policing effect where those who do pay will be unhappy with those who do not. Business reputation would be harmed if the Council prosecuted them. Businesses will be invoiced and if not paid it can be enforced through the Council’s debt collection process.

Concern was raised by a member that concessions who might usually run a summer café had been unable to submit a tender to Parks due to delays by the Council. Gemma confirmed that this was the case and was in part due to changes at the Council but the bids could now be made and for a 5 year period this time. She confirmed that local concessions would get a good opportunity to bid.

Asked if the financial position can be achieved, Gemma was “100% sure” that it could be done, although there was always a process that can be gone through at the Council if anything catastrophic happened. She also confirmed that all income from Parks would stay in Parks department. They already had £400,000 extra this year raised for next year and able to put into reserves.

Current financial conversations are about what happens in 2019/20 and when they grow their business how can it be invested.

Already the Balloon Fiesta will be making a contribution each year. This year they are putting in a water main and paths on the site which will be an improvement that everyone can benefit from. Discussions are taking place for future years. Concern was raised that this sort of in-kind income can only be spent solely on one site and should not set a precedent. Gemma said that this was a particular case where the Fiesta are paying for improvements that the Council would otherwise be making themselves such as the mains water, high quality wi-fi etc.

Mark Logan reported that he and Rob were making a Parks Consultation response for the BPF to the Council Cabinet meeting the following Tuesday www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/Cabinet010518.pdf This was separate from the Parks & Task Group response which BPF is not party to. A meeting of just 4 out of the 10 councillors from the Parks & Task Group had drawn up a response without invitation or discussion with BPF even though we are part of the Group. These 4 councillors then wrote and signed a response purportedly on behalf of the whole group and BPF has therefore formally distanced themselves and stated that we are not party to this response.

Richard Fletcher will attend the Autumn BPF meeting.

4. My Wild City – Janice Gardiner, Avon Wildlife Trust

Janice is the Nature and Well Being Project Manager working on My Wild City and Bee Bristol.

See her presentation: <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/280418MyWildCity.pdf>

My Wild City project began in 2015 as a Bristol European Green Capital Project. Aiming to get everyone involved.

Developing a £500k HLF bid in partnership with BCC and UoB. Support for management of local wildlife sites, parks green spaces etc and how people engage and get involved.

Focus will be on 8 sites in the city which have been selected in consultation with Becky Belfin, BCC Parks. Details of the project approach are in her presentation – see pdf.

By the end of 3 years they want groups there who will have developed relevant skills and for people to be enabled and empowered. Some of the chosen sites already have volunteer groups whilst some do not.

AWT are looking to see what training could be shared beyond the 8 sites. She was seeking suggestions for example for training in certain management regimes and monitoring assessment. For example would people want a Woodland Group? One suggestion came forward for training in understanding what was present at a site, and how taking one approach might impact on other aspects e.g. butterfly eggs vs mowing regimes.

Janice explained that all sites in the project are SSSI and have Management Plans but not necessary had the resources to deliver these management plans. Losing meadows across the County to brambles is an issue. Now there are lots of places trying to get mosaic areas with some cuts only every 3 years for example. The matter of what happens when some areas are just left to go wild was raised. Janice said it was always a judgement and also the level of resources available. It is important that if you start something you will be able to continue with it.

She will be holding meetings to talk about management and intends to hold a workshop to find out what sort of support and training parks groups need and whether Saturdays or evenings are preferred. She needs to engage with Forum members as a group rather than individually.

It was noted that Urban Buzz are carrying out training in identification skills for invertebrates.

5. Future Vision for Bristol's Parks – Len

Following up from the last meeting, Len organised a vision session in break outs of different groups looking at different issues. Len and the rest of the committee to go through the notes from the sessions and write up and circulate. Len was warmly thanked for his work on this.

Action: Len and BPF Committee

6. Reports from Park Groups

Frances from Friends of Badock's Wood reported that they had had soil sampling of their meadows undertaken by Geography students from UoB which had been useful. Student groups from this programme had also done work for other Friends groups as well.

Fraser (BPF committee) and Alison (Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network) reported that they had visited the St Mary le Port site. They noted that the good news is that the development is taking place within the existing footprint. However a cause for concern was that the developers are looking to take out most of the trees and the development would be 17 storeys high. Fraser to write up a report and circulate it.

Susan from Troopers Hill reported that the new weedkilling team had started using weed killer inappropriately and unnecessarily. She showed a photo of an example where they had been using it to kill wildflowers at fence bases on field boundaries where there was no justification for it. She was not asking for a blanket ban but wanted to see minimal use in the Parks and Open Spaces.

Action: Meeting agreed that the Forum should write outlining their concerns re over usage of herbicide and seeking minimal use.

7. Any Other Business

Festival of Nature Stall

The FoN is on 9th and 10th June. BPF had not yet booked a stall and was seeking volunteers before they did so. Please let BPF know if you can help out on the stall, what times and for how long.

Action: ALL to help find volunteers from their groups

8. Next Meeting

Next meeting will be on Saturday 30th June at the same venue as this meeting - Summerhill Methodist Church, St George.

BPF are seeking suggestions for affordable meeting rooms in other parts of the city such as the city centre and North Bristol.

Action: ALL to put forward any suitable, affordable local venues