

Subject: Response to Open Letter - Protecting Bristol's Green Spaces
Date: Thu, 03 Mar 2011 13:24:06 +0000
From: David Fowler <david.fowler@bristol.gov.uk>
To: <info@bristolparksforum.org.uk>
CC: Geoffrey Gollop <geoffrey.gollop@bristol.gov.uk>, Mark Weston <mark.weston@bristol.gov.uk>

Bristol Parks Forum

Dear Mr Holden

Thank you for your open letter concerning the protection of Bristol's Green Spaces.

I find it surprising that you require clarification of the Conservative position in this matter but I am happy to respond on behalf of my Group to each of the questions posed.

1. As we have seen recently over the tuition fees row, political pledges are often very easy to give but hard to keep - especially in the light of changed circumstances. Therefore, the Opposition proposition that Neighbourhood Partnerships should decide on any green space disposals in their area (in concert with local people) is in fact the only meaningful guarantee which ensures that public spaces are not sold over the timescale you have suggested. In any event, I very much doubt it is possible under the City's Constitution for one Council to bind its successors without such a mechanism in place.
2. It is often conveniently ignored or overlooked that the Conservative Group objected to the original 50% retention figure for capital receipts arising from such land sales. Accordingly, we would expect at least 70% of proceeds generated in this way to continue to be ring-fenced for reinvestment in our parks or remaining municipal land.
3. My Party shares the vision and objectives of the Parks & Green Spaces Strategy. Where we depart is in the way in which the criteria used to identify sites for disposal - the concept of low value or poor quality land - has been interpreted by the current Lib Dem Administration and applied in practice.

As the Park Forum itself has recognised. One person's piece of scrub land is more often than not another's treasured green space.

The list of sites finalised by Cabinet on 16th December 2010 are not acceptable because these do not reflect the overwhelming opposition to the ideas and options plans which emerged from public consultation. We also believe there are alternative funding streams available to help pay for the 20 year investment programme.

Moreover, the disposal selection process itself remains open to the charge of political bias.

The unprecedented level of anger felt across the city towards the Strategy means that it cannot continue in its present form.

Accordingly, I hope BPF will get behind the cross-Party Petition and proposals to ensure that no Council leisure land is lost without the consent of those who are most likely to need, use or value it.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Geoff Gollop
Leader, Conservative Group