



West of England Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Consultation response from Bristol Parks Forum

This is the Forum's formal response to the consultation on the proposed plan. We thank you for the opportunity to comment.

The Bristol Parks Forum has a vision for all publicly owned parks and green spaces in Bristol by 2030.

This is presented in its Vision document – A positive future for Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces.

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/vision

We are currently working on a Parks Forum position statement on Cycling and Walking infrastructure.

The Forum comments relate only to the Bristol City Council's geographical area. The use of the term "Park" means Parks and Green Spaces.

We have encouraged individual Parks Groups to write in separately if they so wish.

We are submitting a response as we have previous experience of the issues around providing new cycling and walking infrastructure in Parks and Green Spaces (PGS).

We would like to make the following general points:

- We appreciate the seriousness of the issues that the Plan is seeking to help address.
- Bristol's Parks are used by thousands of people every day.
- Parks provide a wider range of health and well-being benefits/ecosystem services to people and wildlife, than either cycling and walking.

- Parks have in the past been the focus of disputes over the inclusion of infrastructure within them.
- The routes and proposals in the document could be beneficial or potentially negative to Parks and Green Spaces (PGS) depending on the context of the path, and how the project is carried out and maintained.
- We do not believe that a “one size” fits all approach to park situations actually works. It is better to consider the wider context of the Parks and the infrastructure adjacent to the Parks, as well as the physical characteristics of the park, on a case by case basis.
- We are concerned that if a strict “predict and provide” approach is applied to infrastructure in parks, especially those that lead to “retro-fitting” proposals, that the functions and character of that park could be negatively affected.
- We believe that early involvement (not just consultation) and the building of positive relationships is critical to any project – or strategy.
- We are concerned that on occasions the use of Parks is sometimes perceived to be the “easy” option without looking closely at the context and relevant issues. There is a particular problem for example with dealing with slopes/inclines which can need extensive ground engineering to enable path construction thus expanding the path footprints working area; and also depending on the situation the possibility of a heightened risk of inter-user conflicts; or even discouraging certain users to use that part of the park. We would recommend that more work is done on alternatives, including where suitable highways, before routes through Parks are considered
- Parks are not just transport corridors; and it is pleasing to see that approach being taken to the OnePath:BS5 project by Sustrans.

In relation to the Proposed Plan:

- We welcome the use of inclusive images of people and locations on the front cover of the document.
- We have very serious concerns about the justification and implications of putting improved infrastructure, or indeed retrofitted infrastructure in PGS.
- We welcome the range of types of improvement on pages 17 to 19. The solutions to improving facilities for cycling and walking in PGS need to have options available to them, rather than subscribe to a “one sizes fits all” approach.
- Walking and Cycling routes – it is unfortunate that maps provided, especially for walking, lead the reader to assume that routes are only limited to locations on the plan. It would have been far clearer to ensure that readers are aware that there is a network proposed, by including those maps in the document, or available on line.
- The walking proposals shown could have benefits for our PGS, but much depends on the detailed proposals involved for each PGS.

Cycling Map – C09 Bristol 4.

- Bristol and Bath Railway Path – the opportunity to provide pedestrian priority crossings where appropriate, is welcomed.
- We are opposed to the major scheme through St Anne’s Wood before any investigation has been carried with the relevant park group, users and local residents and alternatives investigated. We would recommend changing the wording to “Explore the opportunities for....”

Cycling Map – C10 Bristol 5

- The desire to improve the recently installed Victoria Park Filwood Greenway during the period of the Plan could be considered to be insensitive considering the recent concerns of local residents and parks users in that area. The development of any proposals, including those in principle, must be carefully worked through with the local park group, local residents and parks users.
- Proposals for Redcatch Park will also need to be carefully thought through, bearing in mind the popularity of the park to non-cycling users and the need to protect the Park from night time anti-social behaviour. As Victoria Park above involvement of local park group, local residents and parks users is critical.

Finally, we are extremely disappointed that there has been no opportunity to assess and comment on the routes and areas that have been designated.

We think that this is a serious short coming of the process so far.

Once a route or area has been designated for 15 years we believe that the opportunities to improvements with implications for PGS will be set in stone, and will make involvement on individual projects more difficult to achieve.

As mentioned above the routes/areas could be beneficial to PGS and form the basis of green infrastructure investment for PGS.

We feel it would be more beneficial to have a detailed consultation with interested parties, so that the pros and cons of each route can be identified and alterations made if necessary.

We had hoped to have a meeting with Bristol City Council officers before the consultation started, but this has not been possible.

We would be happy to facilitate a review of the routes/areas from the Parks viewpoint, before the Plan is finalised.

Over the years people have sometimes wrongly assumed that Park Groups are against cycling and walking.

The Bristol Parks Forum is not anti-walking, or anti-cycling. We are pro-parks and green spaces - and the welcomes the diversity of all users within them.

This letter has been copied to the following people and organisations:

Cllr Asher Craig, Cabinet Member for Parks and Green Spaces, Bristol City Council
cllr.asher.craig@bristol.gov.uk

Cllr Kye Dudd, Cabinet Member for Transport, Bristol City Council
cllr.kye.dudd@bristol.gov.uk

Jon James – Head of Parks, Bristol City Council jon.james@bristol.gov.uk

Jacob Pryor – Transport, Bristol City Council Jacob.pryor@bristol.gov.uk

Bristol Cycling Forum

Bristol Cycling Campaign

Bristol Walking Alliance

Bristol Parks Forum committee members. – info@bristolparksforum.org.uk

If you have any queries on these comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to working with the relevant parties as the Plan and related projects are taken forward.

Mark Logan

Chair

Bristol Parks Forum