

4 December 2009

BPF Meeting 31 October 2009

The minutes of our last meeting are now on the website together with notes on the Events Workshop and a copy of the display about the Play Pathfinder Project.

These can be seen at: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/#meetings

Head of Parks

The BPF committee will be meeting with Tracey Morgan again on 14th December for an update and to discuss our proposed agenda for the 16th January. As I mentioned before Tracey has said that she will be along on 16th January so you will have an opportunity to ask any questions you have about Peter's departure then. In the meantime if you have any urgent issues that you wish us to raise on the 14th Dec please let us know.

One issue that Tracey has been able to clarify is the rumour that John Jefferies has taken over Peter's role. This is not true; John reports to Tracey Morgan on Public Protection and Trading Standards and he has been asked to assist Tracey on a temporary basis to provide more management support to managers in parks.

Area Green Space Consultation Delay

You may remember that at our meeting on 31st October Gary Hopkins raised the possibility that the BDF Site Allocations Consultation planned for January 2010 might be delayed. He also said that this would cause a delay to the AGSP consultation since the intention was to run them together.

At the BDF meeting about the launch of the Core Strategy on Wednesday it was confirmed that the Site Allocations Consultation will not now happen until June 2010. The BDF team have also now updated their website to show this – see www.bristol.gov.uk/bdf

Bristol Parks' website still says that the AGSP consultation is planned for January, but our understanding is that, as Gary suggested, this will now also be delayed until June 2010.

The BCC rules regarding the 'purdah' period of a month or so before an election means that if a full 12 week consultation period is to take place then it has to start in early January or wait until after the May local election. The BPF committee made it clear to Tracey Morgan when we met that we would not like the consultation period shortened, this is an important issue and as many people as possible should be given the opportunity to get involved.

On the plus side the delay will give the P&GSS team time to enhance the presentation of the AGSPs and put more time into planning the consultation; a process in which the BPF will be involved. It also means that the more devolved Neighbourhood Partnerships should be up and running by the time the consultation takes place.

On the downside the P&GSS team will need funding for a longer period. More importantly there will be uncertainty over which areas of 'low value' park land might be considered for disposal for

another five months. This may be particularly important in areas where plans for development are being progressed such as in Knowle West - there was an article about Knowle West regeneration in the Evening Post tonight: <http://tinyurl.com/y8ebsme>

If the delay to the AGSP consultation is confirmed it will also mean that we will have to rethink our planned conference on 16th January. It is probable that this will revert to being a normal meeting with the conference on the AGSPs rescheduled to June. Since the Vassall Centre has been booked then that will remain as the venue and we may be able to organise a visit to Snuff Mills in the afternoon.

BNPN Meeting on BDF Core Strategy

The Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network www.bristolnbn.net has organised a meeting of residents planning groups at 1800 on MONDAY 7th DECEMBER 2009 at 35 KING STREET, BS1 (2 doors from Theatre Royal)

The purpose and the agenda is:

1. To share community group views on the content of the final Strategy Document. We will assume that everyone will have at least skim read it. The Council says that it now feels that the Strategy is good enough and ready to invite final public comment before being sent to the Secretary of State.

2. For community groups themselves to decide:

(a) Whether the Document or each major part of the Document is fit for purpose. At this final stage, after 4 years of production and a long programme of community involvement, the Government planning system allows for the public to be invited to make final comments, but only on grounds of fitness for purpose, not on grounds of the policies per se. Fitness for purpose or "soundness" has to do with whether the Strategy has, for example, sufficient evidence behind it; is logical; has a clear direction; has had proper community involvement; demonstrates that it can be delivered and so on. I have previously circulated the Planning Inspectorate guide to judging "soundness".

(b) Whether any comments on the Strategy would have a more than 50/50 chance of persuading a Planning Inspector to order an alteration or re-write in order to make it sound. Given the amount of work involved in making representations, Groups may want the odds to be more like 75% in favour of success before making comments.

3. To decide who will do what, if anything. There is a deadline of 15 January 2010 for any comments to be made.

Inside Out Programme on Arnos Vale

A message from the Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust

On Monday 7 December at 7.30pm Arnos Vale will be featured on the BBC's Inside Out West programme

The programme will focus on the ongoing restoration of Arnos Vale through the eyes of a naturalist and an historian. It has been turned into a bit of a competition to see who can find out the most interesting things about the cemetery.

Naturalist Mike Dilger thinks “The appeal of Arnos Vale Cemetery lies in its amazing range of wildlife” and regards it as an urban haven for nature.

However, for Bristol University archaeologist Professor Mark Horton it is a different story. Professor Mark Horton says “Arno Vale is a brilliant place to find out about the city's past and it’s the history of the site that interests and inspires”.

Essentially both the Naturalist and the Historian both set out to discover what makes Arnos Vale so special.

Why not watch this amazing programme on 7th December at 7.30pm and decide who you agree with.

Arnos Vale has undergone an extensive renovation programme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, a number of trust fund and an extensive number of individuals. With the buildings almost ready for use for remembrance services, celebrations, meetings, art exhibitions, talks, museum to name but a few of the options available, people will soon be able to visit the site and see this glorious piece of history that has been saved for future generations to explore. Arnos Vale will also be running regular member’s tours from April onwards and there are also the Guidebooks on sale for people who would like to self tour which are available for sale now at only £5.00. In 2010 there will also be several trails available offering initially four different perspectives and routes around the site.

The programme on Inside Out on the 7th December will give just a taster of what Arnos Vale has to offer with the site being fully ready to explore early 2010.

For further information please contact Sarah Cox on 0117 9719117 or email sarah.cox@arnosvale.org.uk

Ashton Vale Fields Town Green Application

There was an article about this application in tonight's Evening Post, see <http://tinyurl.com/yavraro>
It's also worth reminding yourself how events at Ashton Vale started in September 2008
<http://tinyurl.com/ybpxo5x>

Rob Acton-Campbell
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11 December 2009

Meeting with Tracey Morgan / AGSP Consultation

The BPF committee meeting with Tracey will now be Thur 17th Dec, it was put back so that more people were able to attend. One of the main issues will be the AGSP consultation so I will update you on that after the meeting.

You may have seen more coverage in the Evening Post about Lamplighters in Shirehampton, see <http://tinyurl.com/y9oqkuk> The article states that "The council is writing to residents to tell them the land will now be excluded from a document due out early next year, which will list areas of land being considered for development". We will be asking for confirmation as to whether this is true and whether any further information about the outcome of research used to produce the AGSPs will be released prior to the delayed consultation.

Events Workshop Follow up

We have also now arranged a follow up session with Jenny Crook following the Events Workshop at the last BPF meeting and I have sent details to those you volunteered at the meeting to help take the ideas forward.

The main aim is to make it easier for Park Groups to hold events, but we also covered consultation with Parks Groups about other events planned in their parks and issues around funding. If you would like to get involved with this process but weren't at the BPF meeting please let me know.

An event held on Brandon Hill last night is featured in today's Evening Post; see <http://tinyurl.com/yejbhdn>

Wild City www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/#wild

As agreed at our last meeting, Fraser is putting together a letter in support of this project. Bristol Parks are intending to submit the application for funding to Natural England next week.

I'm sure you will be pleased to learn that our previous Local Nature Reserves Officer, Sally Oldfield, is expecting a baby in May.

While on that subject, we were also pleased to hear today that Claire Adams gave birth to a healthy baby boy a couple of days ago.

Congratulations all round.

South Bristol Riverscapes

South Bristol Riverscapes have a wonderful new website up and running based on the rivers and river groups of South Bristol. The web address is www.southbristolriverscapes.org.uk You will

find maps of our local rivers - Colliter's Brook, the Pigeonhouse Stream, the River Malago, Brislington Brook and the Avon New Cut - with photographs, videos and sound pieces just a click away. There are downloadable maps to guide you when out walking, events listings, rivers news, details of local groups, and a resource section.

The website has been set up so that the individual groups can upload their own news. Hopefully this will enable the website to continue even if further funding to allow this excellent project to continue after its current scheduled end in Spring 2010 is not found.

Spaceshaper 9-14 facilitator training

Involving young people in improving their neighbourhoods

If you or anyone in your group is interested in this scheme (see below) then there is the possibility of some funding being available through the BPF and Bristol Parks. If you would like more details please let us know.

Are you passionate about young people having a say in their neighbourhood?

Spaceshaper is a tool for anyone who is keen to improve their local parks, streets or squares. An exciting new version has been developed enabling 9 to 14 year olds to get involved in the developments that affect them. It offers practical, creative and interactive resources that encourage young people to contribute to discussions about the future of their neighbourhood.

Training is open for facilitators!

Trained facilitators have a crucial role in managing Spaceshaper events so that everyone has a fair say and to ensure that young people's views are heard. Training is now available for those wanting to become a facilitator:

20 January 2010 Birmingham

27 January 2010 Manchester

2 February 2010 London

10 February 2010 York

10 March 2010 London

17 March 2010 Bristol

More information

We are looking for people who have experience of working with young people and on built environment issues.

Costs are £50 - £150.

For more information and an application form, see www.cabe.org.uk/spaceshaper9-14 or call 01924 215 550 or email Spaceshaper9-14@cabe.org.uk

Garden Share Bristol

With the pressure on allotment space in Bristol at the moment, this scheme seems to me a very good idea. I'm told that at the moment they are particularly short of growers, so if you know of anyone waiting for an allotment please pass on the details.

GardenShare Bristol are looking for community-minded garden owners and would-be vegetable growers across the city. This local volunteer organisation has recently been set up with the aim of matching people who would like to grow plants and vegetables but don't have the space, with those who lack the time, ability or motivation to use their gardens.

Similar projects are taking place across the country including Brighton, Bath, and Totnes and tend to attract people living in flats, town houses and rented accommodation, who have no access to a garden, but who would love to grow their own.

The benefits for the garden owners include a share of the produce, the pleasure of seeing a developing vegetable plot, and the sense of community in being part of a sharing initiative.

Abbi Gutierrez (27) GardenShare volunteer from Ashton says "Perhaps there are elderly people or people with young kids who don't have the time or ability to look after their garden, but who like to see things grow."

This initiative will help communities in Bristol to grow more healthy, fresh food locally. It will also help reduce weekly shopping bills during the recession as well as being better for the environment because it reduces the distance that our food is transported. The new friendships that form will help to strengthen our local communities.

Autumn is the perfect time for people to begin preparing land for the winter and growing in the spring - sign up today! For more information please see our website:
<http://gardensharebristol.blogspot.com/>

If you would like to get involved contact the team on 07770391531 or gardensharebristol@gmail.com to arrange to meet a local volunteer to find out more and join the scheme.

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12 December 2009

2010 BCC Budget Proposals

Information about BCCs budget arrived in my in box just after I sent Friday's email. As promised there an increase in the Parks' budget to cover the cost of the additional Community Park Keepers that we discussed at our last meeting.

The budget documents state:

"People regularly tell us how much they love the parks around the city, but often say how they don't feel as safe as they could be in using these green spaces. That is why next financial year we propose to spend an extra £250,000 providing a park keeper for every park in the city."

At our last meeting we were told this would be nine new CPKs, we still don't have information as to where they will be based.

This is obviously good news, though with 280 'parks' on our list at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/parks.htm the claim of a park keeper for every park seems to be an exaggeration. It is of course important that all parks are well maintained regardless of whether they have a designated 'parkie'.

Details of the budget on the BCC website are here: <http://tinyurl.com/yd5xwr4>

Neighbourhood Partnerships

Another quote from the proposed budget says:

"We know that in many areas, the best people to decide how services should be provided at a local level are the people who live and work there. That is why we are developing our 14 Neighbourhood Partnerships and Neighbourhood Forums across the city, to let you have more influence where you live. To start with, we'll be transferring £13 million of existing money and services to these 14 areas, and also spending a new £500,000 to help make it work most effectively."

There are more details in a press release here: <http://tinyurl.com/yevtzrs> and in a video with Barbara Janke talking to Ben Barker here: <http://tinyurl.com/nmajs3>

More information about Neighbourhood Partnerships is here: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/neighbourhoodpartnerships>

Amongst the issues that the NPs are apparently going to looking at are 'park maintenance' and 'improvement of parks and open spaces'.

It is not yet clear how Bristol Parks will work with the NPs; the new contract areas will generally align with NP boundaries but the four areas each cover several NPs and it seems unlikely that the NPs will be able to change the terms of the contracts.

It is obviously going to be important that park groups get involved in their own partnerships so that we continue to have a strong input into any decisions made about our parks.

We would be interested to hear your thoughts on NPs and how they are working in your area. Given the importance of this issue we may also include it in the agenda for our January meeting.

Chocolate Factory and the Railway Path

The results of the second consultation have now been added to the website at www.bristol.gov.uk/bristolrailwaypathpublicconsultation . There were only 41 responses and the decision has been taken to allow the individual accesses as per the planning application.

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18 December 2009

Area Green Space Plans Consultation

As I mentioned in my last email the BPF committee met with Tracey Morgan yesterday to get an update on various issues and to discuss the agenda for our meeting on 16th January 2010.

It has now been confirmed that the AGSP consultation will not take place until June 2010. This is so that it coincides with the BDF Site Allocation Consultation which has also been delayed.

Due to the local elections in May and the 'purdah' period when everything at the Council stops for a month June is the earliest that the consultation could start once the January date had been passed. The consultation will run for more than the planned 12 weeks to make allowance for the fact that it will run through the summer holidays.

There are plans to issue some interim reports on the feedback received during the stakeholder consultations in each area. These should be available in February and I will post them on the BPF website.

The BPF will also be involved in planning the consultation process and reviewing how the AGSPs are to be presented.

It was also confirmed that as reported in the press the level of contamination found below ground at Lamplighters in Shirehampton is such that this land could not economically be developed and that is not therefore to be considered for disposal. This is a good example of how the process was supposed to work since it was the feedback received during the 'stakeholder' consultation phase that highlighted this as a possible issue.

Devolving Budgets to Neighbourhoods

Tracey and other officers in Parks and other parts of the Council are still reviewing how best to respond to these changes. The proposals are detailed in the papers for the 10 December cabinet meeting that can be seen here: <http://tinyurl.com/yjveyfy>

The total involved for the Parks budget is £4,681,636 which is over 50% of the total Parks budget. The NPs will have 'influence' over this budget but not control. The arrangements agreed at the Cabinet meeting state in relation to Parks:

'For the two large contracts for south and central Bristol the budget is allocated wholly to works defined within the grounds maintenance contract. However there is some scope to influence specifications subject to this being in line with the contract. For the in-house areas the labour, machinery etc is deployed across a number of NPAs and could be influenced on a site by site basis.'

Some concerns have been raised with us that the NPs do not have the capacity to deal with this at the moment. There will be some changes to the NPs in February that might help but the main point is that if no issues are raised by the NPs then the Parks maintenance will continue as it is. The extent of influence will in any case be small and restricted to changes that do not increase costs, such as changing which areas of grass are cut when or perhaps how CPKs split their time between sites.

For park groups I think the important thing will be to get involved in the NPs and ensure that we have a say in any suggested changes.

Central Contract

The Cabinet will be discussing the award of this contract on 23 December and details can be seen in the report to that meeting here: <http://tinyurl.com/yjtezr6>

Of course the names of the Contractors and the details of their bids are confidential. Roland was involved in the interview process on behalf of the BPF.

Head of Parks

As I mentioned previously Tracey Morgan, Service Director - Environment & Leisure will be at the Parks Forum meeting on 16th January. As well as meeting the BPF committee, Tracey also had a meeting with all of the Bristol Parks staff yesterday.

It is clear that at the moment Tracey is listening to what her staff and others are telling her and is not rushing to make changes to structures. With the current pressure on budgets and the move to Neighbourhood Partnerships there are lots of issues to consider. Certainly I got the impression yesterday that we were being listened to and that Tracey was taking on board what we said. Tracey seems keen to get out and learn what is happening on the ground and to speak to Park Groups.

The meeting on 16th January will be a chance to have your voice heard about how Bristol's parks should be managed in the future, so please come along if you can.

Wild City

The Wild City bid has now been submitted to Natural England. The bid as submitted is for a grant of £250,000 out of a total project cost of over £330,000. The project will fund one full time Local Nature Reserves Officer and cover 14 sites, 7 of which will be the core sites. The bid will now be assessed by Natural England with the result announced in the spring or early summer.

Bristol Parks Forum wrote in support of the bid and the letter can be seen here:

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/WildCitySupport.pdf

The map showing the sites is here: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/WildCityMap.pdf

Spaceshaper 9-14 facilitator training

A reminder about this scheme which is about involving young people in improving their neighbourhoods

This is an opportunity for people who have experience of working with young people and on built environment issues. There is the possibility of some funding being available through the BPF and Bristol Parks. If you would like more details please let us know via info@bristolparksforum.org.uk

For more information about the scheme and an application form, see www.cabe.org.uk/spaceshaper9-14 Please pass this on to anyone in your group who might be interested.

This will be my last update for 2009, the next will be a week or so before our meeting on 16th January.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for 2010.

Rob Acton-Campbell

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