

08 December 2013 - No 139

In this update: Change of Meeting Date - Budget - Green Volunteers Awards Presentation - AWT Training - Castle Park Update - Rethinking Parks

Change of Meeting Date

After much discussion we have decided to postpone our planned January meeting until Saturday 8th March.

This is primarily due to the fact that the current budget consultation closes at the end of December 2013 and the Full Council meeting making the decision is not until 18th February 2014.

A meeting in January would therefore be too late to discuss the BPF response to the consultation (a response will be submitted by the committee). By March we will know the outcome of the budget meeting and will be able to have meaningful discussion with Parks as to how any cuts will be implemented. A meeting in January between the two dates would have been at a time when we could only speculate about possible outcomes of the budget.

Budget

www.bristol.gov.uk/budget

As mentioned above the BPF committee will be submitting a response to the consultation. Of particular concern to us is that the cut of £500k in Grounds Maintenance is proposed for the 2014/15 financial year. While we are concerned about the impacts of any cuts on the standards of maintenance, cuts next year are likely to be particularly difficult to implement because they would fall before the current contracts expire in February 2015. If any cuts to the Grounds Maintenance budget could be postponed until 2015/16 then at least there would be an opportunity to plan for them in the letting of the new contracts.

In addition to the issues in the budget that I mentioned in my last update, an item that I missed (and that has had a lot of publicity in the last week) is the proposed cut to supervision at Hengrove Play Park. The description in the budget papers for this item has now be revised to say:

"Stop supervision at Hengrove play area so that it is the same as other play areas across the city (£120k); raise income through efficient running of kiosks across all estates (£80k). Review all Estates operation to identify further £100k in year two, not anticipated to affect Hengrove play area and subject to consultation next year."

More details and the reasons for the update can be seen at www.tinyurl.com/q4ogjp2 (pdf document).

You might also be interested to know that the list of toilets proposed with closure has been clarified. The list of those scheduled for closure can be seen at :

www.bristol.gov.uk/page/community-and-safety/toilets-run-council-are-proposed-shut

There is also a link on that page to Council toilets that will remain open.

Some park toilets would remain open, those proposed for closure are those in parks but not operated

by Bristol Parks, eg the one in St George Park.

Please let us know if there are any particular points you think we should raise in our response to the consultation.

Green Volunteers Awards Presentation

The list of winners of the Green Volunteer Awards (and those shortlisted) can be seen at www.bristolgreenvolsawards.org.uk

It was great to see BPF members well represented - and many thanks to Nancy for collecting my award!!!

AWT Training

In the last update I mentioned some 1st Aid training being run by Joe McSorley of Avon Wildlife Trust.

He is also organising other courses that may be of interest:

There will be a Wildlife Pond Maintenance Session at St Andrews Park Pond on January 6th 10:45 - 13:00 (just meet AWT at the pond and get lots of tips on how to undertake winter management on your pond).

He'll also be putting on an Apple Orchard Management Day on February 17th which is open to Friends of Groups with Apple Orchards (He'll let you know the venue once you sign up but its probably going to be in Hartcliffe). You need to contact Joe by email to register for this one as there are a very limited number of places.

If you would like to book a place or for more details email joemcsorley@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Castle Park Update

The report into the consultation on the Central Area Plan can now be seen via a link on www.bristol.gov.uk/centralarea It is a 162 page document. Pages 41-118 are the pages concerning Castle Park.

The revised Central Area Plan is apparently due to be considered at the Council meeting on 17th December. If so, then the revised document should be available in the papers for that meeting when they are published in the next few days. You will be able to see them via www.bristol.gov.uk/CommitteeMeetingFinder

While on the subject of Castle Park; there is some work planned over the next few weeks to reline the one of the water mains that run through it. This will mean some areas at the west end of the park being fenced off for excavations. This work is part of the scheme that is also causing disruption in

Victoria Street.

Rethinking Parks

www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks

Over the next two years, Nesta, The Heritage Lottery Fund and The Big Lottery Fund will back a small number of pioneering innovations, with a focus on finding the new business models that will enable our parks to thrive for the next century.

They've opened a £1m grant fund to back the best parks innovations, called Rethinking Parks. Through grant funding of up to £100,000 per project and a package of non-financial support, Rethinking Parks will back organisations and partnerships to develop, test, scale and share new approaches to help UK parks thrive.

The website has more information and a report that can be seen at www.nesta.org.uk/node/911

So if you have a bright idea as to how parks can be funded and want to try it out then get in touch with them.

Rob Acton-Campbell

www.twitter.com/RobCrewsHole

Bristol Parks Forum

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

2014 meeting dates: Sat 8th March - Sat 12th April - Sat 28th June - Sat 11 Oct

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In this update: Budget Consultation - Health & Safety Training - Community Festival and Events Fund

Budget Consultation

www.bristol.gov.uk/budget

The committee are in the process of bouncing around emails to finalise our response and it will be submitted next week. Our main concern remains the proposal to implement cuts in 2014/15 rather than in the following year when there might be an opportunity to make some savings with the renewal of the grounds maintenance contracts due in February 2015.

We also object to the closure of public toilets in some parks, especially as the basis for deciding which to close appears to be whether the doors open into the park or on to the street, rather than any assessment of need.

The closing date for the consultation is Monday December 30, 2013, please make your own views known.

Health & Safety Training

We now have some dates for the Health & Safety training that several groups have been asking for. This allows you to carry out works in Bristol's parks & green spaces using hand tools while being covered by BCC insurance.

This is being organised by Emma Bird on behalf of Richard Fletcher.

The following dates have been provisionally booked:

- Friday 24th January
- Thursday 30th January
- Friday 31st January

Please let Emma know who from your group would like to attend and on which dates. Each session holds 10 people and will run from 10am until 3pm.

Emma can be contacted at emma.bird@bristol.gov.uk or phone: 0117 922 3231

Emma works the following hours:

Monday - Wednesday: 8:00am until 2:00pm

Thursday: 8:30am until 12:45pm

Community Festival and Events Fund

Looking for funding to put on a community event in your park next year?

The Council's Community Festival and Events Fund is now open to applications. The closing date is 30th January 2014.

Full details and application forms can be found at www.bristol.gov.uk/node/5421

This will be the last update for 2013, so on behalf of all the BPF committee I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Rob

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