

4 January 2009

Happy New Year!

Alan Barber OBE

Some good news to start the year. Alan has been recognised for his work in campaigning for better parks. The Evening Post report is here: <http://tinyurl.com/7zcowj>

Bristol South Contract

Subject to the final signing of the contract, the Bristol South contract for grounds maintenance will be taken over by Quadron Services Ltd (www.quadronservices.co.uk/environment/index.php) from 1st February. They will replace the current contractor Continental Landscapes. As you may remember BPF through Roland was involved in the procurement of this new contractor and it is hoped that this will be good news for parks and green spaces in the south of Bristol.

We are pleased that the Director of Environment for Quadron, Clive Ivel, will be attending the next BPF meeting on 24 January to talk about Quadron and the contract.

Thoughts on Brandon Hill

I received the following from a member of the new Friends of Brandon Hill and thought I ought to share it with you:

"Brandon Hill was, until the late nineties, the "showcase" garden and park of Bristol, sitting as it does at its heart, the cathedral, one might say, of its parks, and with the historic and world famous Cabot Tower at its summit. Bristol's brides traditionally came there after their weddings to be photographed, and many tourists visited it, as well as countless families and others from across the city and outside. In that respect it was never treated by the council as a "community park", but was supplied with a team of eight gardeners, and full time park keepers as well, to keep it as Bristolians expected to find it. Some of the trees in its arboretum for instance, may not be found at Westonbirt, only at Kew.

Tragically, in the last ten years it has been more or less abandoned by the council, and the brides no longer come every Saturday, though a few still do occasionally. The rose garden has vanished, the drinking fountain is out of order, the borders and rock gardens have been let go, ivy covers the collapsing walls and beds, and many of the trees; and the Victorian iron work which survives is rusting away. The tower is shut and the cascade switched off. Graffiti and vandalism, barbeques and litter, once unheard of there, now prevail, and the one remaining gardener must now concentrate his remarkable energies mostly on cutting the grass, blowing the leaves, and dealing with the mess and damage from the night before, as the closure of the police station and the removal of the park keepers, especially at night, have unfortunately coincided with a more lawless and heavily populated time. The WCs are locked at 3.30pm on weekdays, when the one remaining groundsman leaves. So visitors cannot use them after school or in the evenings, at weekends, or on bank holidays. As their repeated vandalism devours so much of the inadequate budget, this is a particular example of how not having a park keeper is a false and self-defeating economy.

Brandon Hill could not under the new arrangements be redesignated as a "destination park" and

once again given its own team of gardeners, because it could not make huge sums of money as those parks are expected to do - mainly by accommodating thousands of cars for big "events". Anyway, that is not what the magic of Brandon Hill is about, even though it is Bristol's principal destination park in the true sense of the word. And as it is in the centre of Bristol, it will continue to be contracted out under the new plan, thus perpetuating the likelihood of its not being maintained as it should."

Castle Park

Finally a reminder that the Public Inquiry into whether Castle Green/Park is indeed a Green at law did not complete its business in December. It is reconvening on Wednesday January 7th at 10am in the Council House, College Green, in Committee Room 15. Business will be to hear the Applicant's Closing Statement (that's those who believe it is a Green), and any remarks the Inspector may wish to make. Statements from the Opposition - BCC and Deeley Freed - were heard in December.

Rob Acton-Campbell

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BPF Meeting Dates for 2009: 24th January, 16th May, 25th July, 31st October

07 January 2009

Play Areas

Some good news...

Hopefully you will have heard of the Bristol City Council Play Pathfinder programme to improve children's play spaces in Bristol's parks with £2.65m of Government funding. The Council put out a press release about it on 31 Dec which lists the parks that are to be included in each year of the programme.

You can see the press release here: <http://tinyurl.com/a36veg>

Information is also on the BCC website here: <http://tinyurl.com/8c2pje>

Castle Park Town Green Application

Today was the last day of the inquiry – here is Fraser's report:

"The summing up by Daniel Bennett, barrister for the applicant Mary Bannerman, was completed today. Again, Mr Blome, council for the objectors (the council) couldn't make it to work on time and arrived 15 minutes after the proceedings were meant to start at 10:15. No apology given to the other 25 people in the room that managed to get there on time. Dan's summation covered all the points of objection that were raised by the objectors.

It will now come down to the technicalities of points of law and how the inspector interprets the evidence and its relation to previous rulings by the house of lords. Dan did a most excellent job. Likely contentions are whether or not that a car park covered 25% of the area of the park for two years within the 20 years constitutes a break in the use as of right of the park and whether the land

that the park covers was ever really assigned to be parkland at all. That the park has been used for recreation over the last twenty years seems to have been proven. Will the law be proven to be an ass?"

Update on Parks & Green Spaces Strategy

Bristol Parks have prepared a report for the Quality of life scrutiny committee which meets next week. You can see the report here: <http://tinyurl.com/85enff>

We would be interested in feedback from any groups that have been involved in the Area Green Space Plan consultation process so far. Richard Fletcher will also be giving a presentation on this subject to our meeting on 24th January.

Chocolate Factory / Railway Path Consultation - Reminder

The consultation documents, which include a response questionnaire, are on the Council's website at: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/bristolrailwaypathpublicconsultation>

Details of the proposed development (Planning application ref 08/03862/F) can be seen here: <http://tinyurl.com/6jaunt>

More details of the development are also available on the developers website at: <http://www.greenbankchocolatefactory.co.uk/>

You may still be able book a place at the stakeholder workshop on 13 January, but you need to let the organisers know as soon as possible. The invitation letter is here and reply form is here: <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/WorkshopInvite.pdf>

If you going to attend, can you please also let us know?

Publicity for Parks

Bristol Magazine, the free magazine that gets shoved through the door had two mentions of parks

1. a 10 mile walk through several of the cities parks pp52/53 - first website that got a mention was the BPF one.
2. Troopers Hill on PP38/39 on industrial landscapes.

The online version is here: <http://tinyurl.com/7pa2qa>

If you see any publicity for Bristol's Parks that you think other BPF members might find of interest then please let me know and will pass it on.

Finally - Vote for a Park?

London's Mayor Boris has organised a vote to decide which 10 out of 47 London Parks should receive up to £400,000 for a makeover; details are here: <http://www.london.gov.uk/parksvote/>
Personally I much prefer Bristol's plans to allocate funds through a properly thought out strategy

and I'm certainly glad that Bristol's parks aren't being forced to compete against each other for funds. But it is good to know that Boris "believes parks and open spaces are key to the capital's quality of life".

Rob Acton-Campbell

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18 January 2009

BPF Meeting Saturday 24 January 9.30am Windmill Hill City Farm

We will finalise the agenda for Saturday following the meeting between the BPF committee and Bristol Parks which takes place tomorrow. As I have previously mentioned it will include an update on the P&GSS/AGSPs from Richard Fletcher and an item on the award of the new South Bristol Contract. There will also be the latest on the Parks Service Review. I will upload the agenda to the website later in the week and email you the link; if there is an issue you would like to talk to the BPF about on Saturday then please let us know as soon as possible and we will see if we can squeeze it in.

If you are on the Bristol Parks mailing list, you should have received the minutes of the last meeting in your inbox last Monday. If you didn't, you can see them via our website at <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFMin111008.pdf>

Chocolate Factory Site

This will also be on the agenda on Saturday, the consultation documents are here: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/bristolrailwaypathpublicconsultation>

The intention at the meeting will be to agree a BPF response to the issues raised.

Street Tree Pit Survey

The Redland and Cotham Amenity Society have produced a survey form to record 'lost' street trees. They have surveyed streets in Redland and part of Fishponds. The idea is to use evidence on the ground or old maps or photographs to establish where street trees used to stand. In some cases the tree pit might still exist but have been covered over and forgotten. It is to avoid this happening in the future that BCC now leave a tree stump when trees have to be felled.

If you would like to survey the streets in your area you can download a survey form from http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/TreePitSurvey_BlankForm.pdf. Please email info@bristolparksforum.org.uk to let us know which streets or area you intend to survey so we can check they have not already been covered. We will also then let you know where to send the completed forms.

More information about Trees in Bristol and the Bristol Tree Forum is at <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/trees.htm>

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20 January 2009

BPF Meeting Saturday 24 January 9.30am Windmill Hill City Farm

The agenda for Saturday is now on the website at:

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFagenda240109.pdf

If you are on Bristol Parks' contact list for Park Groups you should also receive a copy by email tomorrow (Wednesday). You may also receive a copy by post! It is important that Park Groups can be contacted by Bristol Parks so if your group does not receive a copy please email catherine.newman@bristol.gov.uk and give her your details. Please also email Catherine if you receive a copy by post but are happy to have just the email version so that we can avoid unnecessary postal charges. Catherine will also be at the meeting on Saturday.

The email list I use for these emails is separate to the Bristol Parks list.

Grove Wood update and special walk (Sun 25 Jan 2pm)

This is on the agenda for Saturday but this is advance notice of an event on Sunday from Steve, Chair of the Stuff Mills Action Group:

"There has been lots going on in Grove Wood in the last few days and we can expect further developments in the coming days.

The landowner has put up the ugly 'temporary' fencing again to try to stop people from using the upper footpath. This is potentially very dangerous because we know that he has been asked by the Council to clear the lower footpath of fallen trees and obstructions. Chainsaws and walkers will make a dangerous combination. A caring and sensible landowner would have encouraged the top path to be used while the lower footpath was being cleared.

He has also engaged a group of men to do some work. At first we thought they were going to clear away all of the debris that was dumped next to the river last year, but all they seem to have done is put a load of large logs against the fence to try to prop it up. We asked, through the Council, that the removal of the debris was done sensitively because kingfishers have tried to nest there and we know otters have been resting there too. If you look at what has been done, you wouldn't really describe it as being very professional.

This makes us even more concerned about who is going to clear the fallen trees along the footpath. We really hope that the landowner has employed some qualified tree surgeons and that he will get proper advice regarding the rare bats that roost in two of the trees.

We feel that the way the work is being carried out is once again making Grove Wood a dangerous and intimidating place to visit and we have had reports of walkers being harassed.

However, we do not think we should be bullied off land that has been enjoyed for generations. That is why we are organising a walk through Grove Wood on Sunday 25th January at 2pm, starting at Snuff Mills car park. We will walk through the woods to assert our right to enjoy it as we have always done. Our walk will of course be legal and peaceful.

Please join us and pass this email on to others who might like to come.

You can keep up to date with developments by visiting our blog: <http://snuffmills.blogspot.com/>
Please post your experiences of walking through the wood there too.

These developments make it even more important that we get Grove Wood registered as a Town Green. Already people are sending in evidence forms. Don't forget to do yours. It can be downloaded via the links below;

In Word: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/SnuffMillsTGform.doc

In pdf: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/SnuffMillsTGform.pdf

Finally, if you feel you have been intimidated or harassed please email us and we will pass your report on to the right person in Bristol City Council. If you witness trees being felled that are not blocking the footpath or are not marked with an orange mark, try to take a photo or email us details and we will chase this up too.

Together we can save Grove Wood!"

Community Events organised by Park Groups

Following the departure of Sally Oldfield, Friends of Troopers Hill have been having discussions with Bristol Parks and the Parks Events Officer about how our events should be organised and licensed in the future. While Bristol Parks wish to encourage groups to hold events to promote their parks the BCC bureaucracy (not to mention charges) seems to be acting to discourage them.

It is important that events are run safely and that arrangements are agreed with the CPM but it seems to us that the process required for Park Groups to hold events on their own parks could be simplified and that this would make them more likely to happen. I would be interested to hear the experiences of any other groups who have held events. Did you get a formal licence, were you charged for a licence, how did you deal with insurance? Or have you taken one look at the form and given up?

Mancroft Park

Some good news see the press release here: <http://tinyurl.com/7njlxz>

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26 January 2009

Hi,

Town Green Applications Meeting

As Fraser mentioned on Saturday he is planning to hold a meeting on at 7pm on Thursday 5th February to discuss Town Green applications. This will be a chance to for anyone thinking of making an application in the future to learn from those who have already been through the process. If you are interested in going along please email info@bristolparksforum.org.uk Fraser will confirm the details and venue once he has an idea of how many people are likely to attend.

Saturday's BPF meeting.

The minutes of the meeting are being written up by Catherine at Bristol Parks and will be issued in due course. In the meantime here are some notes of the important issues that were raised:

Area Green Space Plans

The important news is that the dates for the public consultation on the AGSPs have been put back to the Autumn. However, Richard Fletcher and his team are still intending to complete the stakeholder (eg park groups) consultation phase for all 14 Neighbourhood Partnership areas by April. The latest programme and contact names for each area are here:

<http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/AGSPprogJan09.pdf>

Richard gave a review of the process so far with some excellent computer animations of how spaces could be transformed. Concerns were raised about the situation in Knowle West where the AGSP consultation is being absorbed into the Knowle West Regeneration consultation. Also there was a comment about all the green spaces that are not covered by the AGSP process. The AGSP process should cover all publicly accessible green space which is owned by BCC. If you know of areas that aren't covered but should be then please let us know and the BPF will formally ask for them to be added. The areas covered by AGSP are shown on the maps on this page:

<http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/parks.htm>

Privately owned green space can be submitted under the BDF call for site process, although this has formally closed, the BDF may still consider areas if they are submitted in the next couple of weeks. See <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/bdf.htm>

South Bristol Contract

Clive Ivil of Quadron (www.quadronservices.co.uk/environment/index.php) gave a very upbeat presentation. Time will tell whether Quadron are able to live up to Clive's promises and meet the standards included in the contract, but the very fact that they came to the meeting is encouraging.

Grounds Maintenance Contracts

Quadron's South Bristol contract starts on 1 Feb. Two of the other four areas will be covered by in house teams from April. The other area (central) remains with Continental Landscapes until at least Jan 2010. BCC will decide shortly whether this contract will be re-tendered on the same basis as the south contract or brought in house. A maps of the areas can be seen here <http://tinyurl.com/af4pt5>

Parks Review

Peter Wilkinson's boss, Richard Mond, has unfortunately lost out in the review of second tier management. Richard is leaving the Council and Peter now reports to Steve Moore within Neighbourhoods. The review of Peter's level of management will take place over the next few weeks. Also in the next few weeks appointments will start to be made to the new Parks Structure, which is much as Peter described it at our last meeting.

Chocolate Factory Site

The meeting agreed to support the position adopted by the Save the Railway Path group. The BPF submission can be seen here: <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFRailwayPathResponse.pdf>
There is still time to make individual responses to the consultation, it closes on 30 Jan.
See <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/bristolrailwaypathpublicconsultation>

Ashton Vale

The Ashton Vale Heritage Group gave an excellent presentation and the meeting agreed to support their position in trying protect the area of wetland, which is clearly of value for wildlife, from development. More information at <http://www.ashtonvaleheritage.co.uk/>

Grove Woods

Dave spoke about the latest situation and the walk planned for the next day. Approximately 150 people joined the walk. The Evening Post report can be seen here: <http://tinyurl.com/b49ut5>
More information at <http://snuffmills.blogspot.com/>

Tree Strategy

Hugh urged more groups to get involved with the Tree Forum, details here: <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/trees.htm>

Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge

This is a new group that has recently been established and copies their first news booklet were available at the meeting.

Questions to Political Parties

The BPF intends to put a series of questions to all four political parties prior to the local election in June to establish their views on parks & green spaces. Please email any suggested questions, preferably questions requiring yes/no answers to info@bristolparksforum.org.uk over the next couple of weeks.

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