

14 July 2009

BPF Meeting Sat 25th July 9.30am

The BPF committee have a meeting with Parks on Monday 20th July so the Agenda for the Saturday meeting will be finalised after that. If you have anything that you would like be included or anything you wish to discuss at the Forum please let us know. Fraser has met with our new CDO, Raquib Khandker, and one of the items that they discussed was the level of support from Bristol Parks both for the Forum and for Park Groups so this will be one of the items.

We may also try to fit in something on events, we have received an email from Friends of Greville Smyth about their experiences of dealing with the events team, if any one else has had experience this year we would be pleased to hear your views.

Castle Park Town Green Application

The Castle Park Town Green application is to be considered by the Public Rights of Way and Greens Committee; here is some information we have been sent by Lucy Fleming, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, about the forthcoming meeting:

1. The meeting will now take place at 2pm on Monday 3rd August. This is because Members want Vivian Chapman QC to be present so they can ask him about his recommendation that the Town Green application be refused.

The meeting will also be webcast, so will be available to view on the City Council's website after the meeting.

2. The Head of Legal Services, Stephen McNamara, will be available from 1pm on 3rd August to meet members of the public who wish to ask him any questions about the application. If you would like to attend this meeting, please let me know.

3. Any public forum statements submitted for the last meeting won't automatically be re-circulated for the meeting on 3rd August, so if you want the same statement to be taken into consideration please let me know and I will ensure that it's included.

Ashton Vale

You might have seen a mention in the local press about some plans for a football stadium in Ashton Vale.

The planning application is now on the BCC website. As well as seeking full planning permission for the stadium itself, the application also seeks outline permission for two areas of housing - one on what was part of Alderman Moores Allotments and one on Ashton Vale Fields Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). The stadium itself is on an old landfill site which is part of the Greenbelt and a 'wildlife network site'.

As far as the Ashton Vale Fields SNCI site is concerned approval of the current application would allow enabling work to be carried out for the housing. The plan is for the ground levels in the northern part of the SNCI to be lowered by approximately 0.8m and for the land in the southern half of the site to be raised by a similar amount. The platform created in the southern half of the site would be used for housing once full planning approval was given. Prior to work on the housing starting it is proposed to grass seed it. The northern half of the site is to be used for flood retention and as a wildlife area. So over 50% of the SNCI would be permanently destroyed and then used for housing, while the remainder will be destroyed when the level is reduced but then reinstated. Of course the claim is that the reinstated area would result in a better habitat than that currently existing with more areas of permanent wetland and a management plan to ensure it is properly maintained. There is also talk of fencing it off to prevent access from people and pets so as to protect the wildlife. This is known as mitigation. The whole area is of course also Greenbelt.

Of course since neither the RSS nor the BDF have yet been approved the planning application should be considered using the current policies as set out in the Local Plan (see below). The policy NE5 refers specifically to the protection of SNCIs states that 'development which would harm the substantive nature conservation value of sites of citywide importance will not be permitted, except where the significance of the site for nature conservation is outweighed by the importance of the development'. Some people might consider that the stadium is of sufficient importance to Bristol to justify the destruction of the SNCI. However, as can be seen from the plans I've described above the destruction of the SNCI seems to be for housing not for the stadium.

There is a link to the planning application on the BCC website here: <http://tinyurl.com/ku4e5w> and the Ecology report can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/mj3fmx> . No doubt the Council will follow the proper planning procedures to decide whether the permission for the stadium and the housing should be granted; although some of our Council Leaders do seem to have jumped the gun by saying that the stadium will be built even before the application has been considered.

Maps Showing SNCIs etc.

I have recently found an on-line map to show (amongst other things) Green Belt Land, SNCIs and Wildlife Network sites. It is available as part of the current Bristol Local Plan which can be found via the national planning portal at www.planningportal.gov.uk

You need to click on local information on the left, select Bristol as your local authority and then 'view the development plan'. If you then click on the 'Proposals Map' link on the left hand side a map will open in a separate window. You can then tick the features you want displayed and refresh the map to see where they are. You can then zoom in and move around the map.

The Bristol Local Plan is the document that will be replaced by the Bristol Development Framework in due course. However, until the BDF is adopted most of it is still valid and is a 'material consideration' in planning terms.

Ashton Court 50 Years in Council Ownership

If you get the Evening Post you will have seen a familiar face on the front page of the 'Bristol Times' insert. There is a four page article about the forthcoming 50-years celebrations at Ashton Court featuring Peter Wilkinson.

Bat Walk at Arnos Vale Cemetery

Some of the most enjoyable Nature in the City events that Sally Oldfield organised were the bat walks, though on Troopers Hill the bats all managed to hide. I have always thought that a good place to see bats would be Arnos Vale Cemetery, so I was pleased to receive information about this event:

A night time Bat Walk is being held at Arnos Vale on Friday 24th July with our resident bat expert James Field.

James is promising a magical summer evening's discovery walk. 'I will be giving an illustrated educational talk about some of our British bats with a discussion about how to identify them, what they eat, where they sleep and how we can help protect them for our future generations to enjoy. This walk will give people a chance to find out more about one of the most threatened yet fascinating species in the UK today. This is very much a family event being really educational and fun for everyone – no matter what the age.'

Come along and discover for yourself the magic of walking through the grounds of Arnos Vale at dusk and discovering our resident bats as they dart around the twilight sky in search of their supper!

By using bat detectors James can pinpoint the bats so there could be observational opportunities to spot one or two different bats and an opportunity to learn all sorts of interesting bat facts. For instance... did you know that a common pipistrelle bat has a huge appetite and can devour up to 3000 insects in just one evening, mostly by feeding in mid-air? Did you know that during the summer months young bats will start to fly at only three weeks old and some of these young bats are less than an inch long?

The walk will last about an hour and a half and is on a strictly first come first served basis. Places must be booked in advance. It costs only £3 per adult and £1.50 for children (however donations are also welcome!) with proceeds going towards the Arnos Vale restoration fund. Anyone interested in taking part should wear warm clothing, sensible footwear and bring a torch. No dogs will be allowed on the Bat Walk.

For details of the time and meeting place and to ensure your place on this fabulous walk is confirmed please call Mary Wood on 0117 9721079 (evenings or weekends) or email marywood@talktalk.net.

Rob Acton-Campbell

BPF

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

BPF Meeting Dates: 25th July, 31st October

The Big Lunch 19th July www.thebiglunch.com

Love Parks Week 25th July to 2nd August www.loveparksweek.org.uk

23 July 2009

Bristol Parks Forum - Saturday 25th July 9.30am

The agenda for Saturday can now be seen here:

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFAgenda25July2009.pdf

If you are on Bristol Parks mailing list should have received a copy already from Catherine.

Green Flag Awards www.greenflagaward.org.uk

This year's awards were announced this week. I am pleased to say Bristol now has six green flag sites.

Troopers Hill LNR and the Downs have both kept the award for a third year. Blaise Castle Estate and Queens Square are second time winners, while new for this year are Ashton Court and St Pauls Park.

This is a great achievement, especially since the judging was just after the Parks reorganisation. I think everyone involved at Bristol Parks should be congratulated. The flags were presented at an awards ceremony in Bournemouth yesterday and you can see Bristol's representatives with one of the flags here: www.troopers-hill.org.uk/news/gf2010.JPG

Friends of Troopers Hill have some very exciting plans for displaying the Troopers Hill Green Flag; we will tell you about it on Saturday.

100 years of Dame Emily Park

There is an event on Sunday 6th September from 12-5pm in Dame Emily Park, Southville.

The event is funded by Dame Emily Park Project (DEPP) and is supported by Friends of Bristol South Swimming Pool (FOBS) as well as other local organisations including the South Bank Club, Salvation Army etc. The event is to celebrate the 100year anniversary of the park opening to the public and will feature music, dance demos, sporting activities, a market of local organisations arts and crafts, bbq, as well as activities held in the pool and an open day.

Harriet Martin who is organising the event says:

'I am very keen to get organisations such as the Bristol Parks Forum involved with the event as I want to concentrate on the community side of Bristol, and the importance of parks in bonding neighbourhoods and communities together. It would be great if you could come to the event and perhaps hold a market stall?'

If you would like to get involved with the event, either through helping with a BPF stall or by getting your group involved please let us know.

Exhibition at the CREATE Centre

I am pleased to pass on an invitation to all BPF members to go along to the preview evening on Friday 31st July in the CREATE Centre Gallery 6-9 pm for a photographic exhibition entitled 'William A. Bolton – Visions of the Natural World'.

The exhibition will then run through until the 31st August 2009 and will be open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. The work on show will take the form of large format photographic prints drawn from a new collection of work inspired by the British rural landscape and the wildlife therein.

With an academic and professional background in wildlife and conservation William has managed to combine these interests with stills photography and the moving image. He works as a wildlife camera specialist for the BBC Natural History Unit in Bristol on the BBC2 programmes Springwatch and Autumnwatch. It is William's hope that the images inspire and motivate the viewer to engage with their local environment and appreciate the biodiversity it contains and this ties in neatly to the ethics and work of the CREATE Centre where the exhibition is on display.

A chance to see a wonderful garden and help a worthy cause...

At 28 Kensington Rd, St George there is a wonderful garden, the smallest in the National Garden Scheme. It has featured in a number of television programmes, articles in magazines and national newspapers.

You can find out more about the garden and its owners, Alan and Grenville, on <http://www.victorianhousegarden.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/>.

Alan's sister recently died after being lovingly cared for at St. Peter's Hospice at Brentry, Bristol. Alan and Grenville wish to support the work of the hospice by opening their garden for private, pre-booked viewings on 3 successive Saturdays from 25th July from 1pm to 5pm. The entrance fee of £3.50 per person and any additional donations you may wish to make will go to St Peter's Hospice <http://www.stpetershospice.org.uk/>.

To arrange to see the garden please either email Grenville at victorianhouse@blueyonder.co.uk or telephone him on 0117 949 6788.

Windmill Hill City Farm

You may well have seen the publicity about the funding problems at the venue for our meeting on Saturday. There are more details at www.windmillhillcityfarm.org.uk/ including information on how you can help.

Rob Acton-Campbell
BPF

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

BPF Meeting Dates: 25th July, 31st October

Love Parks Week 25th July to 2nd August www.loveparksweek.org.uk

30 July 2009

BPF Sat 25 July 2009

As usual Catherine will be producing the minutes from Saturday but here are some of the main points from a very full meeting. Below this section is some news about upcoming events that you might find interesting.

Parks Reorganisation & Budget - Peter Wilkinson

The two CPO vacancies have now been filled with Gerry Cole having started in the North area a couple of weeks ago and Miles Harris due to take up his post in the Central Area next week. The Woodland & Wildlife Officer should be appointed soon. Parks will also be employing 5 apprentices this year who will be working towards their NVQs over a 3-year period.

The delay to the AGSP and the loss of a contract for schools grounds maintenance has led to the need for some savings from other parts of the budget. Peter said that there should be little impact on frontline staff but there would be a reduction in the money available for 'lifting the crown' of trees meaning that no more would be done this financial year. Parks were in discussion with the council's Infrastructure Development Board to try and cover the increase in P&GSS costs which have been caused by the delay to the BDF process.

Gary Hopkins added that there were plans to introduce a further 9 Park Keepers and that a review was underway of the working hours of Parks staff to see if more evening cover could be provided.

Allotments

Peter mentioned the new Allotment Strategy which it is hoped will build on the previous one. He noted that it had followed the P&GSS in establishing a 'life-cycle' fund. The allotment strategy will be considered by the cabinet tomorrow (Thurs) and can be seen here: <http://tinyurl.com/lubsut>

There was then some discussion about whether parts of parks should be given over to allotments or community food growing schemes. It was pointed out that although allotments remain as green areas they do not allow public access so the area of publicly accessible space would be reduced. Allotment holders also like to surround themselves with ugly palisade fencing.

Events

Peter presented a paper produced by Jennifer Crook setting out some actions aimed at improving the system to make it easier to hold community events in Parks. There are a lot of different issues to be considered and it is hoped to cover this subject in more detail at the next BPF meeting.

AGSP Public Consultation

This will happen Jan-Mar 2010 and will not be delayed any further even if the BDF is further delayed. There will be a BPF conference to review all 14 Area Green Space Plans on SATURDAY 16 JANUARY 2010.

Other sessions will be held in each of the Neighbourhood Partnership areas to discuss the individual plans and there will also be consultation via the website.

Chocolate Factory / Castle Park

Gary Hopkins reported that the further consultation on the use of Parks land for access to the 'cycle houses' would take place within a month or so. Gary also stated that the developers for Castle Park had been asked to reduce the size of their development. He said that the intention was to decide what was needed in the park first and then to fit the development to the park not the other way around. The Rights of Way and Greens Committee meeting to consider the Town Green application is on Monday 3rd August at 2pm and will be webcast. There was an article about this in the Evening Post today, it can be seen here: <http://tinyurl.com/n6z5fz>

New Community Development Officer

Raquib Khander introduced himself and presented a paper that he has been developing with Fraser setting out the support that Bristol Parks will provide to the BPF and to Park Groups. Raquib pointed out that the CPOs would provide the day to day contact with Park Groups and that his role was more one of setting an overall strategy and helping to encourage new groups.

Save Our Green Spaces / Ashton Vale SSCI www.saveourgreenspaces.org

The meeting agreed that Fraser should issue statements on behalf of the BPF stating our opposition to building on Greenbelt land and also to the destruction of the Ashton Vale SSCI for the building of housing as proposed by the planning application for the football stadium.

BDF

Alison gave an update on this process which will eventually replace the 1997 local plan. Full details are at www.bristol.gov.uk/bdf

During discussions on this there was a mention that planners often seem to forget about pedestrians in all the excitement about cycling city schemes and the need to deal with cars. This was a prompt for a mention of www.livingstreets.org.uk which has recently held a meeting in Bristol to start a local group.

Richard Smith MBE

Peter Wilkinson and Gary Hopkins attended the funeral of Richard Smith last week. As chairman of the Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery and later of the Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust Richard was the driving force behind the successful campaign to save the cemetery from development. As a result of his work and that of everyone else involved Arnos Vale is now protected as a very special green space for everyone to enjoy. Fraser was asked to write to the Friends Group on behalf of the Forum to express our condolences and our appreciation of Richard's work to protect green space in Bristol. There is a chance to experience Arnos Vale on a bat walk on 7th August - see below. Find out more at www.arnosvalefriends.org.uk

Invasive Weed Pulling at Malago Manor Woods Valley LNR 4th August

The Avon Invasive Weed Forum and Manor Woods Valley Conservation Group are arranging an invasive weed pulling day at the Malago at Manor Woods on Tuesday 4th August. They would love to have some local volunteers to come along on the day so please pass on to anyone who you think may be interested.

They will be tackling an invasive weed called Himalayan Balsam, which is in abundance along the Malago. This is a problem because it out-competes native

plants, and also causes erosion of river banks.

Halt the invasion! - If you would like to get involved in the weed pulling event please go along. All are welcome.

Date: Tuesday 4th August 2009

Time: 10am

At: River Malago, Manor Woods Valley LNR,
Off of St Peters Rise, Bishopsworth, Bristol.

Please wear long sleeves and trousers, that you won't mind getting dirty and your Wellington boots or other sturdy footwear. They will supply gloves. Please bring your own packed lunch and a drink. For more information call Victoria Freke on 01278 484421 Email: info@aiwf.org.uk or visit the website at www.aiwf.org.uk

Troopers Hill goes to Trafalgar Square

On Tuesday 4th August at 5 am, Helen Gillard, Secretary to the Friends of Troopers Hill (FOTH), will be taking her place on The Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square as part of Antony Gormley's One & Other project. When she does so, she will be taking Troopers Hill's Green Flag with her to display.

Antony Gormley, previously best known for his Angel of the North sculpture, conceived the idea of having a succession of real people take their place on the plinth for one hour each and for a total of 100 days. Helen was chosen as one of the 2400 successful applicants out of almost 30,000 that have so far applied. Helen was thrilled to be picked.

As well as promoting the achievement of a third green flag, Helen will devote the hour on the plinth to a yoga practice devised with the advice of yoga instructor Sally Davies. She will also be displaying FOTH's unique cloth, which was specially created for them by children at Air Balloon Hill Junior school in 2005.

The Friends are, of course, delighted that the Local Nature Reserve that they care so passionately about will be featured in such a prestigious event.

In addition to being featured on SkyArts on Friday evenings at 7 pm, the plinth is watched live by viewers around the world on the project website, <http://www.oneandother.co.uk>

So set you alarms for Tuesday morning!

Health and Safety for Groups working in Parks

Bristol Parks have produced a Health and Safety Pack to allow Parks Groups to carry out tasks in parks while being covered by Bristol City Council's insurance and without the need for your CPO or APM to be there.

In order to use the pack you need to attend a training course. This may seem like a lot of hassle to do a bit of pruning or whatever, but if you want to get other people involved then there needs to be some control to make sure everyone is safe. Once you have done the course it is relatively easy to organise activities in your park. There only needs to be one person on each work session who has been on the course but if several people from your group are qualified you can take it in turns to lead. We have been using the system at monthly work parties on Troopers Hill for over two years so if you have any questions please get in touch.

A health and safety course is being held on 12th August, 1-5pm at the Create Centre. There are a few spaces available, if you or a member of your group would like to attend, please let Catherine know - catherine.newman@bristol.gov.uk There are more details in this letter from Catherine: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/H&Sletter.pdf

Arnos Vale Bat Walk

Due to the popularity and success of the Bat Walk held on 24th July another night time Bat Walk is being held at Arnos Vale on Friday 7th August.

The walk will last about an hour and a half and is on a strictly first come first served basis. Places must be booked in advance. It costs only £3 per adult and £1.50 for children (however donations are also welcome!) with proceeds going towards the Arnos Vale restoration fund. Anyone interested in taking part should wear warm clothing, sensible footwear and bring a torch. No dogs will be allowed on the Bat Walk.

For details of the time and meeting place and to ensure your place on this fabulous walk is confirmed please call Mary Wood on 0117 9721079 (evenings or weekends) or email marywood@talktalk.net.

Rob Acton-Campbell
BPF

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

BPF Meeting Dates: 31st October 2009, 16th January 2010

Love Parks Week 25th July to 2nd August www.loveparksweek.org.uk