

05 July 2011 - No 69

In this update:

Agenda for BPF Meeting 16 July - Cross Party Meetings - Love Parks Week 23-31 July - July in Bristol's Parks - The Bench 67 - BPF Online Directory

BPF Meeting 16 July 9.30am Windmill Hill City Farm

The agenda for our next meeting is now on the website at:

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFAgenda160711.pdf

We might be able to squeeze some more items into AOB, but please let us know in advance if there is anything you want to mention so that we can tweak the timings as necessary.

Cross Party Meetings on P&GSS

You will see from the agenda that we will be giving an update on these meetings at our meeting on 16 July. The BPF committee were invited to send representatives along and we have attended the first few sessions. The intention is that other groups and Council Officers will be invited where they have expertise in a particular aspect.

Love Parks Week 23-31 July 2011

www.loveparksweek.org.uk

A reminder that if you are organising an event from 23-31 July please enter the event details onto the Love Parks Week website. By doing so you will benefit from both Bristol's promotion and the national promotion that Green Space who organise the event are planning. You can see the listing of events for Bristol at <http://tinyurl.com/LoveParksBristol> and there is also information at www.bristol.gov.uk/parks or follow the links from our website.

July in Bristol's Parks

There are a few events in July that I would particularly like to mention:

Wild River Festival 17th - 28th July 2011

Join the Avon Frome Partnership, the South Gloucestershire Wildways Project, Bristol Wild City Project and local wildlife conservation partners for a 2 week programme of events along the River Avon at Eastwood Farm and Conham River Park celebrating the wildlife, heritage and landscape of the beautiful Avon Valley.

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/RiverFestival.pdf

Songs for Summer 22nd July Eastville Park

A free live performance by the Gasworks Choir www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/EastvilleChoir.pdf

Tai Chi on the Hill 17th July Troopers Hill

Join the Bristol School of Tai Chi for a spectacular demonstration and a 1 hour introductory class with gentle exercise for all ages. Afterwards join us for a picnic on the hill.

No need to book - just turn up. To protect the wildlife and grassland, please no BBQs.

www.troopers-hill.org.uk

Frome Valley Walk Thursday 28th July

This is the second of a series of three walks in the Frome Valley (sorry this was too late for the first one).

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/FromeValleyWalks.pdf

The Bench 67 Latest News from GreenSpace

The latest edition of 'The Bench' which of course features Love Parks Week can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/bench67>

BPF Online Directory www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/directory.htm

It is now over a year since I added the directory page to the website listing Park Groups and their contact details. Can you please check that the details for your group are up to date and let me know of any changes?

Rob Acton-Campbell

BPF

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

Meeting dates: 16 July & 15 October

Festival of Nature 18 & 19 June

Love Parks Week 23-31 July 2011

12 July 2011 - No 70

In this update:

BPF Meeting this Saturday - Open Public Services White Paper - Park Groups Websites - Bristol City Council Website - Making a Difference - Recent research and reports

BPF Meeting this Saturday
16 July 9.30am at Windmill Hill City Farm

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFAgenda160711.pdf

In addition to the items on the agenda there will be a short update on Knowle West and a discussion about hay cuts, at least one of which seems to have happened too early this year due to a lack of control by Bristol Parks over their contractor.

Open Public Services White Paper

You may have seen coverage of this yesterday. The White Paper can be seen at www.openpublicservices.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

"We will consult on the scope for enabling neighbourhood councils (i.e. parish, town and community councils) to take greater control over local services. This will focus on the local public realm, leisure opportunities and community activity and could include: street improvements, parking and traffic restrictions; local libraries; local museums and arts; sports, local parks and leisure facilities; licensing of certain premises other than for the provision of alcohol; minor bye-laws and lower-level anti-social controls; and community grants."

So could the Neighbourhood Partnerships become Neighbourhood Councils in the future? Whatever happens it seems a fair bet that Neighbourhood Partnerships are going to get more power in the future rather than less.

The White Paper is also a consultation document, so there is a chance on the website to have your say.

New Park Group Websites

Following my request for any updates to the BPF Online Directory in the last update; Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC) wrote to say they now have their own website at www.franc.org.uk - it is well worth a look.

Friends of South Purdown also wrote with details of their new site at <http://friendsofsouthpurdown.weebly.com/> where they also have a link to their e-petition and facebook group.

Meanwhile at Friends of Troopers Hill we have created our own facebook page, see

<http://tinyurl.com/FoTH-fb>

While on the subject of websites, the Greater Fishponds NP has a good one featuring the parks in their area and others close by; it includes photos and videos
www.greaterbristol.com/fishponds/pages/parks.html

Bristol City Council Website www.bristol.gov.uk/parks

Kerry Morgan has sent me news of some updates to the Parks website.

There is a new version of the 'What's On' guide for the destination parks at
www.bristol.gov.uk/parklife

There are also two new sections:

Goats on the Gorge - www.bristol.gov.uk/gorgegoats

Deckchair hire - www.bristol.gov.uk/deckchairs

These and other 'redirectors' can be found at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/redirectors.pdf

The BCC website is due for a major upgrade at the end of the month.

Making a Difference

A good news story about something that came about through a Neighbourhood Partnership meeting, featuring Steve England of the Stoke Park Action Group was in the Evening Post on Friday and can be seen here: <http://tinyurl.com/6e5d4y6>

Recent research and reports

The following may be of interest to you:

1. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation have released 'Community organisations controlling assets: a better understanding' which highlights the challenges facing community organisations who wish to own or manage assets

www.jrf.org.uk/publications/community-organisations-controlling-assets

2. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has also been running a series of seminars on Community Assets. Although it looks like these have all taken place now, you can access presentations and reports from the seminars.

www.jrf.org.uk/events/community-assets-seminar-series

3. Natural England have published the annual report from the 2010-2011 Monitor and Engagement

with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey.

<http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/NECR083>

[Thanks to Sarah at the Birmingham Open Spaces Forum for forwarding the above via the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces]

Rob Acton-Campbell

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www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

Meeting dates: 16 July & 15 October

Love Parks Week 23-31 July 2011 - <http://tinyurl.com/LoveParksBristol>

17 July 2011 - No 71

In this update:

BPF Meeting - Additions to P&GSS Land - Cross Party Working Group - Castle Park - Wild City - Meadow Cuts - Parks (ongoing) Reorganisation - Bristol Festival of Nature - Development Consultations - Town Greens - Contacting & Joining BPF

BPF Meeting

There were some lively moments at the meeting! The official minutes will be produced as usual by Catherine and I will send a link and post them on the website once they are complete. The sections below include some of the main points that were covered from my notes but are not official minutes.

Additions to P&GSS Land

Gary Hopkins outlined the current position on the three sites that have been mentioned as being added to 'Parks' land.

Stoke Park - the final acquisition by BCC is being delayed by the developers who currently own the site. [Note following the meeting Steve England has raised concerns, that we have passed on to Gary, about the fact that this means that the site is not currently being maintained by anyone. Steve got in the paper again last week - see <http://tinyurl.com/5r9w4j9>]

Grove Wood - Negotiations on purchase are awaiting the outcome of the Town Green Application.

Stoke Lodge - The aim is to move this from 'Education' to 'Parks'. There is a risk that if the school currently using the land becomes an Academy then BCC may have to lease the land to the school on a 125 year lease. There is also an issue at Stoke Lodge over TPOs. Council policy is currently not to put TPOs on their own trees, this is a potential problem if the land moves out of Council control as might happen at Stoke Lodge.

P&GSS Cross Party Working Group

Cllrs Ron Stone and Gary Hopkins were at the meeting to give an update on the work of the Working Group, Hugh commented on the BPF involvement. The main messages were:

The group has so far held six meetings, these have all been attended by BPF committee members; There is an intention for the group to produce a report on their progress for the Full Council meeting in September;

The group is meeting every week and will increase this to twice a week to catch up when weeks are lost due to holidays;

If conclusions can be reached by September this would help the BDF team working on the next stage of the Site Allocations documents but the group will take as much time as it needs and this may not be possible;

Avon Wildlife Trust will be invited to take part in a meeting to discuss the SSCI sites;

The BPF will take part in meetings discussing general principles and the strategy but will not take part in discussions about individual sites.

The meeting on Saturday agreed to support a motion that sites that were withdrawn from the disposal process by Cabinet in December should stay withdrawn and should be protected for at least the next 20 years.

It was of course a commitment from the then Labour administration that "no more land will be sold than that identified in the next stage of the strategy consultation as 'low recreation value' land." that was one of the conditions of the BPF supporting the strategy in 2008 (see www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFstatement300108.pdf) Any P&GSS land not listed for disposal should therefore be protected for at least the next 20 years; which brings us on to Castle Park...

Castle Park

This was put on the agenda to raise BPF members awareness of the fact that revised proposals are likely to be put forward soon for redevelopment at the St Mary Le Port end of Castle Park.

It had been reported that Cllr Simon Cook had told the Cabot & Clifton NP meeting "The improvement of Castle Park is dependent on, and won't happen without, the development at St Mary le Port". This goes against the principles of the P&GSS.

The meeting reiterated the BPF opposition to any development on Castle Park. No disposals at Castle Park were listed in the AGSP consultations and the NP is below the P&GSS standard for quantity of green space (despite the fact that well known green spaces such as Millennium Square and other areas around the Docks are included in the P&GSS calculation). The P&GSS map for the area can be seen by following the links from www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy The NP area also includes the part of the Clifton Downs south-east of Bridge Valley Rd.

It was also noted that the 'depot' area at the south east corner of the park is included as part of Castle Park under the P&GSS, as are depots in other parks.

Some of those at the meeting wanted more discussion on this subject. It was eventually decided that a separate BPF meeting would be held once any proposals are published. I will let you know dates

for that via these updates.

Wild City

Paula Spiers gave a well received presentation on the Wild City Project and the launch event that happened last week.

More details including the map of the sites and the programme for the Wild River Festival which runs for the next two weeks are at www.bristol.gov.uk/wildcity

It was pointed out that publicity for events such as the River Festival and things such as available grant applications are not being publicised early enough for groups to include them in Newsletters etc. This is something I have also raised with Parks in the past and I will continue to push for improvements on. I am hoping that when the new BCC websites come online later in the month it will have a better events listing section that might help with this.

Hay / Wild Flower Meadow Cuts

This was a late addition to the agenda following wild flower meadows being cut too early at Old Sneed Park and Badock's Wood. It was also reported that the work had been done without notice being given to park users and that the quality of the work was poor.

Pete Clark apologised on behalf of Parks and Estates and explained that the wrong information had been included in the tender documents for the hay cut contract. He reported that all hay cuts in the east and north & east areas had been stopped while the timings were reviewed. He acknowledged that communication lines need to be improved. In contrast Quadron were complemented on their consultation with on the Northern Slopes over the timing of hay cuts.

Tracey Morgan reiterated that Parks would try to learn from where things had gone right. Tracey also pointed out that they are restricted on how contracts are let by the Council's procurement processes.

It was noted that similar problems had occurred a few years ago so that lessons had obviously not been learnt from then (or had been forgotten with staff moving on).

Parks (ongoing) Reorganisation

Tracey Morgan (Service Director) outlined the current structure and issued handouts with names and phone numbers, I hope to get this on the website soon.

The main changes from our last meeting are that Richard Fletcher has been appointed as 'Neighbourhood Engagement Manager' and Richard Stranson (who has come from the private sector) has been appointed as 'Group Maintenance Manager'. Along with Richard Bevan (Estates, Play and Cems & Crems) and Richard Ennion (Horticultural Services) they report to Pam Jones, who in turn reports to Tracey.

Richard Stranson starts on 25th July. Reporting to Richard S will be Chris Hammond who is now APM for South and Central assisted by Miles Harris and Jamie Roberts who is APM for North & East assisted by Jerry Cole. Pete Clark will act as assistant to Richard S.

Richard Fletcher has 9 people in his team and is aiming to have a structure in place by September. His team will become the main link for park groups and Neighbourhood Partnerships to Parks. Though Tracey stressed that there was nothing to stop groups talking directly to APMs where that was appropriate. It is likely that each member of the team will cover a geographical area. The team includes Richard Gwyn and Rob McGovern who are currently working with NPs to put together Investment Plans as part of the AGSP process.

Bristol Festival of Nature

My feeling from the meeting from those groups that attended was that they thought it was worth while attending. There was some suggestion that we needed more space. After the meeting a suggestion was also made that there should be a joint Parks & BPF presence to promote both parks and park groups.

This links to the issue of publicity mentioned earlier and also to the ongoing unacceptable situation where park groups are getting charged by BCC to hold events that do BCC's marketing for them.

Development Consultations

There are lots more consultations on the way including various overlapping plans in Knowle West and the Site Allocations will return for another round in September and there will be a consultation on the next stage of the 'Central Area Action Plan'. There are also ongoing consultations over bendy bus routes which seem to be continuing in Bristol, though I saw that Bath have decided to drop theirs.

Information on the various Bristol Development Framework documents can be found at www.bristol.gov.uk/bdf

Town Greens

The current list as I know it is here: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BristolTG.pdf

There was a bit of discussion about what can be done on a Town Green. There is some guidelines from DEFRA here: <http://tinyurl.com/6j84ke2>

They say that it is a criminal offence to 'undertake any act which interrupts the use or enjoyment of a green as a place of exercise and recreation (e.g. fencing a green so as to prevent access)'. It is also the cause of a public nuisance to 'disturb, occupy or interfere with the soil of the green (e.g. camping) other than for the purpose of the better enjoyment of that green' and can also be the subject of criminal proceedings.

The advice goes on to say: "in Defra's view, in considering whether or not any given

development or action contravenes either or both of these statutes a court is likely to be concerned with whether material harm has been caused to a green and whether there has been interference with the public's recreational enjoyment. Other issues that might be relevant include the proportion of a green affected by the development or activity and the duration of the interference."

Contacting & Joining BPF

Finally in answer to a point that was raised at the end of the meeting can I reiterate that the BPF committee is pleased to hear from anyone who is concerned about green space in their area. Emails to info@bristolparksforum.org.uk go to all the committee so that someone will be able to respond even if some of us are away. Membership of the BPF is open to any group that complies with our terms of reference, see www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/#membership

Rob Acton-Campbell

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www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

Next meeting date: Sat 15 October (AGM)

Love Parks Week 23-31 July 2011 - <http://tinyurl.com/LoveParksBristol>

25 July 2011 - No 72

In this update:

Green Flags - Love Parks Week - Health & Safety Training - Defra Consultation on Town & Village Greens - Abandoned Trolley Survey

Green Flags

Gr8 News! It was announced today that Bristol now has eight Green Flag Parks. New this year is St Andrew's Park - the flags and certificates were distributed there this lunchtime.

Troopers Hill and The Downs first won a Green Flag in 2007 so this is our fifth flag. Last year's first time winner, Netham Park, retained their flag. Other winners were Blaise Castle Estate and Queen Square who received their first flag 2008 and St Paul's Park and Ashton Court Estate who won for the first time in 2009.

More details about the award can be seen at www.greenflagaward.org.uk or on the Council's website at www.bristol.gov.uk/greenflagparks (not yet updated).

A photo of the the Troopers Hill gang with our new flag is on our website at www.troopers-hill.org.uk/gf.htm and you can see the news story in the Evening Post here: <http://tinyurl.com/3vvtqxy>

Love Parks Week

The Council's press release about this week's Love Parks Week can be seen at:

www.bristol.gov.uk/redirect?oid=PressRelease-id-36630088

Bristol events are at <http://tinyurl.com/LoveParksBristol>

Health & Safety Training Sat 17th September

There are still places available on the Health and Safety training course on Saturday 17th September 2011. This course provides health and safety advice, details of best practice and safety procedures that will enable you to carry out a range of practical activities independently on Bristol City Council land. The course is run for Bristol Parks by BTCV Avon.

The training will take place in two parts. Part one provides a general guidance on the health and safety pack and specific guidance on the principles and practice of risk assessment. Part two provides guidance on tools use and 'tools talk' that should be given before any practical activities take place. Part two will take place outside, so please ensure you wear appropriate clothing and footwear. The training will take place at The Create Centre 10:00 - 14:00.

Once you have completed the training you will be able to lead a group of people carrying out tasks on your site while being covered by Bristol City Council insurance. Only the group leader needs to have done the training. You will also be able to lead guided walks.

The safety pack can be downloaded from www.bristol.gov.uk/parksafety

If you or anyone in your group is interested please email catherine.newman@bristol.gov.uk Please also let Catherine know if anyone in your group would like to do the training but can't make the 17th September, more courses will be arranged if there is sufficient demand.

Defra Consultation on Town & Village Greens

Consultation start: 25 July 2011 Consultation end: 17 October 2011 This consultation seeks views on proposals to reform the system for registering new town or village greens under section 15 of the Commons Act 2006.

Around 185 applications were made in 2009 to register new greens. The volume of applications to register new greens, the character of application sites, the controversy which such applications often attract, the cost of the determination process on the parties affected, and the impact of a successful registration on the landowner, are all giving rise to increasing concern. In this context, and the Government's commitment, announced in the Natural Environment White Paper, to introduce a Local Green Spaces designation through the planning system, the consultation presents the Government's case to reform the registration system so as to achieve an improved regulatory balance between protecting high quality green space valued by local communities and enabling the right development to occur in the right place at the right time. It also seeks to reduce the burden on local authorities which are responsible for implementing it, and on landowners who are affected by applications. There is no intention to review sites already registered.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/07/25/town-village-greens/>

Abandoned Trolley Survey

The Bristol Living Rivers Project is looking for willing volunteers to participate in this years Abandoned Trolley Survey. This involves sparing a couple of hours in October to walk along a stretch of a river or stream and record any abandoned trolleys and incidences of fly-tipping. From this we will be able to produce a report that details the findings of the survey.

Abandoned trolleys and fly-tipping in water courses are a problem as they contribute to an increased flood risk, may encourage more fly-tipping and disrupt the balance of sensitive river ecosystems.

If you would like to get involved or would like more information on what the survey entails please e-mail Ben Packham at ben.pakham@bristol.gov.uk or benpackham@hotmail.com.

Rob Acton-Campbell

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www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

Next meeting date: Sat 15 October (AGM)

Love Parks Week 23-31 July 2011 - <http://tinyurl.com/LoveParksBristol>

29 July 2011 - No 73

In this update:

World Parks Day conference - National Planning Policy Framework - Bristol Parks in the Press - Section 106 Contributions

NFPGS World Parks Day conference - 17 September, Birmingham

Friends groups and community groups across the UK who are passionate about their parks and open spaces are invited to attend the first ever 'grass-roots' national conference organised by the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS).

This free one-day conference, which will take place on World Parks Day, will focus on discussing and debating key issues such as health benefits of green spaces, nature and biodiversity and finding funding for your green space, amongst other topical subjects. Delegates who attend will be able to share and hear about best practice, network with other groups and walk away with some new knowledge and skills.

More details and application forms are at:

www.green-space.org.uk/community/nfpgs/conference.php

There are subsidies available to cover travel costs.

This is a good chance to get ideas from groups in other parts of the country.

National Planning Policy Framework

In the last update I mentioned the consultation about Town Greens which can be seen at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/07/25/town-village-greens/>

This was published on the same day as the draft National Planning Policy Framework from the Department for Communities and Local Government.

This is the document that makes proposals for the new Local Green Space designation. However, it has also raised concerns about it making it easier for developments to go ahead. It aims 'to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, and to promote sustainable growth'

Links to the document and details about the consultation (which closes on 17 October) can be seen at:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframework

Bristol Parks in the Press

Four stories in Tuesday's Evening Post relating to parks:

Two about the Green Flag awards, the first featuring the celebration event at St Andrew's Park :

<http://tinyurl.com/44egr22> and the second about the fifth flag at Troopers Hill:

<http://tinyurl.com/3htwouu>

Fraser was quoted in a story about the scaffold coming down from Cabot Tower:

<http://tinyurl.com/4ye83bs>

There was also a story about the possibility of funding for parks coming from the new Community Infrastructure Levy: <http://tinyurl.com/3pm67mg>

Section 106 Contributions

You may have seen the story in the Evening Post on Wednesday about the proposed development of the old magistrates court in Nelson St: <http://tinyurl.com/3qkwom6>. The report highlighted that the developer was trying to reduce the amount of Section 106 money that they had to pay. This development was due to be discussed by the planning committee on Wednesday but the decision was postponed to a later meeting while further discussion on Section 106 took place.

According to the papers for the committee this development should be paying £80,216.40 in S106 for Recreation and Open Space. There should also be contributions due to the loss of trees which is included as part of a £940,000 contribution due for the 'Public Realm'.

Whatever the outcome from the cross-party talks on funding for parks its is clear that Section 106 (and in the future the Community Infrastructure Levy) are going to be important sources of funding for parks. It is to be hoped that the Councillors on the Committee are aware that when the let developers off S106 contributions they are reducing the money available for parks and since some of the S106 money has now been devolved they are denying funds to Neighbourhood Partnerships.

Of course you could argue that if the S106 is set too high then the development won't happen at all and we won't get any money. But development of the site will only happen once, so maybe it is better that it is delayed until the financial situation is better and developers can afford more S106 contribution?

Rob Acton-Campbell

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www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

Next BPF meeting date: Sat 15 October (AGM)

NFPGS World Parks Day conference - 17 September, Birmingham