

04 July 2014 - No 154

In this update: BPF Meeting 28th June - Grounds Maintenance - Green Capital Project - State of UK Public Parks - Festival of Nature - Elizabeth Shaw Chocolate Factory - TreePips - HighWaterLine Bristol

BPF Meeting 28th June

The minutes from Saturday's meeting will be available later on our website and distributed by email as usual. Below are a couple of updates on the main issues discussed.

Grounds Maintenance

The Bristol Parks proposals to bring the grounds maintenance 'in-house' for at least 2 years from March 2015 were agreed at the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday (1st July).

The report can be seen here:

www.bristol.gov.uk/committee/2014/ua/ua000/0701_7.pdf

You may also have seen the media coverage of this. It started with what was a reasonably accurate article (with lots of quotes from the Cabinet report) in The Post but with a completely misleading front page and introduction.

The BBC then seem to have believed the Post's headlines and not bothered to check the facts.

As discussed at our meeting the plans are for the grounds maintenance work to be brought back in-house which will give more flexibility to change specifications and priorities.

Neighbourhood Partnerships and Park Groups will have more say in what is done in our parks and park groups or others will be able to do more in their parks to improve them if they wish. We will continue the discussions started with Bristol Parks at the meeting about the mechanics of this.

Bristol City Council / Bristol Parks have made no references to volunteers cutting grass and there are NO PLANS FOR THAT TO HAPPEN.

Core maintenance will continue to be carried out by the current in-house teams and contractors until February. The Contractors' employees who work on the Bristol contracts will then transfer to BCC via the TUPE process and will then be employed directly.

The Labour group amendment to this year's budget delayed the proposed £1/2m budget cut to the Grounds Maintenance budget by 12 months to 2015/16. The proposed cut is 8.5% of the existing net budget of £5.9m. (The actual cost of Grounds Maintenance is £7.3m part of which is covered by income so the actual cut is a slightly lower percentage than this; the figures are in the Cabinet Report). As such Bristol could be said to have got off lightly compared to other core cities, however, cuts on this scale will have an impact. Prior to the 2015/16 budget being finalised in February, the BPF committee will be arguing that the year in which Bristol is Green Capital is not the time to make these cuts.

Green Capital Project

I'm sorry I missed what was described as an inspiring presentation by Sam Thomson about the ideas for projects for Green Capital.

Sam is putting together a website with the details of the proposals and I will send out the links and add them to our website when they are ready which should be within the next couple of weeks.

There is also a lot of work going on behind the scenes to make sure that all those involved in Green Capital are aware of these ideas and that they fit in with what other people are doing.

The Green Capital Partnership Nature Group, which is co-chaired by Fraser, is meeting next week (11th July).

State of UK Public Parks

The HLF produced a report last week setting out the current state of parks nationally. The report and an associated video can be seen here: www.hlf.org.uk/news/Pages/StateUKParks.aspx

Sarah Royal and Dave Morris of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces www.natfedparks.org.uk (of which BPF are a member), said about the report:

"This report on the alarming long-term crisis being caused by the underfunding of the UK's parks, so vital to every local community, is a shocking wake-up call which clearly necessitates immediate and effective national action.

The inspirational rise of the Friends Groups movement over the last 15 years has demonstrated the commitment of the public. We are now demanding an equivalent commitment from the Government to ensure adequate public resources for all green spaces, a statutory duty to manage these spaces to decent (Green Flag Awards) standards, and a national inquiry into these matters.

We will be responding to the report by launching a UK-wide public petition, and are also calling on all park users to back Love Parks Week at the end of July to demonstrate our love for our vital local green spaces."

Festival of Nature

The Festival of Nature events continue this weekend with:

'Wild and Free – at Kings Weston!'

Sunday 6 July, 11.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

www.bnhc.org.uk/festival-of-nature/wild-free-kings-weston/

Other events are listed at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/festival-of-nature/

Elizabeth Shaw Chocolate Factory

The redevelopment of this site caused some discussion at our meetings a few years ago when 'cycle homes' were proposed that would effectively use part of the green space of the railway path as their front gardens.

That development stopped due to the recession and the factory has been vacant and unused since then.

There are now revised plans being put together by a different developer Generator South West LLP and they have held workshop sessions with local people.

They have sent us the following invitation:

We are now at a stage where we would like to invite the wider local community to a further event at Easton Community Centre, which will provide an opportunity for local residents and stakeholders to offer feedback on the range of masterplan options and pose questions to members of the Generator South West team.

The full details of the events are as follows:

Wednesday 16th July 2014

4pm to 9pm

Easton Community Centre, Kilburn St, Bristol, BS5 6AW

This will provide an opportunity for all local stakeholders to feed into the design process before a refined scheme is presented later in the year at a further public event. We will write to you again in due course to confirm details of this event.

Further details of the proposals and of the programme of community events are available on our website, which is being updated with further information as the project progresses. This can be found at:

www.chocolatefactorybristol.com

You can also find out more and follow our progress on Twitter by following @ChocFactoryBris.

Should you have any queries, or require clarification of any matters, please do not hesitate to call me on 01225 422243 or email paulerskine@meetingplacecommunications.com.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Erskine

On behalf of Generator South West LLP

TreePips

Following my item in the last update about tree planting in Parks, Mellie from TreePips wrote to say:

Please don't forget that TreePips want to plant in parks with primary schools and the local community, and we aim to produce detailed tree planting plans. I know the trees will be small - but they will GROW and be beautiful!!!!

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/treepips-update

HighWaterLine Bristol

The HighWaterLine has now been postponed until September 2014. Those involved have received emails with the details and the revised dates will be published on their website at bristol.highwaterline.org once they are finalised.

Rob Acton-Campbell
www.twitter.com/RobCrewsHole
Bristol Parks Forum
www.bristolparksforum.org.uk
Next meeting Sat 11 Oct 2014

10 July 2014 - No 155

In this update: Rethinking Parks Success - Green Capital Project - Grounds Maintenance - Managing Nature Reserves - FoN Magpie Bottom - Kings Weston Estate - Arts Heritage and Culture Call for Ideas - Green Connect

Rethinking Parks Success

You may remember that at our meeting in April we mentioned that one of the projects 'ParkWork Bristol' that Fraser had submitted for funding from Rethinking Parks had got to the second stage.

I am delighted to now be able to tell you that the project has been selected as one of only eleven around the country to win funding.

Fraser will now be working with Bristol Parks and the other partners to develop the detail of the scheme.

Rethinking Parks is a partnership between the Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Nesta.

Detail of the 11 projects funded (including ours) can be seen here:
www.nesta.org.uk/blog/11-projects-are-rethinking-parks

More about the Bristol project on a video produced as part of the submission:
www.vimeo.com/93379217

An article in today's Guardian:

www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/10/parks-costs-trees-bees-subscription-fees

Green Capital Project

In my last update I mentioned that Sam Thomson was putting together a website for the Green Capital Project that she has been pulling together.

You can now see the website here: www.tinyurl.com/UWE2015BPF

Sam has done a tremendous amount of work on this including conversations with lots of different people to try and bring in everyone's ideas and the website is very impressive.

This is very much a work in progress and Sam needs input from from BPF members to inform the next stages & 'shape' of the project from here. Sam has set up a form at www.bit.ly/1kIvYZo which she would like groups to complete by by the end of 27th July, to give her a chance to start planning dates/activities etc in more detail.

In terms of funding Sam says:

At the BPF meeting, I confirmed that the parts of this project being resourced by UWE are agreed & 'ready to go' as part of UWE's commitment to support Bristol Green Capital 2015 (and this is a substantial resource which will enable us to achieve a lot of the aims/strands of work), but the involvement of a number of the community-based partners e.g KWMC, Ujima Radio, The Restore Trust etc is contingent on sponsorship being secured through Bristol 2015 to enable them to take part. I am really hopeful that we will be able to secure this funding as I think that the potential for the project in supporting the Green Capital aims is enormous, as well as enabling much more visibility for parks and green spaces in the city with the potential future benefits that this may bring in terms of finances which can support maintenance and improvement of these crucial assets for residents (and visitors).

Crucially for BPF members - in terms of the programme of skills development workshops for parks groups volunteers - 90% of this can be delivered through UWE's resource & commitment to the project, so I am confident that we are not raising aspirations unreasonably at this point & happy to promote this activity now.

Grounds Maintenance

I have put the information from my last update on our website at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/parks-maintenance - please send this link to anyone you know who still believes that Bristol City Council wants Park Group members to spend all their time pushing lawn mowers around parks.

Gus Hoyt also mentioned this on Radio Bristol this morning, in a discussion that mostly focused on cemeteries. You can listen again at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p021q927> Gus is on for the first 40 minutes or so of the show.

Managing Nature Reserves

One of the concerns that has been raised with Neighbourhood Partnerships having more say in the management of green spaces is that those making decisions might not understand the aims and objectives of nature conservation and might make decisions that are detrimental to nature reserves or other wildlife spaces including areas of grassland.

In order to address this the following proposal has been put forward and passed to Richard Fletcher. I would be particularly interested on the views of those groups involved with Nature Reserves on these ideas.

The Nature Reserves in Bristol require different management/maintenance from that of the more formal parks.

When the NPs decide on an overall plan of management for the parks in their area, this may not be suitable for a nature reserve.

Will the NP be able to stipulate specific requirements for each individual nature reserve?

Can we be assured that there will be the specialist knowledge with each NP, which has nature reserves, to ensure that appropriate maintenance is carried out?

Many community groups have now a long experience of work on reserves and it is in the interests of nature conservation in Bristol that this should continue. Much of the work done has been on the advice of the ecologists employed by Bristol City Council. There has been a decline in the number employed to do this work e.g. the untimely death of the Woodlands and Wildlife Officer.

Proposals

1) Each NP should agree that the recommendations contained in Management Plans for each individual reserve should be adhered to.

2) Where a management plan does not exist steps should be taken to write them. In the interim professional advice should be sought for guidance as to best practice.

3) A panel of experts could be set up to advise on nature conservation practice. There is a wealth of expert naturalists within the city. We have Bristol Naturalists Society, The Wildlife Trust, City Museum, BRERC, TCV and two universities which teach biological sciences and ecology, also many naturalists both employed and retired from BBC wildlife unit.

It would be a shame in a city which is acknowledged as a wildlife centre that its nature reserves were left to unqualified inexperienced people.

It was from such groups that a precedent was established 35 years ago to advise on Geological Conservation and site selection for conservation. Such a group might be established to play a similar role with regard to ecological conservation.

It is urged that Bristol Parks should take action to ensure that the nature reserves are given the care that is essential to their effective role as sites of conservation.

Grass Cutting

In the case of reserves, it is important that this is done at the right time vis a vis the type of meadow, the antecedent weather and the ripening of flower seeds. It has been the case in some years that the "needs" of the contractors takes precedence over ecologically based best practice. In house

work should prevent this in future.

There is also the problem that unnecessary cutting takes place "to make it look tidy". Park keepers have not always been appraised of management plans.

Many areas which are grassed open space with an assumption that there is not much ecological value in the grass, however, as was shown in selected parts of the Downs , when the cutting regime was changed (at the suggestion of Helen Hall) many wild flowers appeared. I would suggest a review of all open spaces in order to assess whether they need such frequent cutting. This would save money and increase the biodiversity in the city.

FoN Magpie Bottom

There are Festival of Nature events on The Downs and at Narroways this coming weekend. Then on 20th July there is a 'Nature Open Day' at Magpie Bottom. Magpie Bottom is somewhere that we don't mention very often and it is perhaps one of Bristol's least known green spaces. Magpie Bottom is actually owned by South Gloucestershire Council and they maintain it, but around half of it is within the City of Bristol (in St George). It is a wonderful space either side of the Stradbroom that forms Bristol's eastern boundary with Hanham and is well worth a visit.

Links to details of these events are at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/festival-of-nature

Another nature themed event is being held on Troopers Hill on Friday 18th July when Ray Burnet and the Bristol & District Moth Group will be setting up their moth traps on Troopers Hill to see what they find. If you would like to come along then details of how to sign up are at www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events

Kings Weston Estate

Kings Weston Action Group continue to get excellent coverage for this long neglected estate, this week there was an article in the Bristol Times insert in Tuesday's Bristol Post - see www.tinyurl.com/incredibleKW

This Saturday is a busy day at Kings Weston with a history exhibition, statue, and launch of a new estate guide taking place at the Echo between 10am and 4pm - all free as part of the Bristol Festival of Archaeology. Please use the Shirehampton Road Public car park as there will be a wedding happening at Kings Weston house and parking will be difficult there.

There will also be a working party. KWAG say:

'Our plan is to start clearing laurels close to the Echo and we are keen to demonstrate to exhibition visitors the sort of work we do on the estate. We'd love it if you could come along and lend a hand. As usual we will be starting at 10am and we'll meet at Shirehampton road car park. Please feel free to come along any time during the day and make yourself known to one of the volunteers. Tools and gloves will be provided, but please feel free to bring your own if you'd rather. Bow saws, loppers and shears will all be useful.'

See www.kwag.org.uk for more details.

Arts Heritage and Culture Call for Ideas

The Arts Heritage and Culture [AHC] Group is one of the Green Capital Partnerships 'thematic groups' - the Nature group co-chaired by Fraser is another.

The AHC group are looking for proposals for projects from artists, art producers, companies, or individuals working in any art form, AHC will link the best of these proposals with the targeted action group and other appropriate partners. The proposals should respond to and address one or more of the thematic groups' vision statements, and/or Green Capital objectives.

The main criteria for selection is:

- Working in partnership with at least one organisation/community or group (please name a specific group and the level of their involvement if possible)
- Identify the long term impact of the project (Young people and communities outside the centre are a priority)
- Identify the scale of the project, this maybe an intimate experience for a small group or a city wide audience.
- Ideas need to enable 'change', that ask people to imagine the future - for their lives, for Bristol and beyond as the changing climate impacts on the world.
- Ideas should be achievable by December 2015.
- Applications are welcome from outside Bristol and the SW. Its not essential you live in this area.

Funding

Funding for Green Capital has recently been announced, with three strands (full details can be found on our website <http://artsheritageandculture.org/>)

Our offer is to work with the selected applicants and their proposals to secure funds to enable the project to take place.

Each proposal will be separately funded and realization will depend on securing monies. Apart from Bristol 2015 funding we will also consider Arts Council England, businesses and other sources within each action group.

Submission

- Proposals to be written up on a maximum of 2 sides of A4, include an outline budget. Also include CV for the main participants. Do not include images at this stage but please include online links.
- Proposals to be submitted by Monday 21 July to info@artsheritageandculture.org and addressed to Tessa Fitzjohn – Chair of the Arts Heritage and Culture Group.
- Submissions will be considered by an invited panel and discussed with the targeted thematic action groups. Panel members are:

Lynn Goh: Producer IBT (Inbetween Time Festival)

Ruth Gooding: Contemporary Arts Programme Manager (Bristol portfolio)

Katie Keeler: Director Theatre Bristol

Louise Orchard:(tbc) St Georges, Bristol

Tessa Fitzjohn: Chair Green Capital Arts, Heritage and Culture Group, Independent Curator

Producer

Katy Hallett: Deputy Chair Capital Arts, Heritage and Culture Group, Arts Consultant

- Applicants will be notified of the selection by 28 July.
- A list of the selected proposals will be posted on AHC website.

Further Information

- Check out our website <http://artsheritageandculture.org/>
- All enquiries to info@artsheritageandculture.org

Green Connect

One of the partners in our Rethinking Parks project is Peter Wilkinson through his Next Field consultancy www.thenextfield.co.uk

Peter has dropped us a line to highlight the existence of Green Connect.

'Green Connect is just over a year old having grown out of the ashes of Green Space South West. Myself along a few other former GSSW supporters from across the South West have decided to help give the network some fresh impetus and we want to do more to make our work more relevant to park groups and community partnerships across the region as well as parks teams.

Much of our development work will focus on making better use of social media - no surprise there - and in due course we will be asking active groups what sort of help they might like. We are still musing over whether to retain the network as membership based or if we can develop a different business model to cover our running costs through other means. The latter is the ideal way forward as membership usually stands in the way of wider engagement!'

The latest email update from Green Connect can be seen at www.tinyurl.com/lmms6no

Rob Acton-Campbell
www.twitter.com/RobCrewsHole
Bristol Parks Forum
www.bristolparksforum.org.uk
Next meeting Sat 11 Oct 2014

23 July 2014 - No 156

In this update: Discovering Brislington Brook - Town Greens - Council Meeting - Love Parks Week - Green Capital Project

Discovering Brislington Brook

This Saturday 26th July is a wonderful opportunity to explore St Anne's Wood and Nightingale Valley.

- St Anne's Pageant and Festival! 12pm - pageant procession from Pilgrim Inn, Hollywood Rd, Brislington 2pm

- Festival in St Anne's Wood just off Newbridge Rd with live music, BBQ, children's games and activities, bring a blanket and a bottle!

Poster here: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/StAnnesDayPageant.pdf

The Pageant is planned to coincide with St Anne's day and to recreate the medieval pilgrimages to St Anne's Well, which was one of the most important holy sites in Bristol. The well was visited by Henry VII shortly after the battle of Bosworth. Seventeen years later his queen Elizabeth of York visited apparently because it was thought that the holy water would help her conceive; within a year she had given birth to Prince Arthur.

These are the final events organised by Rowan Matthiessen as part of the excellent Discover Brislington Brook Project which has run for the last three years.

You can see details of some of the events and projects that she has run over that time here: www.discoverbrislingtonbrook.wordpress.com

Rowan's hard work and enthusiasm will be greatly missed, but the good news is that Rowan has helped form a Friends of Brislington Brook which is aiming to carry on organising events and bringing about improvements to the area.

While in Brislington on Saturday you might also want to visit one of the last of the Festival of Nature events that is taking place at Callington Road LNR
www.bnhc.org.uk/festival-of-nature/callington-road-family-nature-day

Town Greens

The Public Rights of Way and Greens Committee agreed to declare Higham Street Green, Totterdown as a Town Green at its meeting on Monday.

The committee also agreed to accept an amendment to the area applied for as a Town Green at Ashton Vale. This allows the compromise reached between the applicants and the landowners to proceed. The landowners have promised to voluntarily register a further small area to the east of the former tip. The southern part of the site has of course already been registered. The amendment to the application area means that the former tip will not be registered.

Details of all Town Greens in Bristol can be seen at
www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/information/town-green-applications

Council Meeting

There were two items on the agenda of yesterday's Full Council meeting that were of particular significance for Bristol's parks.

First the Site Allocations document was finally adopted, this gives most parks and many other open spaces additional protection in planning terms as they are shown as Important Open Space.

Details of the document are at www.bristol.gov.uk/siteallocations

The Council also unanimously supported a motion on Parks for Public Use, the motion states:

Council notes the closure of the entirety of Castle Park for the 'Love Saves the Day' event for a week during May 2014, following similar closures in previous years. In addition, we note the substantial damage caused to the park by this year's event.

Whilst recognising that events such as this provide a source of revenue, Council believes that the complete closure of a park in this way for a commercial event is contrary to the principle that the Bristol's parks should be available for use by all of the city's residents.

Council therefore requests the Mayor to:

- i) Ensure that, where events are to be held in the city's parks, this does not result in the closure of the entire park;
- ii) To, where appropriate, work with promoters of 'Love Saves the Day' and other events to find alternative, more appropriate locations within the city for such events;
- iii) To instruct officers to ensure that, where park closures are being considered, the ward councillors are notified as far in advance as possible of the closure.

Love Parks Week

Love Parks Week runs from 25 July - 3 August 2014.

See www.loveparksweek.org for details, there is still time to register any events you will be holding during that time.

Love Parks Week is run by Keep Britain Tidy who also now run the Green Flag scheme. The national announcement of the 2014 winners will take place on the 28th July with an event in the new park on the Olympic site in London.

There will be no Green Flag winners in Bristol this year as, due to all the changes happening in the Council, Bristol Parks have not entered any sites. Tracey Morgan has though confirmed that they will be entering sites again next year.

Green Capital Project

A reminder about the project that Sam Thomson as put together.

You can see the website here: www.tinyurl.com/UWE2015BPF

As a mentioned in the last update Sam has set up a form at www.bit.ly/1kIvYZo which she would like groups to complete by by the end of 27th July.

Please complete the form, it will ensure that the project will give us as park groups what we want. You do not need to have a detailed project worked out or even an idea for a project but if you do then the form asks for details.

Once the details of the project have been finalised we will seek to get funding for it through the Green Capital Partnership action group that Fraser co-chairs.

Rob Acton-Campbell
www.twitter.com/RobCrewsHole
Bristol Parks Forum
www.bristolparksforum.org.uk
Next meeting Sat 11 Oct 2014