

07 June 2011 - No 66

In this update:

Britain's Park Story - Parks Improvement & Investment Plans - Bristol's "Event of the Year" - Green space 'worth billions' / Guardian Q&A - Find My Local Park

Britain's Park Story

In case you missed it last Sunday (or don't have a TV) 'Britain's Park Story' is on BBC iPlayer at http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00t9qv8/Britains_Park_Story/

The British invented them for the world, and they have been described as 'the lungs of the city' - historian Dan Cruickshank reveals the history of our public parks.

Cruickshank travels the country to discover the evolution of the nation's urban public parks, a story of class, civic pride, changing fashions in sport and recreation which helps re-evaluate the amazing assets they are.

From their civic heyday in the 19th century to the neglect of the 1980s and their resurgence today, the documentary is a fascinating and entertaining history of an often-overlooked great British invention.

Parks Improvement & Investment Plans

As you will know from our last meeting and past updates most Neighbourhood Partnerships are now putting together plans to prioritise spending on parks and green spaces in their areas as part of the AGSP process. Regardless of what happens with disposals there is still a need for an investment plan to prioritise spending of Section 106 money and any money from grants etc. Having a plan in place will also help with grant applications.

I think Filwood, Knowle and Windmill Hill Neighbourhood Partnership is the first to complete a plan ready for consideration at a Neighbourhood Partnership meeting. Their meeting was today (7th June) and the recommendations can be seen on the Council's website at <http://tinyurl.com/3awsr64>

Of course their plan excludes open spaces within the Knowle West Regeneration Framework area, as these are being considered as part of the Regeneration Framework.

Bristol's "Event of the Year": Have a wild weekend in Bristol this summer

The latest press release from the Festival of Nature is below. We now have volunteers to cover all the slots, but if you are able to help out more hands are always welcome. Our stand will be in the Green Forum tent in Anchor Square. More on the festival is on the website at www.festivalofnature.org

Festival of Nature 18-19 June. Harbourside

The Festival of Nature unleashes the city's wild side this summer when it returns to Bristol Harbourside on the weekend of 18-19 June. The Festival has just been awarded "Bristol Event of the Year" in the 2011 Tourism and Hospitality Awards, after a tight race with finalists including the Balloon Fiesta.

The biggest event of its kind in the UK, this festival gives wildlife enthusiasts of all ages the opportunity to explore, enjoy and get close to the natural world – all free of charge.

Throughout the weekend there are loads of free and exciting activities – here's just a taste of what's to come...

- BBC 3D display – Bristol's famous BBC Natural History Unit has a special display of their new 3D technology. See the next generation of wildlife films, and keep your eye out for some very special visitors!
- Free IMAX screenings – 'Sea Rex: Journey to a Prehistoric World' takes you on a thrilling 50 feet high, 3D journey back in time to explore an amazing underwater universe inhabited by Sea Rex – the T Rex of the seas.
- Talks programme – Each year the Festival welcomes BBC presenters, wildlife experts and other well known faces to the talk's tent. Speakers include Satish Kumar - author and presenter on 'Earth Pilgrim' – part of the BBC's Natural World series; Brigit Strawbridge – who featured in the BBC 2 series, 'It's Not Easy Being Green', will be talking about bees and what we can do to give them a helping hand, and author and creator of Downshifting week, Tracey Smith will share practical ideas and tips about living with less. Simon Watt – presenter on Channel 4's 'Inside Natures Giants' will be speaking about the show; Doug Allen, a BAFTA award winning wildlife cameraman will be sharing his experiences working on Human Planet's Arctic team, and the BBC's Chadden Hunter will be talking about the adventures and challenges working on the epic new Frozen Planet series. You will also be able to Join University of Bristol researchers from the Cabot Institute to discuss ideas around our use of water resources, local economics, environmental social inequality and the impact of natural disasters on aviation.
- Contemporary Sustainable Living Show – Straight from Olympia in London, the first show of its kind in the South West. In partnership with UK Aware and Forum for the Future, the Sustainable Living Zone showcases technologies from across the South West with inspiration for your home and garden.
- Wildlife Bee Garden – The Amphitheatre will become home to an extraordinary wildlife garden. Build bee nest boxes, plant seeds and buy plants.
- Free Storytelling with popular performer Michael Loader – Traditional Tales and Spontaneous Stories festooned with an abundance of animals, plus plenty of playful audience involvement.
- Bristol Zoo – Spot your first gorilla down on Millennium Square! Celebrating its 175th anniversary the Zoo tent has one of the large gorilla sculptures that will be on the streets of Bristol this summer. Find out what you can do to help save gorillas across the world, and get your first picture with a soon-to-be-famous Bristol icon.
- The Green Forum – Bristol's green grassroots community. For the 9th year, now supported by Bristol Water, find over 40 grassroots organisations across the festival site and in the Green Forum tent. Join a group, make a pledge, find a hobby.

- Food market – Do your Saturday shop, and make a difference. The Festival's food market is a bustling and colourful place, with local produce and hot food from sustainable traders from across the South West.
- Eco-sculptures by Barry Lewis - Barry uses his talent for using reclaimed metal parts and cutlery to create wild creatures, including a giant rhino and elephant, which will be on show in the Amphitheatre.
- At-Bristol Live Lab – Hook yourself up to a machine that shows your heart beat and muscle impulses, or look super-close-up on your skin, hair, eyes and ears with high magnification cameras.
- Free puppet shows with the Woodenfingers Theatre Company.

Savita Custead, Director of the Bristol Natural History Consortium, who organise the Festival said: "Bristol is the wildlife capital of the UK and the Festival of Nature a much loved date in its summer diary. We're thrilled to named Bristol's Best Event in the recent Tourism Awards, and will be pulling out all the stops to make sure that this is the best Festival yet!"

The Festival is bigger and better than ever – with loads of free hands-on fun for kids of all ages. You can even pick the brains of our friendly wildlife experts and spot some natural celebrities."

More information is available on the Festival of Nature website at www.festivalofnature.org or by calling the Festival team on 0117 930 4926

Green space 'worth billions' / Guardian Q&A

The latest edition of the GreenSpace Newsletter 'The Bench No 66' can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/GSbench66>

There are two articles of particular interest:

The first 'Green space 'worth billions' to the UK' refers to Defra's 2,000 page report 'The National Ecosystem Assessment' which you may also have seen reported on the BBC and elsewhere.

'The National Ecosystem Assessment is an attempt to put a value on the country's nature and wildlife, enabling it to be more easily incorporated into policy. The UK is the first country to develop a piece of research so all-encompassing, and the data will help to shape future planning policy.'

A Guardian comment on the report can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/68ertpy>

The other report in The Bench 'Guardian hosts online green space Q&A' links to a discussion that featured our very own 'ParkBoy' (Fraser) also on the Guardian website. The direct link to the article and discussion is <http://tinyurl.com/3jmspve>

Find My Local Park

As I have mentioned before the Council website is soon to be upgraded and as part of this the Parks pages are being tidied up and improved. One of the improvements is that there is now a 'Find My Local Park' section on the Parks A to Z page which is linked to the Council's Pinpoint mapping system. You can see the page via <http://tinyurl.com/ParksAtoZ> Only the larger parks & green spaces are on the system and at the moment if you click on the 'details' icon you don't get anything useful, unless you want to know if your park is bigger than mine!

For direct 'redirectors' to other Parks pages see: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/redirectors.pdf

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www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

Meeting dates: 16 July & 15 October

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In this update:

Ashton Vale Town Green Decision - Core Strategy and AGSP Disposals - Communities get power to protect green spaces - Big Day Out 25 June 2011 - Love Parks Week 23-31 July 2011

Ashton Vale Town Green Decision

The Public Rights of Way and Greens Committee will consider the TG application on 16 June 2011. The report to that meeting is now on the BCC website and can be seen via www.bristol.gov.uk/meetings

The report, by Jan Ormondroyd, Chief Executive, recommends a compromise it says:

"14. It is the view of the responsible delegated officer that the northern part of the site - all land to the north of and including the proposed Bus Rapid Transit route - does not meet the necessary statutory tests to be registered a Town or Village Green, on the basis that:

14.1. He is not satisfied, on the basis of newly submitted evidence, that the land has been used as of right for lawful games and pastimes in the last 20 years. The use of the land more closely resembles use as footpaths to cross the site, rather than uses synonymous with a Town Green.

14.2. There is significant evidence that this land has been in use as a landfill site within the statutory 20-year period.

15. The registering officer is satisfied that the remaining, southern part of the site, (to the south of and excluding the proposed BRT route) does meet the necessary criteria, and should be registered a Town or Village Green."

The report has a map showing the proposed areas.

It is odd that they seem to be suggesting that the proposed BRT should form the boundary when legally a decision on TG status has to be taken on past use of the site and should not consider proposed future use. It would make more sense (and surely be less open to legal challenge) if the boundary of the old tip was used?

Also in the papers for the meeting is an update on other TG applications in Bristol. I have used this to update this information sheet on our website at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BristolTG.pdf

Core Strategy and AGSP Disposals

The meetings of the cross party working party looking at the proposed disposals are due to start next week. However, I understand that the Full Council meeting on 21 June is due to adopt the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy has just been through the 'examination in public stage' and the inspector's report has clarified the number of dwellings that the strategy envisages being built on land released as part of the Area Green Space Plan process.

The inspector's report says:

"28. The SHLAA assumes an overall contribution of 1,100 units on land to be identified in the Area Green Space Plans as surplus to open space requirements. The Site Allocations and Development Management Options Document (SADM OD) (CDE103) June 2010, identifies potential housing sites on open space with an illustrative capacity of 1,396. Not all of these sites are likely to be progressed, but the Options document supports the figure of 1,100 as a reasonable estimate of the contribution to land supply from this source."

Given the density for housing proposed 1,100 dwellings would require a minimum of 22 hectares of land. This compares with 25.4 hectares in the list of disposals agreed by the Cabinet in December.

The 1,100 dwellings count towards the 26,400 identified supply of housing for Bristol to 2026, of these 7,037 were completed 2006-09 and 12,510 already have planning permission leaving 6,853 from other sites including the 1,100 on AGSP sites.

The full inspector's report and other information about the BDF can be seen at www.bristol.gov.uk/bdf The thrust of the inspector's comments are that he does not think that there will be sufficient housing land available in Bristol to support the likely growth to 2026. Indeed he has insisted that the Council include the possibility of building on Green Belt land in the strategy.

It seems strange (especially after all the comments made before the election) that the Council should be adopting a strategy that requires building on the sites considered by the AGSP while the review of that process is only just starting. If the decision of the working party is that there will be no disposals then the strategy will already be out of date and need review.

Communities get power to protect green spaces

- according to Communities Secretary Eric Pickles and Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman. The details are in a press release dated 7 June which can be seen here:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/1917128>

Big Day Out 25 June 2011

As I have mentioned before The Civic Society are hosting a series of events as part of the first national Civic Day on the 25th June, the brainchild of the organisation Civic Voice. The focus of the Bristol events is to celebrate our city's unique and diverse public space.

The main event will be in the Bearpit (St James Barton Roundabout underpass) 12-4pm 25th June, take a picnic for an afternoon of entertainment, music and stalls and help celebrate this often neglected public space.

There are also a series of walks planned - see website for details.

The Civic Society are also still looking for local groups to hold their own events on the 25th June - have a community picnic, a game of rounders, a park clean up etc. Please get in touch with them if you'd like help facilitating this at bristolcivicday@hotmail.co.uk.

Friends of Troopers Hill are joining in with our Music on the Hill from 6pm a chance to have a picnic while admiring the views from Troopers Hill and listening to the Gasworks Singers.

Check the website for more information www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/big-day-out

Love Parks Week 23-31 July 2011

www.loveparksweek.org.uk

Bristol Parks are planning a publicity push for Love Parks Week, including a listing in the next 'Our City' magazine and promotion on the website.

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.

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Meeting dates: 16 July & 15 October

Festival of Nature 18 & 19 June

Love Parks Week 23-31 July 2011

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In this update:

BPF Meeting 16 July - Cross Party Talks - Town Greens - Grove Wood - Wild City Project - Muller Road Rec

BPF Meeting 16 July

We will be finalising the agenda for the July meeting in the next few days; please let us know if there is anything you would like to be included.

Cross Party Talks

You will remember that after the election as part of the 'deal' to allow the LibDems to continue to run the Council it was agreed that there should be cross party talks on the disposals under the P&GSS. Those talks are under way but they are not being held in public. It is clear that the talks are considering all the issues in depth and will take some time so don't expect any announcements about their conclusions for several weeks.

In the meantime the BDF Core Strategy has been adopted. The next BDF document to be produced that will have relevance to green spaces will be the Site Allocations document. The website at www.bristol.gov.uk/bdf says 'It is expected that the next version of the Site Allocations will be available to the public in late summer 2011. This will set out the council's preferred approach.'

Town Greens www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/#tg

As expected the Public Rights of Way and Greens Committee on 16th June accepted the officer's recommended compromise of declaring part of the site as a Town Green. We now wait to see if the decision is challenged by way of a judicial review. In this respect there was an interesting comment about Town Greens in relation to Grove Wood, see below.

I have been sent two examples of Town Green campaigns from the Oxfordshire area that might be of interest. The first at www.friendsofwarnefordmeadow.org.uk went to Judicial Review after the Council had accepted the inspector's recommendation that it should be a TG but the Council's decision was upheld. The second example at www.saveradleylakes.org.uk was headed down the legal route when the landowner had a sudden change of heart (can't see that happening at Ashton Vale!).

Grove Wood

This is of course another site where a Town Green application is in progress. Nearly a year ago the Council stated that it wished to purchase Grove Wood and declare it as a Local Nature Reserve. The Snuff Mills Action Group asked a series of questions about this to the Full Council meeting on 21st June. The questions and Gary Hopkins answers can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/6gvzxxq> while on

the webcast you can see Steve Micklewright asking some supplementary questions.

Two answers are of particular interest, the first relates to the cross party talks and is in reply to a question about budgets:

A3 At the time of passing the Cabinet report, it was identified that funding would be made available through the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy. It is only fair to inform you that the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and all of its funding mechanisms are now subject to all party consideration and so this funding, the funding necessary for Stoke Park and for other parks improvements are back in the melting pot. I am glad to report that the objection to partnerships being allowed to set their priorities for improvement which was lodged by an opposition party leader now seems to have been dropped. I understand and applaud that the top priority for your Neighbourhood Partnership is the acquisition and protection of Grove Wood.

The second is in response as to whether the land could be an LNR and a Town Green

A4 Officers will require further information to the statement "There are several Town Village Greens that have been subsequently designated as Local Nature Reserves". It would be useful to have more detail to the statement made above as there will be individual circumstances in each case that has led to the declaration of that land as a local nature reserve.

Once land is registered as a Town or Village Green under the Commons Act 2006, the effect is that existing recreational rights continue indefinitely ie people have the right to carry out any lawful recreational activity such as organised sports and games like football and rounders, kite flying, fishing, archery, shooting, bird watching, black berry picking, picnics etc. Whether or not a Local Nature Reserve can be established on land that has been registered as a Town and Village Green will depend on whether it falls within section 29 of the Commons Act 1876. Under Section, it is deemed to be a public nuisance to encroach or build upon or to enclose a green. This extends to causing any 'disturbance or interference with or occupation of the soil thereof which is made otherwise than with a view to the better enjoyment of such town or village green. Each case will have to be looked at on its own merits. The Council are currently seeking Counsel's opinion on this point.

This also raises an interesting point in relation to Ashton Vale where the Stadium plans require a lot of disturbance of the soil on the area south of the proposed BRT in order to provide an area to take

drainage from the stadium.

Wild City Project www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/#wild

The Wild City Project Launch event will be held on Wednesday 13th July at Hengrove Mounds, off Hengrove Way - 10.30am to noon.

Helen and Paula are working with students from the nearby Bridge Learning Campus Primary School to stage the activity which is called 'Take Flight Over Hengrove Mounds'. The event will include student led guided tours of the site, school performance and artwork, and of course, some light refreshments.

Another event being run by Wild City is the Conham and Eastwood Farm Wild River Festival which will run from 16th – 31st July 2011. I will post the programme on the website as soon as I receive it. Also on our website you can see the new Wild City logo.

There will be a presentation about the Wild City Project at our July meeting.

Muller Road Recreation Ground & Downend Park Farm

The Friends of Muller Road Recreation Ground & Downend Park Farm are organising a series of events to get people's views on their park. They had a session to look at possible tree planting sites and on Thursday 7th July between 7pm & 9pm they are holding a design workshop in the park. They say,

'Please bring your design ideas & opinion for improvement at Muller Road Rec, Downend Park Farm & Dovercourt Road Green Space to us for a sit-down, chat & a doodle, (sketch).'

The venue is Muller Road Rec – Downend Park entrance

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