

01 November 2010 No 36

BPF Meeting 9 October 2010

The minutes of our last meeting are now on the website at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFMin091010.pdf

Area Green Space Plans Consultation

The consultation has now closed (and the Ideas and Options Documents have been taken off the website). As I mentioned previously the next stage is the production of a report to the Scrutiny Commission on 6th December and Cabinet on 12th December. The report can be changed to reflect scrutiny commission responses before the document is finalised for cabinet consideration.

The report will highlight particular issues on the following criteria:

- a.. volume of response about a particular park [eg petitions etc]
- b.. any particular response/issue that appeared a large number of times
- c.. any response that gave rise to a change of assessment about whether a site was low amenity value.

Parks Reorganisation Workshop

As suggested by Tracey at the meeting there will be a workshop session to discuss how park groups and the public will engage with Parks when the new structure is in place. The session will be in the evening on Monday 15th November. If you are interested in taking part please let us know by the end of this week.

Neighbourhood Partnerships

Further to the discussions at the meeting we would be interested in any feedback on how groups are engaging with NPs (or not) and particularly whether the Environmental sub-groups have been set up and how they are working with park groups (or not).

A message from the Parks Events Team:

"Dear Event Organisers,

Xmas is on the Horizon and the summer event season is now behind us. Now is the time to let us know of your event plans (if you haven't already) so we can provisionally hold a booking in our 2011 Diary. We have already received a lot of enquires about our city centre spaces, if you are considering a city centre event please call us to discuss what options are available.

We have been busy here revising our application pack and have a new look site licence form that we hope will make it much easier to gain permissions for events in parks and Open Spaces. The form

now captures more information which should (if completed fully) reduce the consultation and assessment time for small and medium sized events. We also have a new member of the team Alex Kerr who will be handling the majority of initial enquires.

On top of that we have been busy developing our web pages and its now possible to access all the necessary paperwork for the licence application and park permit online. This was something that we had a lot of requests for and we are pleased to have the following links now live.

Park Pass

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Leisure-Culture/Arts-Entertainment/park-permits.en>

Event Site Licencing

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Leisure-Culture/Arts-Entertainment/event-application-toolkit.en>

You may also be aware that a new Park Permit scheme is now being trialled for those low risk, small scale events in our smaller parks. We hope that this Permit Scheme and its reduced paperwork will ensure that those small Fun Days and Community events can gain consent to proceed faster and at a lower cost than other larger events.

This time of year as you start to plan for 2011 be aware that we are still only half way through our current financial year. As a team we are working hard at getting the charges for next summer consulted upon and agreed as soon as possible as we are aware that this will factor into your plans for events. Please bear with us on this, we are doing all we can and as soon as we know the schedule of charges for next year, you will too.

On behalf of the Site Licencing Team we would like to wish you all the best with your event planning and your plans for Xmas."

As mentioned at our the meeting the different limits for community events are:

Licensing:

Events up to Up to 50 people - no need to notify Parks (but you are advised to do so to avoid clashes with other events).

50-100 people - parks permit required (not a full licence), £20 fee

100-200 people - licence required - £20 fee

200+ - licence required, fees negotiable.

Insurance:

Groups can apply to be covered under BCC insurance for small events (generally events with less than 200 people expected but maybe with more for low risk events). The insurance cost is included within the £20 licence fee.

To get a copy of the new application form or for more information email

parks.events@bristol.gov.uk

The new form is a Word document and designed to be completed electronically and emailed back. It is also much clearer in saying which parts you need to complete and what you need to provide depending on the size of the event eg 'events with duration of less than 3 hours will not require toilet facilities'.

We were hoping to arrange another workshop session with the events team in November but due to

the difficulties in finding slots in the diary (mostly mine!) it looks like that will probably now be January. If you are interested in taking part in these sessions, which are currently attended by a small group who volunteered at the BPF meeting in October 2009, please let me know. The aim of the workshops is to provide feedback from BPF members on the events licensing processes and to discuss ideas on how it can be improved.

Development Management Policies

The BPF committee response to the consultation on these policies, which were part of the Site Allocations consultation, can be seen here:

http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPF_DMPfeedback.pdf

Town Green Application - Cotswold Road Green

This application was rejected by the Public Rights of Way and Greens Committee on 18 October 2010. The committee accepted the recommendation of the inspector that the application "should be dismissed by reason of the Council's appropriation of the land by decision of the Land and Administration Committee on 21 June 1984, the land was thereafter held on the statutory purposes of Section 9 and 10 of the Open Spaces Act 1906, and the usage made of the land by the local inhabitants thereafter was not 'as of right'."

However the committee resolved that "That Cabinet be requested to voluntarily declare the land known as Cotswold Road as a Town or Village Green."

Details can be found via www.bristol.gov.uk/meetings as always the report and minutes of the meeting are worth reading if you are considering your own Town Green application.

Bristol Parks Website

I have previously mentioned the redirectors or shortcuts that allow you to access parts of the BCC website directly (such as www.bristol.gov.uk/treeforum).

I have now added the list of all the parks related ones to the website at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/redirectors.pdf and I will update this with any new ones that I am told about.

They are particularly useful for emails and in leaflets etc. since the full website address becomes very long.

Spending Cuts

GreenSpace have produced a special Spending Review edition of their Newsletter 'The Bench', which can be seen here:

<http://green-space-updates.org.uk/JEZ-A499-232WRVWM87/cr.aspx>

It includes links to a report, 'Blue Sky Green Space,' which outlines the many benefits that high quality green spaces bring, covering; health, communities, economic and environmental value.

There is also news about the impact of the cuts on DEFRA and the withdrawal of funding from CABA.

Rob Acton-Campbell

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www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

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Area Green Space Plans Consultation

Following the closure of the consultation the webpage at www.bristol.gov.uk/agsp has been simplified. Having been briefly removed after the consultation the 'Ideas and Options' documents for each area are now again available for download.

The AGSP process is likely to be discussed at the Full Council meeting on 16th November, details of the meeting will be at www.bristol.gov.uk/meetings soon.

Background information is at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/pgss.htm

Knowle West Consultation

The options for development in Knowle West are on the Council's website at www.bristol.gov.uk/kwrf This consultation now ends on 12th November 2010.

There is still no news on dates for the consultation about the proposed development at Kingswear Road & Torpoint. The Northern Slopes Initiative are keeping a close eye on this and no doubt any developments will be posted on their website at www.northern-slopes-initiative.co.uk

Planting Places Awards 2011

Please see below message from Lynn Gibbons (Sustainability South West).

Applications are now open for the fourth annual Planting Places awards, celebrating top examples of local greenspace across the South West of England. The awards recognise the input of these spaces in supporting healthy, sustainable communities and acknowledge the people who work to make them special.

Any public greenspace in the South West of England can be nominated for an award; this includes

everything from parks, community gardens and allotments to green routes (ie cycle paths), playing fields and even cemeteries and rooftops. It can be privately funded, NHS Trust, community, conservation group or council land. But the greenspace must be free and accessible to the public, and for public use and enjoyment.

This year, ten 'top example' winners will be chosen, highlighting how local greenspace can have a positive impact on local communities. Winners will be invited to attend an awards ceremony in March 2011.

Planting Places is a partnership project coordinated by Sustainability South West to champion and celebrate local greenspaces and their importance in building sustainable communities. The application form is available on the Planting Places website www.plantingplaces.org.uk (click on the 'awards' page). Completed application forms must be returned to Sustainability South West by 5pm on 29 January 2011.

For more information contact Sustainability South West on 0117 929 0989 or email lynn.gibbons@sustainabilitysouthwest.org.uk

Parks Forum Directory

A reminder that the website has a listing of all groups who are members of the Bristol Parks Forum at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/directory.htm

Any groups wishing to be added to the list need to fill in the membership forms available at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/index.htm#membership to confirm that they comply with requirements of the BPF Terms of Reference.

We were pleased to be able to add two new groups to the list in the past couple of weeks:

Friends of Muller Road Recreation Ground & Downend Park Farm

and

Friends of Okebourne

As with all member groups a brief description of the group and contact details are available by clicking on the link to the group at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/directory.htm . Please let us know if this information needs updating for your group.

We also have a listing of parks and groups at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/parks.htm

The Bench Issue No 59

The latest edition of this newsletter from GreenSpace can be seen at <http://green-space-updates.org.uk/JEZ-A8OC-232WRVWM87/cr.aspx>

Guided Walk at Stoke Park

Steve England will be leading a Geology walk of Stoke Park and the Frome Valley on November 16th meeting at 10 am at the Cameron Centre in Lockleaze and is inviting BPF members to join him. Bristol Parks are still in the process of acquiring Stoke Park and this is an excellent chance to look around this impressive site with a very enthusiastic guide.

Steve says, "we will be looking at the Prehistoric Past of both sites and I will showing my fossil collection too, please ensure that anybody coming along is fully prepared for all weathers and bring food and drink, we will be walking around four miles, a tough day but very enlightening."

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Wild City Project

Some good news from Helen Hall:

I am pleased to let you know that we have now appointed the Wild City Project Officer(s). The job is going to be a job share between Helen Adshead and Paula Spiers.

Some of the parks groups may already know Helen and Paula. Helen previously worked as the South Bristol Riverscapes Project Officer. Paula is currently working as the Avon Frome Development Officer, and will be continuing this post part-time. Both Helen and Paula fought off tough competition to get the job and we are delighted to have them joining Wild City. Their combined experience and knowledge will be a great asset and I know they are excited about getting the project underway. They start on 29th November.

We will be in touch to update you on progress with Wild City in due course.

Fungi Forays

There will be Fugus Foray led by Justin Smith tomorrow (Sunday 14th November) at Old Sneed Park Nature Reserve 1.30 pm.

Justin is very busy leading hunts for fungi at the moment, he was on Troopers Hill last weekend where we had a very successful morning see <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events/10foray.htm>

Parks Reorganisation Workshop Mon 15 December

We have had a good level of interest in this workshop, details of the time and venue have been sent to those who said they would come along.

Full Council Meeting Tue 16 November

You will see from the details published at www.bristol.gov.uk/meetings that the Conservatives have tabled a motion calling on Cabinet to scrap the Area Green Space Plans.

There is also a petition linked to the motion at http://epetitions.bristol.gov.uk/epetition_core/view/SaveOurGreenSpace

Personally I think it would be a disaster for Bristol's parks if the AGSP were scrapped altogether. We would then be back in the position that we were before the P&GSS was adopted, with developers seeing green space as undeveloped land and the Council giving away bits of green space without public consultation. We also need an agreed plan for investment in Bristol's Parks to show where the priorities lie, all the more so if there is less money available than was envisaged when the P&GSS was adopted.

The good news is however that Councillors of all parties have now been saying publicly how important green space is; so I assume that we can look forward to lots of proposals for increases in both revenue and capital spending on parks and green spaces when next year's Council budget is discussed.

Ground v Green

There is another chance for Councillors and others to show their support for protecting green space at the 'Ground v Green' debate to be broadcast live on BBC Radio Bristol and the BBC website at 7pm on Monday, November 29. See <http://tinyurl.com/2fb89ze> for more details.

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Area Green Space Plans

You may have seen that there was a lot of coverage in the Evening Post this week about the AGSPs and the motion that was discussed at the Council Meeting on 16 Nov; see www.bristol.gov.uk/meetings

The BPF committee did not make a statement to the meeting because we did not want to be seen to be supporting any particular Political Party. We are non political and independent of the Council.

A lot of what was said in the paper this week was misleading and gave the wrong impression about what is happening. In particular there was an article about the Section 106 funding that missed the

fact that it is a 20 year strategy so comparing the S106 money available now with what the strategy suggests will be available over 20 years is nonsense.

It is also wrong to give the impression that supporting the strategy means that you support the disposal of all 62 spaces. This is a consultation on 'Ideas and Options'. No decision will be made until the Cabinet meeting on 16th December.

The first indication of which spaces might be listed for disposal will be given in a report to the Quality of Life Scrutiny Commission which meets on 6th December. The report will be available at www.bristol.gov.uk/meetings a week or so beforehand. The report may then be further revised following that meeting with a final version appearing in the papers for the Cabinet meeting; which again will be published a week in advance. Cabinet will then decide the final list.

In accordance with the strategy, any green spaces that remain on the list for disposal will be offered for sale over the following 20 years. The Council have previously said that they will not sell spaces at the current depressed property prices but will wait for prices to recover. Spaces not listed for disposal will be protected for the 20 year life of the strategy, that is well over 95% of Bristol's parks and public green spaces.

The following statement sums up the views of the BPF committee on the P&GSS:

The P&GSS was drawn up to agree a set of minimum standards for parks provision for all residents of Bristol and to agree an investment plan to get those parks up to a good standard. There was a solution agreed by all parties to deal with the under investment in parks; by identifying funding streams to put into the parks that were most important in each neighbourhood to provide the Bristol standard for children's play, formal green space, wildlife areas etc. These particular spaces were to be identified using the distance and quantity standards set out in the strategy. The value of the space to the local community was also one of the criteria that was to be used to identify sites to be retained.

As part of the funding, it was agreed by all parties, political and BPF, that some spaces that were of low amenity value, that is were not needed to ensure that all the residents of Bristol had access to the correct quantity and distance standards of park space, and in some cases were areas where anti social behaviour caused problems to the residents. These could be sold off to fund the investment in the parks and green spaces that did comply with the quantity and distance standards.

The Area Green Space Plans consultation has been just that. A consultation to identify which those spaces that are not highly valued by the community are, so that they can be considered for development, which will bring in the funding needed to invest in the other parks.

Ideas and options have been put forward for consultation. We believe the Parks officers, who have repeatedly said that this exercise is to find out from the local residents what they think about their parks. Parks officers cannot know how each park is valued by the local residents, this is why the consultation exercise has been carried out. It is an information gathering exercise not a proposal to sell off all the green spaces identified in the AGSP ideas and option papers.

We believe that to throw out the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, after all the time and effort put in by local residents to responding to the consultation, would be offensive.

We want to see what the consultation response is - throwing out the P&GSS and the AGSP would mean that we have prevented people from telling the council officers and political administration what they think about their own green spaces. The decision on disposal of spaces was put back to

December from November at the BPF's request so that there would be time for all the responses to be properly considered.

Until we see the report, we and the politicians do not have any grounds to say that the process is flawed.

The officer's report on the consultation process is being drafted. When it is available the BPF committee will be inspecting it to see whether the AGSP consultation process is, as it believes, sound. If a number of parks that have been identified by local people as very important to them are still in the report as being suitable for development, we will be objecting to the Scrutiny Commission and the Cabinet that the criteria for identifying areas for disposal have not been used and that the process is therefore unsound.

There is more information and background at <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/pgss.htm>

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Area Green Space Plans

We have received the following statement about the meeting of the Quality of Life Scrutiny Commission that is to study the disposals proposed in the AGSPs:

"An Extraordinary meeting of the council's Quality of Life Scrutiny Commission will be held at 10am on Wednesday 15 December to discuss the Parks Strategy/Area Green Spaces proposals. This will replace the scheduled discussion that was planned for Monday 6th December. The change in date will allow officers more time to work up final proposals following the huge level of public contributions to the consultation.

The proposals will then be considered by the Council's Cabinet on Thursday December 16th. Members of the public will be able to attend both meetings, make public statements or watch proceedings on the webcast through the council's website - www.bristol.gov.uk/webcast."

This means that the final list of sites proposed for disposal will not now be available on www.bristol.gov.uk/meetings until a week or so before the Cabinet meeting. You may remember that the BPF asked in July for the Cabinet meeting to be postponed from November to December because we were concerned that there would not be time for all consultation responses to be considered.

Neighbourhood Partnerships and Section 106 Money

The Cabinet meeting on 25 November agreed to devolve decisions on spending of some Section 106 money (£5.2m) to Neighbourhood Partnerships. This includes a significant amount of money to be spent on parks. The new arrangements will come into effect in April and training sessions for

NPs are promised before then. Full details can be seen in the report to the Cabinet meetings at www.bristol.gov.uk/meetings

Regardless of your views about Neighbourhood Partnerships this is another reason why Park Groups need to get involved. Contact details for NPs are at <http://bristolpartnership.org/neighbourhood-partnerships>

Over the next few years the the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is likely to replace Section 106 grants for new developments. The new Government has confirmed that the CIL will be introduced and seem to support the idea of control being devolved to Neighbourhoods. The Communities and Local Government website at www.communities.gov.uk says:

"Mr Clark confirmed a Community Infrastructure Levy, introduced by the previous Government in April 2010, would be continued because it provides a fairer system to fund new infrastructure. The levy will give councils the option to raise funds from developers building new projects in their area, and provide a more certain and flexible system for housebuilders, cutting the costs of lengthy legal negotiations.

However, the levy will be reformed to ensure neighbourhoods share the advantages of development by receiving a proportion of the funds councils raise from developers. These will be passed directly to the local neighbourhood so community groups can spend the money locally on the facilities they want, either by contributing to larger projects funded by the council, or funding smaller local projects like park improvements, playgrounds and cycle paths."

A summary of the CIL can be seen here:

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1772927.pdf

Engaging with Bristol Parks

The notes of the workshop session that we held with Bristol Parks on 15 November are now available at www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/Workshop151110.pdf

This workshop was designed to feed into the consultation on the reorganisation of Bristol Parks as discussed at the last full BPF meeting.

I got the impression that everyone who was there thought it was worthwhile and that we should hold similar events in the future. If you would be interested in taking part please let us know.

National Tree Week - 27 November to 5 December 2010

This is national tree week. There are several community tree planting events in Bristol that can be found through www.bristol.gov.uk/treebristol

Another website that might be of interest is <http://VisitWoods.org.uk> which has been set up by the Woodland Trust and lists several areas of woodland in Bristol. There is also a link which allows you to add any that are not listed.

One of the 'woods' listed in Bristol is Arnos Vale Cemetery which has some winter walks and other

events planned over the next few weeks, details are at www.arnosvale.org.uk

There is also Hidden Blaise Guided Walk on 5th December at 10.30am which is listed on www.bristol.gov.uk/events Search under 'event type' for 'Parks and Open Spaces' events, where you will also find the tree planting events.

Geology Walks, Stoke Park & Frome Valley

Following the success of the walk he led on 16 November Steve England has said that he is willing to lead more geology walks in the area if there is a demand. If you or members of your group would like to join a walk please email Steve at newlook388@aol.com and he will try and organise something. Steve's aim is to publicise the area so he does not charge! If you would like to see Steve's personal fossil collection then you can visit the Glenside hospital museum on Wednesday or Saturday mornings.

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