

Bristol Parks Forum Annual General Meeting.

18th October 2025

At the Nissen Hut, Eastville Park.



Attended.

Committee:

Len Wyatt (Chair)
Frances Roberston
Kate Spreadbury
Sarah West
Ted Fowler

Parks represented:

Badocks Wood
Canford Park
Eastville Park
Frome Fairies
Horfield Common
Northern Slopes Initiative
Oldbury Court Estate
Owen Square Park Pals
Redland Green Community Group.
St Andrews Park
Snuff Mills Action Group
Victoria Park Action Group

City Council Councillors attending:

Councillor Lorraine Francis
Councillor Cara Lavan
Councillor Stephen Williams

Bristol City Council officers attending:

Richard Fletcher.
Colin Chapman

Other non-Parks Group attendees:

Your Park: Phillipa Statter
Civic Society: Gill Brown.

Apologies –

Castle Park
Manor Woods Valley Group
Councillors Ed Fraser and Lisa Durston.
Parks Service – Nic Ferris, Kit Beaumont, April Coombs and Richard Ennion.
Your Park – Charlee Bennett and Rob Acton-Campbell

1. Chair's Welcome.

Len thanked the Friends of Eastville Park for organising the room and refreshments, and for helping with the tech. Len reminded the meeting that BPF do not collect membership fees and rely heavily on donations and the support of parks groups and related organisations. Groups or individuals, can help the Forum by making a suggested donation of £10 a year to cover the hire of halls and refreshments etc. Donations are entirely voluntary. If groups, or individuals can pay a little more that would be helpful. However, if you are unable to donate, please come along anyway. Donations by cash or cheque will be accepted at meetings or contact us for our bank account details.

2. The BPF Annual General Meeting.

2.1 The outgoing Chair, Len Wyatt, thanked the committee, Frances, Sarah, Ted and Kate, for all their work this year. Len Wyatt and Ted Fowler are standing down this year. He also thanked Rob and the Friends of Troopers Hill, for their help in running the BPF website. Len also thanked all who have participated in and contributed to BPF this year by attending meetings, emailing in and contributing to particular themes and projects. Len noted that he had no formal annual report to present because BPF activities have been reported in the notes of formal meetings over the year. He also reminded the meeting that the AGM process was circulated in advance.

2.2 Accounts for 2024-2025 were presented by Treasurer Frances Robertson. After leaving Lloyds Bank due to the imposition of regular monthly charges, the BPF account is now with Nat West. Frances thanked BPF members for changing their bank debits as a result of the new account arrangements. The Forum relies on donations to cover the cost of room hire and refreshments, Friends groups are encouraged to donate £10 per year if possible. Groups can also contribute in kind, for example by hosting the BPF website (Troopers Hill) or hosting meetings (Eastville Park, Manor Woods Valley Group.) The BCC Parks Service has offered to pay for hire of rooms as needed in the future. Sadly, the poor acoustics at City Hall means that we cannot take up the Parks Service kind offer of meeting there.

Frances presented a spreadsheet showing £2,908.25 in the BPF bank account plus £9.20 cash. BPF holds £2,790 donated for a project in Castle Park. The intention is to deposit this in a savings account as it may be some time before the Castle Park regeneration project is completed, following which idea as to how the money can be spent will be sought. BPF is also holding £50 in anticipation of the Greenway Centre invoicing for the BPF January meeting. This leaves unrestricted funds of £280.25 in the BPF bank account and £9.20 cash.

Questions from the meeting:

The meeting agreed that the acoustics at Eastville Park were good.

Q: Could Castle park re-donate the funds held by BPF to other Parks as Castle Park will have regeneration resources?

A: The funds were donated for Castle Park only.

The accounts were agreed and approved by the meeting unanimously.

2.3 Elections to formal posts, and agreement on Committee members, informal posts and standing groups. Len read through the 'job description' for each post before asking for nominations. He outlined the voting process, only resident-led Park Groups who are BPF members can vote.

Chair – no nominations.

Vice Chair – no nominations.

Secretary – no nominations.

Treasurer – Frances Roberston volunteered and was agreed unanimously.

Committee Members – current members reflected on their experience of being on the BPF committee, it has been a busy year with the Local Plan etc. but there are periods when life is much quieter! We work collaboratively, and all volunteers who do what we can.

Committee meetings are all on Zoom. This is interesting and important work, Parks and open spaces are all part of how the city works, we can make sure that they are always on the agenda.

Frances Robertson, Sarah West and Kate Spreadbury volunteered and were agreed unanimously. Further committee members can be bought on board as the year progresses.

Len outlined other informal roles that support BPF.

- Note taking – Kate Spreadbury
- Meeting organisers – no volunteers.
- Facebook account manager – Sarah West and Kate Spreadbury
- Technical/IT support – Sarah West.
- Email update organizer and distributor – Frances Robertson and Kate Spreadbury.
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We may also need a Webmaster in the future depending on whether Rob Acton-Campbell continues in this role. Training is available for this role.

- Standing Groups – we have had two standing groups.
- Climate and ecological emergencies

The climate and ecological emergency standing group (Peter (Manor Valley Woods) and Lawrence (Horfield Common)) will continue their interest but not as a Standing Group. It was noted that Bristol City Council will publish their Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan in November/December after it has gone through the Environment and Sustainability Committee and will send someone to talk about the action plan at the BPF January meeting.

- Local Plan.
- We will not be creating any more Standing Groups this year. Len Wyatt (Northern Slopes) will work on the Local Plan until the end of the Main Modifications consultation.

The meeting noted that Ted Fowler is now leaving the committee. He was presented with a token of appreciation and thanked for all his work for BPF over the years.

At the end of the Committee selection process the meeting noted that we have no Chair, Vice Chair or Secretary as required by our Terms of Reference. Frances presented an alternative interim proposal, Portfolio working. Under this arrangement we will share Chairing meetings, each committee member will take a specific theme to lead on.

Comments from the meeting:

- An excellent proposal.
- Sensible as long as senior stakeholders know who to contact and can get debates going outside of the committee arena as needed.
- Disappointment that there are no volunteers as the work of BPF is valuable and appreciated.
- We need to remind BPF members that more than one representative can come from each group.

The meeting asked what benefit the council gets from BPF? Richard Fletcher responded that BPF has been an important sounding board for the council for the last 22 years. He remarked that groups do go through an ebb and flow and many people just want to volunteer in the park, they do not want the extra responsibility of being a BPF representative. The council could present on a specialist subject at meetings to encourage more attendance and the council could also run a further celebrating volunteers event.

Cllr Williams, Chair of the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee said that councillors cannot run the City without BPF and Park volunteers.

3. Farewell to our outgoing Chair, Len Wyatt. Frances Robertson led the thanks to Len for his amazing work with BPF, particularly in leading us through the Local Plan in the last year and in enabling us to participate in the large number of consultations this year. Len was presented with a Richard Mabey book as a thank you for all his hard work and dedicated leadership.

Len reflected on his time as BPF Chair. He thanked all BPF members for their patience and understanding over the years. He was persuaded to stand as Chair by Cllr Ellie King and 'the two Richards' after a really lively BPF meeting. Over this time, he has learned so much, particularly the power of Parks working together and the example of Redcatch and Victoria Park Groups' close relationship. What shines out as being really important is the relationship between us, whether we are Park Group volunteers, councillors or council officers.

END OF AGM

Bristol Parks Forum Ordinary Meeting 18 October 2025.

In the absence of a new Chair Len Wyatt continued to Chair the meeting.

1. Minutes of the meetings April 2025 and July 2025.

The minutes of the two meetings were circulated and comments sought. None have been received. Minutes were also available in print at the meeting. Minutes were accepted and approved by BPF members.

1.1 Matters arising not on the meeting agenda.

From April 2025 minutes:

‘The Committee to write to the Chair of the Public Health and Communities policy group asking for Parks Groups to be represented on the Task and Finish Group on Commercialisation.’ **Action Completed.**

‘BPF Committee to discuss a proposal to convene a meeting on encampments.’ **Action Completed.** The emphasis was changed to enable a consistency of approach on issues like this across Bristol. A meeting is to be held with the Council on this. **Action Outstanding.**

The Council would be happy to talk to the BPF about the policy on tree planting at a future meeting. **Action Outstanding – time to be found for this.**

Updating information on parks and green spaces groups – and changing details of groups on members page of the Forum’s website. Request made via an Update for groups to check their details on the revised website. A number of groups responded, and changes have been made to the list. **Action - Ongoing process.**

From July 2025 minutes:

Item 4 ‘Councillor Fraser said that the (Parks commercialisation and events) task and finish group will look into the question of when Friends groups should be told’.

The task and finish group has not yet reported. Richard Fletcher reiterated that the Parks service will provide stakeholder contact details to event organisers but do not have the capacity to contact Park groups themselves. The expectation is still that events organisers will approach Park Groups themselves. It is important to keep contact details updated on the BPF website so that council permissions can refer to this. **Action: Could members please check and email us at the BPF in to say that the address is current.**

The issue about informing park stakeholders does not yet seem resolved.

Action: Frances Robertson to follow up.

Sarah West is the BPF representative to the task and finish group.

Item 3.2.6 'How can the Parks Forum, City Council and Your Park work better together?'
Action Still ongoing.

Item 5. The "Big Park" in St Phillips Regeneration Area Masterplan. In response to the current consultation the Committee is to issue a press release and send a response in.
Action Completed.

2. From the BPF Committee.

The BPF Committee met once in September. We considered arrangements for the AGM and meeting including how to recruit a new chair and committee, and what it would mean if we did not have a Chair.

Commercialisation

We presented the information collected from groups to the Commercialisation and Events Task and Finish group at the end of August. We know that other groups have met with the group separately.

Vehicle Dwellers issues and policy consultation, what evidence can we provide and how do we respond to the policy consultation?

We asked groups for their experiences which were collated and also asked groups to respond directly to the consultation.

How do we build alliances with other groups?

This is an ongoing issue, but the range of groups is a long one. Some are ongoing such as the work with National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces, Tree Forum and Civic Society, others are relatively new, for example the Allotments Forum etc.

New Facebook page

The forum's Facebook page is nearly ready to go...information to follow.

Big Park at St Phillips

We continue to work on the push for a Big Park and are involved in the consultation work that the Temple Quarter LLP is undertaking. So far, their proposals have only put forward a park that is smaller in area than Sparke Evans Park and nowhere near large enough for the projected residential and employment populations.

Implications of new waste legislation due to come into effect on March 2026 – we do not really know if it will affect facilities in our parks and green spaces.

City Council Green and Blue Infrastructure strategy

We do not know when this will be consulted upon but hope to hear from the Council soon.

Other items are on this Agenda – or held over to the next Committee meeting.

3. Colin Chapman from the Planning Department – the Local Plan and Local Green Space (LGS.)

Colin has been the lead officer developing the Local Plan and in taking the proposed Local Plan through the examination hearings which occurred over a period of about two months earlier this year. As mentioned in other meetings, there is an ongoing discussion about the role of LGS and whether the designation will be in the new Local Plan. Bristol Parks Forum has been working with the Civic Society and Tree Forum to try and find ways of trying to improve the current situation, as we feel that it is really important that Bristol has LGS designations. BPF members should write to their local councillors asking what they think.

Colin outlined what the Local Plan (LP) is and how it is used for dealing with Planning Development proposals, the LP would be referred to regarding any planning application involving a green space.

Bristol's LP was proposing to introduce a new designation, Local Green Space (LGS), as described in the National Planning Policy Framework. The designation of LGS through the LP allows local communities to designate green spaces that are important to them. Colin said that the BCC use of the LGS designation had unintentionally introduced a hierarchy of protection, with LGS afforded the greatest amount of protection for the longest time

The draft Bristol Local Plan designated 173 parks and green spaces as LGS with remaining green spaces designated Reserved Open Space (ROS.) As well as LGS and ROS Colin explained that other policies will be relevant for parks and green spaces, for example areas of regeneration.

The Draft Local Plan must be examined by the Planning Inspectors at the Examination in Public (EIP). Inspectors check against national policy and make recommendations. The recommendations must be accepted for the Local Plan to be approved.

The inspectors concluded that the LGS designation was not justified in the way that it was described in the draft LP. The Inspectors were not saying that those LGS sites were not important, but they recommended that LGS spaces should become ROS, not LGS in the Bristol Local Plan. LGS is a voluntary designation, it does not have to form part of the Local Plan.

The Implications.

This would mean that the status of parks and green spaces would be similar to the existing Local Plan where Parks are described as 'Important Local Space'. LGS added an extra layer of long-term protection, and LGS weighs heavily in planning decisions and presumption in favour of sustainable development. Some Bristol LGS sites remain because they were designated as part of a Neighbourhood Development Plan, for example in Lawrence Weston - <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/6983-lawrence-weston-ndp-made-plan/file>

What next?

Once the Council has completed its Main Modifications for resubmission to the Inspectors there will be a consultation. This will be comments only which the Inspectors have to take into account. In Colin's experience the Inspectors are unlikely to make changes to their recommendations.

Questions from the meeting, with Colin's responses:

Q Will the same Inspectors also review the council's Main Modifications?

A Yes

Q Have LGS designations been rejected elsewhere?

A: Inspectors do vary in their approach but are keen to ensure that the use of LGS was needed to achieve the objectives in the Local Plan. How can LGS be special if there are 175 of them in Bristol?

Q. Is the rejection of LGS a national issue?

A; Not as far as Colin is aware.

Q: Does council ownership of land make us more vulnerable?

A: Ownership of land has no bearing.

Q: Which Local Plan are we currently working with?

A: The previous Local Plan applies until the new Local Plan is adopted, although its provisions can be taken into account.

Q Does the Local Plan affect Green spaces with special protection – Town and Village Greens etc.

A: The LP does not affect these, or indeed common land.

Q: Who are the inspectors and where are they from?

A –The Inspectors are appointed by the Secretary of State and are drawn from the Planning Inspectorate. They are independent of the local area. They are objective.

Q: How can the council obtain land for new Parks?

A: This is not addressed through the LP.

Q: Can incoming government legislation on planning override the LP?

A: The Local Plan will continue to have status beyond the implementation of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

Q: What is the designation of Bristol Parks now?

A: Under the current LP they are 'Important Open Spaces'.

Q: What are the implications of the change of designation not being first tier of protection?
A – ‘Important local space is similar to ROS. This still locks in the requirement to retain a Park as a Park, but the LGS designation gives an extra level of protection. Open Spaces of public value are supposed not to be built on and the requirement to prove that the open space is no longer needed or no longer important to the community still apply. The difference is in the weight and permanence of the designation. But there is no indicator at all that any of the 174 sites could be built on.

Q: Why do the inspectors think the designation is unsuitable?

A: The Inspectors have said that the designated areas are too large and there is no evidence of local importance within the BCC submission. The areas are better described as ROS.

Q: Can we challenge the Inspector’s recommendation?

A: No, the Inspectors conclusion cannot be reversed. It is difficult to have LGS spaces that are large.

Q: Can the LP be reviewed, what is the process of this?

A: A review of the Local Plan will take place in time. It may have to be reviewed quickly as it will need to fit into the WECA Spatial Strategy as well as any new requirements from the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

Q: Are then any other ways BCC can protect the spaces?

A: Neighbourhood Development Plans can be used. However national planning policy continues to be that existing local space including playing fields should not be built on.

Q: With the designation change and push to build houses in Bristol how can we push the message that spaces that are important for well-being and wildlife are just as important as play spaces

A: Existing parks are not earmarked for development, national policy continues to apply. Parks will be ROS so it will be clear they are not intended for housing.

Q: Are there any opportunities for incremental decisions before the Local Plan is completed?

A: No, once the Modifications are agreed the Local Plan is complete. Do get involved in the post Main Modifications consultation however.

Q: Can we go to the Secretary of State?

A: There is no pathway to do that, and it is likely be that the Secretary of State will say the Inspector has spoken. We should look to see if there are any changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Q: Is there a precedent?

A: Some Local Plans have no LGS at all.

4. Looking to the future – Bristol City Council Policy Committee and Parks Service.

4.1 Updates from the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee – Cllr Stephen Williams, Chair.

Cllr Williams commended out going Chair Len Wyatt for attending every meeting of the PHC Policy Committee meeting. The Report of the Task and Finish Group on commercialisation opportunities, festivals and events in Parks will be published in the first week in November. BCC has made a significant investment in Parks of £1.1 million, last year the emphasis was on balancing the books. This year the case will be made for more investment, spending Community Infrastructure money on Parks and Libraries, not just on roads.

Castle Park – 32 years ago no one lived in the city Centre, now thousands do with more to come. We need more investment in Castle Park and a new Park in St Phillips.

4.2 Updates from the Parks Service – Richard Ennion.

There are currently three live and significant projects in Bristol:

- Managing for Nature

This is a two-year £1 million project about managing council land better for nature. £400,000 came from the BCC capital budget and £600,000 from WECA. The aim is to increase the amount of council owned land managed for nature from 15% to 30%. The project has been running for a year and has seen significant progress in the grassland management. Of the 60 hectares in the programme, 20 are hay cut, 30 are on the cut and collect regime and 10 hectares are meadows. With the purchase of new machinery, the cut and collect regime is currently in the learning phase. All feedback is welcome. Hayley Swift and team are keen to meet up; there is also a new Managing for Nature ranger across the city. To find out more see <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/museums-parks-sports-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/managing-green-spaces-for-nature>

- Ash Dieback

BCC has been tackling Ash Dieback since 2012. There is a live programme with £2.8 million funding from the BCC Capital Programme. The risk-based approach recognises the importance of replacing the lost tree canopy and will increase the tree canopy by 10 hectares in green spaces. Look out for information on tree planting published in October/November – see <https://services.bristol.gov.uk/residents/museums-parks-sports-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/trees-and-meadows/tree-planting-programme>

- Nature, Towns and Cities – ‘Nature Together’

The Nature Together project will start in January, funded by £984,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The aim is to help improve nature and make it easier for people to enjoy and benefit from urban green spaces. The project will take a collaborative approach to working with communities to develop their plans for nature and improving access to green and blue spaces. The project will also create opportunities for volunteering,

community-led action, developing skills and exploring new ways of funding for nature recovery. BCC is currently recruiting a core team to support the three community projects who were selected from 18 applications to test and learn the collaborative approach. More information will follow.

4.3 Tree planting.

Under the BCC Tree Strategy, the key criteria for increasing the tree canopy are:

- Is there a deficit?
- Urban heat stress – keeping Bristol cool.
- Nature recovery – trees as habitat.

The key principle is 'right tree, right place' and the 20/30/10 rule – family, genus and species.

Spreading risk and looking at what trees are needed in the area are also important. In November the Council Climate Action Plan will be published. The council will commit to reviewing tree plans, there is an opportunity to refine the species plan.

Questions from the meeting, with responses:

Q: There is no mention of Parks in the current budget consultation – is this is good news?

A: Cllr Stephen Williams: There are no plans to cut Parks Budgets, but there is an emphasis on how to raise income.

Q: What does 'limited investment opportunities' mean?

A: Cllr Stephen Williams: £1.1 Million from the BCC Capital Budget was allocated to Parks in November, beyond that there is no other significant capital pot dedication. The BCC Capital Budget is dedicated to crucial works – repairs, the New Cut, Bridges. We need prevention investment in Parks and Libraries, this is in the Corporate Plan and the One City Plan but is not funded.

Q: Where do the arisings from the cut and collect go?

A: Richard Ennion: There are challenges about dealing with the arisings, particularly difficult this year because of the drought, all the cut and collects happened at the same time in the autumn. We either lose them on-site or take them to Avonmouth.

Q: When are local people asked about what they think about the mowing regimes, meadows and tree planting? People worry about long grass and accessible access.

A: Richard Ennion: Bristol has a large footprint of grassland which could be a 'green dessert'. People need to understand that Parks are dynamic, grass will grow but the council will always cut paths through grassland. There is still live feedback on Cut and collect, the council wants to understand how big spaces are being used and where the new

regime is not working we can make changes, it is easier to change grass regimes than trees! Feedback on <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/museums-parks-sports-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/managing-green-spaces-for-nature>

Q: How can we move the piles of grass cuttings left by the cut and collect machine on Horfield Common?

A: Richard Ennion: Hayley Swift (Hayley.Swift2@bristol.gov.uk) can have conversations with you about this. We are trying to get the logistics right, hopefully this will not continue.

5. Your Park

Philippa Statter told the meeting about the successful joint Council/Your Park Branching Out gathering, 70 people from Parks across Bristol attended. All the presentations and more can be found here <https://padlet.com/seolaking/branching-out-park-volunteers-further-information-pack-qv010996vt3zqoy3>

Phillipa gave an overview of the projects Your Park is involved with, including the major 'Parks for All' project in South Bristol and Bath, with workshops on accessibility. Read more here <https://yourpark.org.uk/parks-4-all>

Roots to Wellbeing is running in Eastville Park and Hillfields with a new group for Arabic speaking women being piloted at Easton family centre. There is a survey out on Your Park's future strategy – closed on 24th October.

6. What does the Parks Forum look like in the future?

BPF Committee members Frances Robertson and Kate Spreadbury presented some ideas about the fundamental purpose of BPF. The presentation is here

<http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/BPFwhatisit181025.pdf>

These thoughts will inform a survey going out to all BPF members in the near future and ultimately, a review of the terms of reference.

The meeting was asked if we are we missing anything?

Members thought that learning from each other and visiting each other's parks and green spaces was an important element of the Forum. It is really valuable to meet council officers and councillors face to face for conversations. BPF members want interesting information that they can share with members in maybe a monthly update. Should we reach out to the Sports Community? We need somewhere to share practical tips – for example what to plant – and worries – what have others experienced with encampments for example. Park groups are so diverse, and some people just want to work in the park and not get bogged down with committees and meetings etc.

Action: The future of BPF on the agenda for the next full meeting.

Sarah West added that it will be interesting to know what works, what doesn't, what you need more of. How do you want the committee to communicate with you? We need the 70 plus groups signed up to tell us if we are doing what you want – please look at the BPF Terms of Reference on the website and complete the BPF survey coming soon. **Action: All BPF members.**

7. Submitting a bid for Community Infrastructure Levy.

Jo Corke from Friends of St Andrews Park shared the experience of applying for a Community Infrastructure levy (CIL) grant. The Friends group has been going since 1990; in 2013 the Friends built a new pond in the park. Wear and tear has meant that the pond needs to be replaced so the Friends looked around for Funds, exploring several routes before going down the CIL route, supported by their local councillor, Tim Wye, and Teija Ahjokoski, Park Service Operational Coordinator. The CIL bid reached the second stage but could not progress as, from 2024, CIL monies cannot be allocated to unincorporated organisations, only CICs, charities etc. The process had been hugely time consuming and stressful. Friends of St Andrews Park have a good track record on use of public monies, have a bank account and are publicly constituted. They strongly advocate that the process should change.

Cllr Williams advised that the process has indeed changed. Area Committees will consider local groups such as Scouts – but they usually have background national backing. Ward councillors can also make direct submissions for CIL.

8. Bristol Urban Nature Map.

A Bristol Urban Nature Map is planned for publication in January 2026. Urban Good, the organization creating it has produced maps for London and Edinburgh amongst other places. Len had a copy of the London Urban Nature Map for the meeting to look at. The Forum Committee has contacted the Bristol map people, and we will be liaising with them. This is a link to their website - <https://www.urbangood.org/>

Note: they have reached their crowdfunding target for the Bristol map.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 Parkhive App – the BPF Committee now have a copy of all of the photos from the Park Hive App and the 2016 UWE exhibition, 9GB of information. We are not sure what we are going to do with them; all thoughts are welcome.

Next Forum Meeting

The next Bristol Parks Forum Meeting is on Saturday 31st January, 09.30 for 10.00 a.m. start at the Greenway Centre, Doncaster Road, Southmead, next to Badock's Wood.