

Minutes of Bristol Parks Forum Meeting

16th July 2026 On Zoom

Attended.

Committee:

Frances Robertson (Treasurer)

Kate Spreadbury (Chair for this meeting and Minutes)

Sarah West

Parks Groups represented:

Badock's Wood

Cumberland Basin including Sylvia Crowe Park

Eastville Park

Manor Woods Valley

Northern Slopes Initiative

Oldbury Court Estate

Redland Green Community Gardens.

St Andrews Park

Snuff Mills

Victoria Park

Other organisations:

Charlee Bennett – Your Park.

Apologies:

Richard Fletcher – Bristol City Council.

Rob and Susan Acton-Campbell – Troopers Hill.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kate Spreadbury welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Approval of April 2026 Minutes

The minutes were approved as an accurate record. Frances was thanked for the explanation of Local Green Space (LGS) she gave in item 4.1. This was useful in clarifying the LGS issue for people who were concerned that parks were about to close.

We noted that some media were saying that parks had lost protection, however we have lost the LGS strength of protection.

3. Matters arising not on the Meeting agenda.

3.1 BPF to write to the council to raise concerns that the Parks and Green Spaces strategy is not being taken into account in planning decisions. Action: Frances Robertson.

Frances submitted a written statement to the PCH committee of 1st May 2026, followed by a verbal statement at the Committee. For the BPF statement go to <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=659&MId=11668&Ver=4> Public Forum Report. I think we wrote to committee chairs and got response from leader's office. FR to check

3.2 Update on Parks Forum Survey.

15 surveys have now been received, all from active members of BPF. The meeting though it would be good to hear from groups who do not attend too. Of the 15 responses 13 agree with the purpose of BPF as stated in the terms of reference. Of the 2 who do not no alternative text. However, the most mentioned concern about the terms of reference is what constitutes a 'group', how people meet and organise has changed since COVID with more activity organised through social media etc. Ideas for other groups at meetings include Bristol and Avon Rivers Trust (BART), Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT), Forest Of Avon Trust, West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and West of England Nature Partnership (WENP). The most useful aspects of the meeting are reports from council officers plus questions and answers, and networking/support from other park groups. Having a slot for park groups to share what they are up to plus shorter meetings were also mentioned. Respondents appreciated hearing about city-wide developments in the regular BPF Updates.

Action: Email park groups separately with link to Survey to try to get more input before the AGM on October 17th (Kate Spreadbury)

4. Report from the Parks Forum Committee

4.1 LGS / Local Plan Update (Frances Robertson)

[Link to slides here.](#)

Colin Chapman, who attended BPF meetings with Local Plan updates over the years, has now retired. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the government's national planning policies for England and how these should be applied at the local level, is currently being revised. A consultation on draft policy concluded in March 2026. A new NPPF is expected over the summer (update: published August 2026)

In Bristol it is hoped that the Inspectors will complete their work on the proposed/emerging Local Plan over the summer with sign off in the Autumn. This Local Plan will run until 2040. BPF submitted a response to the final modifications around the issue of Local Green Spaces (LGS) – <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/ProtectLGS240226.pdf>.

There is currently no LGS designation in Bristol which is unusual in any local authority area.

Informally, the Council Leader, Tony Dyer, has indicated he will be supportive of getting LGS designations back in Bristol in the new Local Plan.

Members noted that the City Council will need to “model” the effects of proposed LGS designations against the need for development.

However, the timetable for a new Bristol Local Plan, known as the Bristol Local Plan 2045, has been published with the Notice to Commence published on 30th June. The scoping consultation, which will inform what is included in this new Local Plan, will take place from the 7th to 28th September. This will be a compressed and faster process. The new Local Plan must progress through three Gateways, each Gateway must be passed for the Plan to progress.

Gateway 1 (31st October) – publication of Bristol’s self-assessment which should demonstrate to Government that Bristol has the right direction and approach to the new Local Plan.

Gateway 2 (7th August 2027) – the council will seek advice and initial observations from an assessor on whether the plan is “sound” and can meet the requirements of Gateway 3.

Gateway 3 (1st July 2028) the council will seek advice and observations from an assessor as to whether the Plan can go to examination

The intention is for the new Local Plan to be submitted for examination on the 2nd October 2028, adoption is planned for 30th April 2029.

What will happen if the Local Plan does not pass Gateway 1? Or indeed does not meet the Inspectors requirements? We heard about the fate of Wiltshire County Council whose Local Plan had to be withdrawn in May 2026 during its Examination in Public. The Government told the Council to start again. If this occurs a local authority has to fall back on the previous Local Plan whilst developing a new Plan.

There are changes to Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), masterplans or regeneration plans during the NPPF transition. There can be no new SPDs after the 26th June whilst the new mechanisms, ‘Supplementary Plans’ are brought in. Existing SPDs will remain in force. In the proposed/emerging Local Plan the role that masterplans and frameworks have in influencing planning applications in Central Bristol, and possibly

other areas, is likely to change. The original text is proposed to change to proposals “should have regard to...”, rather than the stronger “will be expected to accord with”:

For example:

“Place principles

Development of proposals in Bristol Temple Quarter should have regard to any approved development framework, masterplan and infrastructure delivery plan for the area.”

4.2 Big Park Campaign (Frances Robertson)

[Link to slides here.](#)

Frances is leading this BPF campaign. She noted that the area could have at least 10,000 homes (potentially 25,000 people living there). Student accommodation is listed separately in the land use summary; it is not clear that the student numbers are in addition to this population. There is still no ‘Big Park’ in the SPD and a reliance on small or existing green/blue spaces for this large population. The proposed green spaces (see *slide on the Illustrative Masterplan and the Future of St Phillips Marsh*) are smaller than the existing Sparke Evans park and the larger areas no bigger than or the same size as College Green. Using calculations based on Bristol’s Parks and Green Spaces strategy there should be green areas of 19.375 hectares, instead there are 2.3 hectares of new parks and 4.6 hectares if Sparke Evans Park is included. What quality of life will people living in the area have? No space to play a good game of football or rounders, no green spaces to walk or have family picnics, or meet friends– remember how small many of the apartments will be. No cool spaces to stay in the shade as UK temperatures increase. See the summary of BPF draft response on the last slide.

The meeting approved the statement summary with one amendment – rather than ‘mealy- mouthed’ use the term ‘inadequate.’

4.3 Commercialisation – Parks Licensing Scheme – (Kate Spreadbury)

Kate submitted questions and statements on behalf of BPF to the May 2026 Public Health and Communities Policy Committee (PH&C) and also gave a verbal statement. BPF requested the publication of the Equalities Impact Assessment and any other relevant papers relating to the original decision, made in 2017 under the previous administration. Kate also attended the PH&C Committee on the 26th June where officers updated the committee on the first few months of the scheme’s implementation.

BPF submitted written and verbal statements to this committee too, asking for the adoption of a tiered level of fee scheme similar to that in other local authorities with not for profit community groups being licensed at no charge.

At the time of the committee 87 applications for a Parks Business Licence had been received, 69 of these were from commercial dog walkers. The scheme had not

generated as much revenue as hoped, around £24,000. An amendment from Green councillors was passed at the committee which would retain the scheme but introduce a 75% discount for Bristol based businesses with a turnover of less than £15k a year, and a 50% discount for those with a turnover of £15-£25,000 per year. This will reduce the income from the scheme to around £19,975 per annum.

The Public Health and Communities Committee agreed that the scheme was now more about public safety than commercialisation. The Chair indicated that charities and CICs might have more favourable terms and invited those in the gallery to approach him. It is not known if the Chair has any powers to offer any changes to individual groups.

The scheme will come back to the PH&C committee in November. BPF will continue to monitor the impact of the scheme where possible. **Action: Kate Spreadbury.**

5. Parks Quality Framework Development - Charlee Bennett, Your Park.

Charlee told the meeting that Your Park has received funding as part of the Nature Together programme to develop a Bristol Parks Quality Framework. This will take 18 months to produce and is being led by Joy, working for Your Park part-time in a 2.5 days a week post.

The purpose of the exercise is to create a unified standard for parks across Bristol. The 'destination' parks will not be included but the focus will be on community parks. Bristol City Council has no Green Flag award parks (see <https://www.greenflagaward.org/> for where awards have been given in our surrounding local authorities) and wants to invest in flagship sites. Knowing what success looks like in parks will lead to better investment decisions. Your Park have had interesting conversations with Leeds and Birmingham, Leeds developed the Leeds Quality Park standards ten years ago, based on the Green Flag standards, 73% of community parks in Leeds currently achieve the Leeds Quality standards.

Your Park will use a co-design approach to ensure that communities and stakeholders have a say in what matters to them most. They will be connecting with health, nature organisations, play people etc, as well as us as a Parks Forum. Your Park is planning workshops with communities in different locations across Bristol, Clifton, St Pauls, Hartcliffe, Fishponds and Sea Mills. These will be fact finding about existing strategies. Your Park is also willing to hold a virtual meeting with members of Bristol Parks Forum if we are interested.

Action: Charlee will send BPF the pre community workshop information and organise a BPF session online.

Discussion. Charlee is using outputs from the Future Parks work. It was also recalled

that Steve Clampin developed a parks quality assessment in 2017. Charlee will approach Steve.

What are 'destination parks' and which parks have this designation? Are 'destination parks;' funded differently from other parks? BPF members thought that there were various park designations including 'destination', 'district', 'neighbourhood' etc.

Action: BPF Committee to write to Richard Fletcher asking about the different park designations and what they mean in reality.

Members also noted that the school holidays start next week so it will be important to get the dates out soon for families, a demographic that depends on parks, to engage. Charlee was advised that school newsletters go out at end of term so essential to get information out about consultations for this deadline. BPF members social media groups can help to push the message out.

6. Bristol Parks Service Responses to previously submitted questions.

Park Service officers could not be at the meeting but invited any BPF questions to be submitted beforehand for written answers for the meeting.

Question 1: Unlicensed events in parks - especially those that use amplified equipment. The police response is poor and people are frustrated by massive stacks of speakers with generators turn up every sunny day. With residents recording high sound levels within their homes, with the windows shut, what is the Parks Service doing to tackle this?

Written answer from Richard: I think I would need more specifics on noise nuisance, and then perhaps Caroline will know if we are taking any specific action. In general, there are clear and obvious routes to enforcing against this sort of antisocial behaviour and calling the police is likely the right approach. In the past there have been persistent offenders who are known to both the events team and regulatory services and if they are licenced to operate elsewhere then seeking to restrict their permitted route can be an option. The Parks Service is not an enforcing service and therefore when there are nuisance or criminal issues in parks we report these to the agencies that are. I would suggest residents doing this direct is still the right call. Of course, if residents choose to report to the Parks Service we will pass that information on. We will gather evidence as required by enforcing agencies. People often point to byelaws for nuisance behaviour, but the council has yet to proceed to court for a byelaw breach and for noise it is almost certain that enforcement would be carried out under other legislation. The byelaw that relates to excessive noise nuisance is slightly odd in that a park user (not adjacent homeowner) should first ask the offender to desist and then report it (to the police) if

they do not. The nuisance has to be experienced by a park user.

Caroline Ennion later clarified that if the noise nuisance is caused by an organised event this needs to be registered at: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/contact/complaints-and-feedback/contact-with-the-council>

This can then be investigated.

Illegal raves, these need to be reported to the police while they are happening. They can also be reported to the council so that we can work with the police on resolving the situation. I am not aware of any raves happening this year in Stoke Park.

Question 2: The St Philips Marsh Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Parks Forum is continuing to push for more parks and green spaces provision, but the latest version of the SPD (now a Masterplan) has not increased the green space in its proposals and if anything looks less (partly because the illustrations seem to be half hard surfaces half lawns!). Do you know whether the provision for new parks (not including the existing Sparke Evans Park) meets the minimum standard in the PGSS and can you advise us how to calculate it?

Written answer from Richard: in terms of St Philips Marsh, I haven't been able to be involved in this for some time. It was clear early on that an area of green space able to meet the PGSS requirements, particularly given the population uplift expected, was unlikely deliverable. I would need to check with the Regeneration Team what the figures amount to. I will try and do that today'.

The meeting asked if the following questions could also be put to Richard:

As above – park designations and what they mean?

Redland Green – when does cut and collect take place? Can timings be varied? Is Redland Green part of the cut and collect scheme? More information on how the council manages grasslands for nature here:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/museums-parks-sports-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/managing-green-spaces-for-nature>

How can I contact a play officer? Sarah West also shared that Eastville have been in touch with a play officer, Cyd Myhill, regarding a CIL bid for play equipment and will update on the experience in the future.

7. Tribute to Jo Moore.

Frances shared the sad news that Jo Moore of the Eastwood Farm group has passed away after 14 years living with cancer. Jo was one of the main drivers behind Eastwood

Farm group for the last 10 years or so and inspired with her great enthusiasm. She will be much missed.

8. Next BPF Meeting – The AGM

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 17th October in the Nissan Hut at Eastville Park. Meet at 9.30 for refreshments and mingle, meeting starts at 10 am promptly and finishes at 12.30. There will be another 30 minutes for conversations after the meeting.

Volunteers for the committee, note taking and publicity etc will be greatly appreciated. Thanks to Jo from St Andrews for minuting the AGM! Similar offers for other meetings would be appreciated.