

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)
Minutes of meeting held at the Southville Centre on 11 May 2006

Present:

Ben Barker, Margaret Fay, Steve Fay, Roy Gallop, Tess Green (Chair), Stuart Lees, John Purkiss (Minutes), Chris Whale, Tracy Whale, Katie White, Martha van der Lem, Jo Young.

Apologies:

Denise Cheung, Matthew Symonds.

1. Welcome

Tess welcomed everyone to the meeting and all present introduced themselves.

2. Review of recent activities

John, Ben and Roy summarised recent activities carried out by FrANC including:

- Clean-ups
- Guided walks
- Liaison with Bristol City Council + Living Rivers Project
- Wildlife leaflet and interpretation boards
- Butterfly Junction + Ashton Junction Wildlife Partnership
- A new book about the Cut.

Special mention was made of the support received from the Living Rivers Project.

3. Future activities

A discussion took place to identify ideas for future activities and events. These were:

1. Continue with clean-ups. Identify large items of hard-to-reach rubbish that may need to be removed by people with specialist equipment (eg. the fire brigade or the South Bristol Caving Club). Remove graffiti.
2. Maintain contact with the Harbour Master and keep him informed.
3. Increase public access to the Cut by improving the Gaol Ferry Slipway and the sitting area adjacent to Vauxhall Bridge. Consider provision of wheelchair access to these areas. Caution was expressed that increasing public access could be detrimental to wildlife on the Cut.
4. Continue community action to reduce traffic speed on roads alongside the Cut. The support of City Councillors could be sought on both sides of the Cut.

5. Continue with themed walks – history, wildlife and trees were suggested.
6. Engage more groups who are likely to have an interest in the Cut and/or the Ashton Junction Wildlife Partnership, eg. Bristol Naturalists Society, Sustrans.
7. Work to establish the Cut as a recognised “Local Nature Reserve”.
8. Encourage the BBC (or other media company) to produce a wildlife documentary of the Cut.
9. Continue to produce newsletters and ensure that people living adjacent to the Cut are kept informed.
10. Communicate with supporters via a FrANC e-mail list.
11. Establish contact with businesses that operate alongside the Cut and involve them in FrANC activities. Involve the Spike Island arts project in arts activities.
12. Develop Jo’s proposed project of involving school children in collecting images of buildings and specific shapes visible along the Cut and putting them on ceramic tiles glazed with mud from the riverbanks.
13. Develop Matthew’s idea of producing some arts installations including a large, colourful ceramic cockerel to commemorate the famed Coronation Chicken.
14. Investigate ways in which green energy might be generated from the Cut, eg. by harnessing the tide or using the outflows from the tributaries.
15. Keep an eye on planning applications that may affect the Cut, and alert people to potential conflicts of interest.
16. Hold awareness raising events, eg. on bridges (especially when morning and evening commuters are crossing them), street parties, etc.
17. Obtain funding to carry out improvements and run events.

Offers:

- Chris offered to see if the South Bristol Caving Club would be willing to assist with a clean-up of hard-to-reach refuse along the banks of the Cut (subject to City Council approval and adequate insurance cover).
- Stuart offered to organise a party to clean graffiti off the wall by the railway line close to the bridge over the line on Cumberland Road.
- Martha offered to take some “Discovering Wildlife on the Avon New Cut” leaflets to the Spike Island arts project and to try and make contact with them.

4. A constitution for FrANC

John outlined the advantages of establishing FrANC as a formal group – notably to raise its profile, increase its recognition, and become eligible for funding. He introduced a proposed constitution for FrANC. A question was raised regarding the possible need for the insertion of a clause regarding insurance cover and a disclaimer of responsibility. It was agreed that advice would be sought from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations or equivalent body.

Ben Barker proposed that the constitution be accepted, with the extra clause added if it is found to be necessary. Roy Gallop seconded the proposal and the constitution was accepted unanimously.

5. Election of a committee

The following people were nominated to form the first committee: Tess Green, Stuart Lees, John Purkiss, Tracy Whale, Jo Young. Ben Barker proposed that all five be elected. Katie White seconded the proposal, which was agreed unanimously.

Following further discussion, the meeting approved the following committee members to fill the officer posts:

- Chair Tess Green
- Vice Chair Stuart Lees
- Secretary John Purkiss
- Treasurer Tracy Whale

6. Closing comments

Tess thanked everyone for attending the meeting and looked forward to seeing people again at forthcoming events and meetings.