

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)
Minutes of meeting held at the Southville Centre on 17 April 2008

1. Present

Helen Adshead (Riverscapes project worker), Ben Barker, Charlie Bolton, John Davis, Margaret Fay, Roy Gallop, Tess Green (Chair), Ed Hall, Adrian Mantle, John Purkiss (minutes), Martha van der Lem, Tracy Whale, Sara Worth, Jo Young.

2. Apologies

Sean Beynon, Steve Fay, Chris Hanmer, Derek Hughes, Royston Griffey, Paul van der Lem.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2008 were agreed as correct.

4. Treasurer's report

Tracy reported that our funds now stand at £1075.15. Expenditure since the last meeting amounted to £939.89 (£100.46 on room hire, £125.95 on volunteer expenses, £51.96 on stationery and printing, £661.52 on a new leaflet and poster). A question was raised as to whether we should apply for a £50,000 "People's Millions" award from the Lottery / ITV. It was decided that we have not currently got an appropriate project that is sufficiently well developed to apply for grant funding.

5. Reports

Power from the Cut

Paul has recorded some figures on river flows, which Tess has sent to Loadpoint Ltd. We await news from John Sweet regarding the design of a potential turbine to be placed in the Cut. **Tess** to arrange a meeting of the Energy Working Group.

Riverscapes project

- Adrian is FrANC's representative on the South Bristol Riverscapes project steering group. Other waterways with support groups currently include Brislington Brook, the Malago (Bishopsworth) and the Malago (Windmill Hill). New groups may be developed for Colliter's Brook, Pigeonhouse Stream and the Malago (Bedminster). Adrian reported on the first meeting of the steering group.
- He noted that FrANC is the most active of the groups currently involved in the project, and that we are already meeting many of the project objectives (cleanups, events, etc). One objective still to be met is to involve people in improvement of the Cut between Bedminster Bridge and Temple Meads. It was suggested that St Mary Redcliffe School, Bart Spices and residents of flats on Bedminster Bridge roundabout and Redcliffe might be approached.
- Helen reported that awareness-raising events to celebrate rivers and estuaries in Bristol are being planned for the period 4-19 October – all linked to the Avon Biodiversity Action Plan. Helen asked if FrANC would like to be involved (see item 6).

Chocolate Path

John reported on a meeting he had with Richard Smith (Docks Manager) regarding future maintenance of the Chocolate Path. Richard thinks that the Highways department cut down all the plants on the Chocolate Path, following complaints from cyclists and pedestrians that the path was becoming overgrown. He accepted our concern about the loss of plants last summer, and placed on record our request that in future the plants be cut back after the flowering season and that plants growing up the railings adjacent to the railway be retained wherever possible.

Clean-ups and litter

- FrANC has used a grant from the Safer Bristol Partnership to employ a contractor to clean up the steep bank on Coronation Road opposite ASDA. The work was completed in early March, but litter has already reappeared – largely because of ASDA's failure to take measures to prevent litter blowing across the road from their car park (which the store manager said he would do). John has written again to ASDA, and the Council's "Waste and Streetscene Enforcement Officer" has visited the manager – a new person who appears to be more interested in the local community than the previous one was (time will tell if this is really the case).
- The same officer has also visited staff at the Jet garage and TES tyres on Coronation Road regarding rubbish dumped on the riverbank at the rear of their premises. Steps are being taken to clean up the mess. Ben has written to these businesses and several neighbouring businesses to inform them about FrANC and our efforts to clean up the Cut, and to request them to do their bit to help.
- Tess has surveyed the Cut with Tanya Darch (Bristol Living Rivers Project) to identify debris on the riverbed, which the Docks Manager has undertaken to remove.
- The South Bristol Caving Club has kindly offered to carry out another clean-up on the more inaccessible areas of the riverbank later in the year.
- John has met with a Council officer from Waste Services, who has agreed to install a new litterbin adjacent to God's Garden on Cumberland Road.

6. Plans for 2008

Three further events were agreed for this year:

- A guided walk to discover the wildflowers on the Cut, to start at 2pm one Sunday in June or July (depending on the availability of a guide). FrANC's AGM to be included in the event – possibly at the Spike Island café. **John** to organise.
- A walk around the Cut in October to highlight wildlife that can be seen and the Cut's importance as a wildlife corridor close to the city centre. **John** to discuss a suitable date in association with **Helen** (see Riverscapes report in item 5).
- An event to discover and record beetles on the Cut. **Ben** to organise.

7. Plans for 2009

Events to celebrate next year's 200th anniversary of the completion of the Cut were discussed. Suggestions of holding a major event (eg. a street party with road closure) have been made, but this was felt to be beyond our capacity to organise. The only way we could run a big event would be to secure substantial funding and employ somebody to do the bulk of the work on our behalf. **Charlie** offered to find out if the Council is planning a celebration of either the Cut or the Harbour in 2009.

Several people offered to help organise activities that were within our capability, and we felt that the following programme would be feasible:

- A photographic exhibition, which could involve local people and local schools exhibiting images at the Create Centre and/or Spike Island studios. Ben informed us that a local group is thinking of holding an exhibition of wildlife photos, which could include images on the Cut. **John** to find out more and to speak to a FrANC supporter who may be willing to organise the event.
- A boat trip up the river, probably in March and/or October when the tide levels are appropriate, to enable people to take photos and make a video of the Cut from the water level. These could be included in the photographic exhibition. **Roy** to contact a boatman who might be able to facilitate this.
- A party on Vauxhall Bridge, to include fun activities for children and opportunities to display art works on the bridge. **Sara, Martha and Margaret** to organise the event, with help from other people on the north (and south) side of the Cut.
- An event on Gaol Ferry Bridge to involve commuters – possibly making birthday cards to display on the bridge.

[Note – subsequent to the meeting, ideas have emerged that could possibly be included in these events: (a) involve the railway people in the celebrations, (b) a walk with people dressed in costume as worn in 1809, (c) an evening launch of 200 little rafts decorated with night lights, and (d) a pram/buggy circuit round the Cut]

As a birthday present to ourselves and the Cut, it was felt we should try and secure the status of the Cut as a recognised Local Nature Reserve. **Ben** offered to find out what this will entail (eg. who we should approach, mapping access points and maybe providing more, etc).

8. Any other business

- Concerns were raised about plans under discussion to run a rapid transit system alongside the Cut – possibly destroying the Chocolate Path and wildlife along it. John to write to Cllr Bradshaw (with copies to local Councillors) to request that FrANC be included in consultations regarding this project.
- Time did not permit discussion of ideas generated last year on ways of improving access to the Cut. This will be included on the agenda of our next meeting. People are invited to read the attached papers on this subject before we meet.

9. Date and place of next meeting

Thursday 5 June at the Southville Centre. This meeting will focus on items 6, 7 and 8 above. The meeting will start at 7.30pm and end by 9.00pm.