

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)
Minutes of meeting held at the Southville Centre on 25 September 2008

1. Present

Ben Barker, Charlie Bolton, Roy Gallop, Tess Green (Chair), John Purkiss (minutes), Martha van der Lem, Sara Worth.

2. Apologies

Margaret Fay, Steve Fay, Chris Hanmer, Derek Hughes, Paul van der Lem, Jo Young.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2008 were agreed as correct.

4. Matters arising

- Tess had received details of an experienced guide who is willing to lead a herb discovery walk around the Cut. His fee is £80, so we might need to charge people £2 or £3 per head. We agreed to go ahead. **Tess** to book him for 18 or 25 June 2009.
- FrANC will be consulted on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route along the Cut this Autumn. **John** to circulate details when they become available.

5. Financial report

John reported that we have just over £1500 in the bank, including £529 received from the Greater Bedminster Community Partnership for printing our Treasure Hunt (see item 7). A bill of £10 is due to VOSCUR for our first year's membership of this advice and information organisation for voluntary and community groups in Bristol.

6. Improving access / seating on the Cut

Several members of FrANC had carried out a survey last year to identify places where we could possibly provide seats along the Cut and further improve access to the riverbanks. Discussion on the survey had been postponed from previous meetings due to lack of time. Proposals were considered with the following outcomes:

- Installing seats close to the river opposite Camden Road on the south bank was considered to be unsafe and would probably attract unsocial behaviour.
- Installing seats and generally improving the area in front of the sea scouts' base at the foot of the slipway leading down from Coronation Road was considered a possibility but doubts were expressed as to whether people would feel safe venturing down there.
- Installing a seat at the back of the Chocolate Path on the sloping section adjacent to Cumberland Road was felt to be an excellent idea, especially as there are good views up and down the river at this point. **John** to write to the Cabot Councillors re grants that might be available. We shall also need to seek permission from the landowner.
- The idea of installing a ramp down the south bank near to Vauxhall Bridge to improve access for disabled people was shelved for the present time due to (a) expense and (b) doubts that the seats by the riverbank are used by anyone but covert drinkers.

7. Riverscapes Project / Wild Waters fortnight

- Ben reported that the Riverscapes project is going well and its targets are being achieved.

- FrANC's contributions to events in Wild Waters fortnight (full details of which are available at www.wildwaters.org.uk) are a riverbank clean-up on Saturday 4 October (meet at Gaol Ferry Bridge at 10.00am) and a stall and Treasure Hunt at an open day at the Create Centre on Sunday 12 October (10.00am to 4.00pm). **John** to e-mail people to request assistance on the FrANC stall. A suggestion to promote the open day by distributing flyers to commuters on Gaol Ferry Bridge was rejected because (a) we don't want discarded flyers littering the banks we have just cleaned up, (b) we have already promoted the event through The Pigeon, local websites and our FrANC network and (c) the event is in any case being widely promoted in the local press.

8. Local Nature Reserve Campaign

- John reported that he had received no news from the City Council or English Nature following his submission of our "case for support" for the Cut to be recognised as a Local Nature Reserve. **Charlie** to make enquiries and **John** to contact Sally Oldfield. A decision on whether or not to set up an online petition was deferred until the outcome is known.
- Ben reported that the Bugs Group had held a further 3 sessions and taken photos of a fascinating array of bugs on the riverbank near Vauxhall Bridge. The photos will be archived and records of the bugs discovered on the site will be sent to the Bristol Environmental Records Office. The potential for wildlife study of bugs by school groups was noted.
- Alison Leaf has started to observe mammals on the Cut, and another person is researching bats on the Cut (at least 4 varieties have already been discovered). **John** to e-mail Alison to see if a mammal/bat talk and walk could be arranged next year.
- Progress on contact with the developers of the building site on Cumberland Road - to see if we could use hoardings for a mural depicting features of the Cut - is unknown.

9. New Cut 200 celebrations

- Sara reported that plans for a special event on 4 May 2009 are progressing. John reported that his meeting with staff at the Create Centre to discuss use of the building on the day had resulted in a lack of information and little sign of enthusiasm. Our thoughts are instead turning to the possibility of linking with the Spike Island Arts Centre and/or holding events in the area surrounding The Orchard. **Sara** and **Derek** to investigate further.
- Roy reported that his discussions with the ferry company had led to the possibility of FrANC organising a private boat trip along the Avon Gorge and up the Cut at some point during 2009.
- Tess and John have arranged to meet the production manager of the Beer Factory to see if they could produce a Stingo Beer to celebrate the occasion.
- The Create Centre gallery has been booked for May 4 – 15 for a photographic exhibition. John is liaising with photographers keen to display their work.

10. Any other business

- A "Bristol 1807" exhibition is being held at the Southville Centre on 28 October and the Central Library during October and November. It is understood to include information on the Cut. See also www.bristol.gov.uk/bristol1807

11. Date and place of next meetings

- New Cut 200 planning on Monday 3 November, 7.30pm at 88 Cumberland Road.
- FrANC meeting on Thursday 27 November, 7.30pm at the Southville Centre.