

## Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)

### Minutes of meeting held at the Southville Centre on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010

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**Attended by:** John Purkiss (Chair) Sara Worth (vice Chair), Derek Hughes (Secretary), Margaret Fay, Tess Green, Angie Tonge, Martha Van der Lem, Paul Van der Lem, Richard Clutterbuck, Ed Hall, Bill Jones, Roy Gallop (part-time), Adrian Mantle (part-time).

1. **Welcome** – John opened the meeting with a round of introductions – with a special welcome to Bill as this was his first attendance at a FrANC meeting.
2. **Apologies** – were received from Tracy Whale (Treasurer) and Chris Hanmer.
3. **Minutes of last meeting** (17<sup>th</sup> September 2009) – these were accepted as an accurate record, subject to the following amendments: (i) the sum of money paid out in the Treasurer's report (Item 5) should read **£290.93**, and (ii) Angie's surname is misspelt).

#### 4. Matters arising

- 4.1 **FrANC Bench** – since the last meeting, the purchase of the *Clarendon* bench from Streetmaster (South Wales) Ltd. has been completed, and the bench was delivered and installed by Mo Mulligan in time for Christmas. The bench is shown in situ in Figure 1, and contains a plaque which reads “*The Friends of the Avon New Cut donated this bench in 2009 to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the New Cut*”. There was some concern regarding the security of the four bolts that anchor the bench to its base, and John offered to discuss with Mo whether further measures could be taken to render them tamper-proof. Paul volunteered to help maintain the area around the bench.
- 4.2 **South Bristol Riverscapes Project** – this project, which is being led by Helen Adshead, is now nearing completion. Adrian (who is FrANC's link with the project) gave a summary of the project status, which included several requests from Helen:
  - (i) Some funding remains to be spent which will be used to extend the end date of the project by 3 months. The last Riverscapes project meeting will be held in May. The remaining time will be spent completing the project report and getting the new groups that have been formed operational. The new groups are associated with Colliter's Brook, Brislington Brook and Pigeonhouse Stream.
  - (ii) Tess reported that she had been contacted by members of the Brislington Community Partnership which were eager to become involved in future Brislington Brook activities. Adrian offered to bring this up at the next Riverscapes meeting to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> March. In the meantime, it was suggested that Helen should contact Brislington Community Partnership and Tess agreed to provide her with the names of contacts, via Adrian.
  - (iii) Adrian reported that the project has obtained some recording equipment that can be borrowed for uses such as the development of Audio Trails. This equipment will be kept under Helen's jurisdiction until the project ends.
  - (iv) Helen has also requested the following information from FrANC:
    - Film or photographs of the New Cut Boat Trip held on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009, for inclusion in the South Bristol Riverscapes website. It was agreed that Adrian should be contacted first with any such information.

- Items/reports on clean-ups to add to the Riverscapes rolling report.
- A link between the FrANC and South Bristol Riverscapes websites. It was noted that at present the FrANC website is actually part of the Southville Centre website.
- The date of this year's New Cut Trek (in fact, there will be no New Cut Trek this year - see Item 7 of these Minutes).
- Someone to update the South Bristol Riverscapes website – Adrian and Richard agreed to help with this.

**5. Treasurer's report** – although Tracy was not present, subsequent to the Meeting she supplied a statement of the FrANC Accounts which is included in these Minutes in Table 1.

**6. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system** – since the last FrANC meeting, two further "Community Steering Group" Meetings, organised by the Neighbourhood Planning Network (NPN), were held on 21<sup>st</sup> October and 11<sup>th</sup> November 2009. These were attended by Derek and notes from both meetings have been circulated to FrANC Committee Members.

At the second meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> October, Derek presented members of the BRT Project Team with a list of issues of concern to FrANC regarding the BRT proposals. The most important issues were considered to be the potential loss of the habitat for butterflies at Butterfly Junction and the environmental impact of the BRT on the Chocolate Path.

The next step for the Project Team is to obtain the support of Bristol City Council and North Somerset Council. Both Councils, on behalf of the Project Team, will then apply to the Government for a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) which will allow them to build and operate the BRT scheme. Several meetings have already been held with the two Councils and the final round of meetings is expected to be completed by the end of March 2010, after which the TWAO application will be submitted.

The TWAO application starts a 42-day objection period. The TWAO documents will be made available for public inspection and venues will be advertised. Individuals or groups can support or object to the proposals through written representation. The Secretary of State will consider any objections made and as a result of these objections may call a Public Inquiry. A likely date for such an Inquiry is early or late summer of this year.

The issues raised by FrANC were included in a West of England Partnership report which summarised the results of the three Community Steering Group meetings. This was appended to the report submitted by the Project Team to the first Bristol City Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009. Some of these issues have been taken on by the Project Team and have been included in the latest "Design Freeze 3" drawings of the proposed BRT route. Derek presented these drawings for discussion at the meeting, and the following points were noted:

- The existing Ashton Avenue Bridge will be refurbished and modified so that it can be used by double-decker buses, which will share the route with BRT bendy-buses. A separate pedestrian footpath/cycleway will be cantilevered off one side of the bridge.
- Steps will be taken to protect the butterfly habitat at Butterfly Junction while the Create Centre BRT stop is being built there. In fact, the current plans show two such habitats, as was discussed during a site visit between members of FrANC

(Ben Barker, Derek, Roy, Tess and Tony Smith of the Bristol Naturalists Society) and the BRT Project Team (Bob Fowler, Sharon Daly and David Whitehorne (BRT ecological specialist)) on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2009. It was proposed that these habitats would be maintained by FrANC, as is done at present for the existing habitat, under Ben's direction.

- The infrastructure of the Underfall Yard itself should not be affected by the BRT route. However, because of road width limitations at the junction between Avon Crescent and Cumberland Road it will be necessary to modify about 200m of the Chocolate Path such that it is cantilevered over the edge of the New Cut.
- The Spike Island BRT stop has been relocated to the west side of Vauxhall Bridge, so that the trees outside the Spike Island Arts Facility can be preserved.

Generally, the design guidelines being formulated by the Project Team will aim to retain "the existing character along the route as far as practicable".

Derek was asked to contact the Project Team to clarify the following issues which arose from the discussion of the "Design Freeze 3" drawings:

- i) Will the existing railings between the BRT busway and the Chocolate Path be preserved? If not, how will the busway and pedestrians/cyclists be segregated?
- ii) Will the existing Victorian stone paving of the Chocolate Path be maintained on the new 200m-long cantilevered section? If not, could any surplus paving stones be used to repair missing stones in other areas of the Chocolate Path?

## 7. Events Planning – the following suggestions for 2010 events were discussed:

- **New Cut Trek** – Roy is not keen to do one this year, but has suggested another Boat Trip up the Cut instead – see below.
- **Boat Trip up the Cut** – there was enthusiastic support for this suggestion, following the success of last year's event. Roy is prepared to provide a commentary during the trip, and the intention this time would be to do a complete circuit of the Floating Harbour and New Cut by going all the way up to and over Netham Weir, through Netham Lock and then back down the Feeder Canal. Whether or not this is possible will depend on the tides, as a mid-summer date was proposed. Roy agreed to investigate this further with the Bristol Ferry Boat Company. Based on the support for last year's event, a boat with a capacity of about 50 people would be needed. Bill mentioned that the Architecture Centre (next to the Arnolfini) were also interested in organising a boat trip, to fit in with an exhibition they are doing, but rather than combine two such events it was thought that there would be enough support for both.
- **Herb Walk, Wild Flower Walk and Food Walk** (a "foraging" walk led by Kean Lamb) – there was strong support for all of these walks, and John offered to discuss possible dates with the walk leaders and book them up.
- It had been suggested that FrANC could do some planting in selected areas around the New Cut, to generally improve its appearance. However, this did not meet with wide support from those present at the meeting. It was noted that in one area along Coronation Road, opposite the junction with Camden Road, saplings planted in an area cleared by the Council had become swamped with brambles and bindweed. Although FrANC could help maintain this area, it was thought that some local residents might object to this if plants or trees grew to such a height that their view of the New Cut and beyond was restricted.

- John has been contacted by Tessa Fitzjohn from the Arnolfini who would like to talk to FrANC about a **Ballast Seed Garden** project which is due to start shortly. John agreed to supply further information on this project, to be circulated with the Minutes of this meeting (this has in fact been attached to these Minutes as Appendix 1). It was agreed that John should invite Tessa to attend the next FrANC meeting.
- **Dates for winter litter clean-up sessions**; one such event has already been held this year, on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> January (South Side), and a second clean-up is planned for Saturday February 27<sup>th</sup> (North Side).

## 8. Any Other Business

- **Highest Tide of the year** will be at 8:18am on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March (from the 2010 Tide Tables, predicted to be 11.8m above the outer sill of the Cumberland Basin Entrance Lock). It was suggested that FrANC members may wish to take the opportunity to record this event. In the past, high tides and adverse weather conditions have led to localised flooding in some areas around the Cut and in the Cumberland Basin.
- **FrANC Website** – at the end of last year, John canvassed members of the Committee to elicit support for setting up FrANC's own website. Since then, John has been successful in obtaining a grant of £1,000 from the Quartet Community Foundation which, together with the remainder of the Lottery Grant for the New Cut 200 Celebrations, should be enough to fund its development. Some preliminary designs for website pages have already been prepared by the website designer, *Springboard Design*, and John presented some examples for discussion. At present these pages are modelled on those on the Southville Centre website, and when operational, there will be a link from the Southville Centre website to the FrANC website. It is intended that the new website will be designed so that its content can be easily updated and managed by FrANC members. Bill suggested that maybe the new website could include a blog section so that members could record their personal experiences of FrANC events.
- **Reprinting of FrANC Leaflets** – John has also been successful in obtaining a grant of £458 from the Greater Bedminster Community Chest to cover the cost of reprinting the FrANC Information Leaflets. However, this will be delayed until the new website is up and running so that the website address can be included in the new leaflets.

## 9. Date and place of next meeting – to be held at the Southville Centre on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> April, starting at 7.30pm.

*Balance on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009: £3583.73*

*Income:*

Grant from Quartet Community Foundation: £1000.00  
Grant from Greater Bedminster Community Chest: £458.00  
*Total Income: £1458.00*

*Expenditure:*

Purchase and Installation of FrANC Bench: £1011.67  
Butterfly Junction clean-up refreshments: £71.20  
Southville Centre Meeting Room/equipment hire: £111.05  
DvDs of FrANC activities: £30.00  
*Total Expenditure: £1223.92*

*Balance on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010: £3817.81*

**Table 1      Statement of FrANC Accounts 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010**



**Figure 1      FrANC bench installation adjacent to Chocolate Path on New Cut**

## APPENDIX 1 – Ballast Seed Garden

**Seeds of Change:** Arnolfini, Bristol proposes the creation of a *Ballast Seed Garden* and 'The Routes Programme' - three artists commissions to engage and explore the histories of specific communities on the dockside, Barton Hill and Easton.

Lead Artist: Maria Thereza Alves



**Seeds of Change** is an ongoing investigation of Ballast Flora in port cities across Europe<sup>1</sup>. Artist Maria Thereza Alves has been researching this phenomenon since 1999 in Marseilles, Dunkirk and Liverpool. Ballast was used to stabilise merchant sailing ships, usually stones, earth, shells along with the seeds native to the area where they had been collected. On arrival the ballast was unloaded and in many cases the stowaway seeds germinated. Seeds from ballast may germinate even after one or two hundred years, and they bear witness to a complex world history often presented in a more orthodox way.

References to ballast in the Port of Bristol exist from 1680, with a regulation prohibiting discharge. The post of Ballast Master was created in 1700, and there is further evidence into the 1800's of this role. There is also mention of a Ballast wharf, even a ballast lane in Avonmouth. Botanist Cecil I. Sandwith mentions sites where plants from North America, Africa and continental Europe have been found on ballast unloaded in Wapping Quay, Grove Quay, and between Avonmouth and Shirehampton.

This project was part of the exhibition *Port City* which was shown at Arnolfini in Autumn 2007. Prior to the opening Maria Thereza Alves undertook a period of research to find and photograph

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<sup>1</sup> Port City on mobility and exchange, Arnolfini catalogue ISBN 978 0907738 877 for more information

possible ballast sites around the river Avon and Bristol's Harbourside. Soil samples were taken and with the help of local individuals and groups (many of whom had family links to the port cities Bristol traded with), these ballast seeds were germinated. Alves says: *Seeds of Change, Bristol is attempting to re-establish the histories of complexities of ballast flora and the potential of individual histories that these plants are witnesses to and which have been removed from their intimate connection to the economic and social history in Bristol.*

A site for the Ballast Seed Garden (BSG) was identified by the artist in 2007, and we have recently received outline approval to use the land from Stacey Hobbs, Estate Services Manager. The identified site is at the point where the 'cut' and docks meet the river Avon as it heads down the gorge seven miles to the sea. The view extends downriver, under/over the suspension bridge, across to Clifton and over to the City. This small triangle of land is used by dog walkers and cyclists. The artist has produced a concept design which quietly animates the space. Plants would be seeded from the original ballast plants, protected by small wind breaks and discreet signage providing relevant information would be developed in line with Bristol City Council's Legible City Programme maintaining the essential character of the space.

Aldo Rinaldi, Senior Public Art Officer, Bristol City Council, is supporting the BSG project, and particularly likes the links to the Maritime history, the community focus (used by and involved in) as well as the potential route between the site at the extremity of the floating harbour and the urban centre. He has brokered a meeting with Martin Deaville, Landscape Coordinator for Bristol City Council and we are in the process of agreeing fees and working methodologies.. As part of its new Interaction initiative to work with different communities in Bristol, Arnolfini will provide project management including consultation events and fundraising, as well as consulting with and engaging the local community in the realisation of the project.

The BSG project has further potential for community engagement by creating access<sup>2</sup> between the BSG, the new Museum of Bristol, the Arnolfini and further afield, linking the docks to the outlying areas of the City to include Knowle West, Barton Hill and Easton.

An extension to the BSG has been discussed as a second stage called 'the routes project' which would provide an opportunity for three artists commissions, to engage and explore the histories of specific communities. This would develop routes around the city with the aim of animating these new 'paths' with events and creating an opportunity for community engagement.

These routes offer significant opportunities for contributing to BCC priorities which include quality of life, contributing to and valuing biodiversity, and developing the recreational potential of the public realm, and for the individual in learning about their own history in relation to world events.

These organisations are working in partnership with Arnolfini and their representatives are on the project steering group:

Bristol Museum, Galleries and Archives  
University of Bristol Botanic Garden  
University of Bristol, School of Biological Sciences  
University of Bristol Centre of Public Engagement  
Create Centre, Transformations Project

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<sup>2</sup> The section of walkway around the SS Great Britain requires pedestrians and cyclists to cut into the Spike Island area, through the boat yard area and away from the harbour edge. This route could do with clearer signage.

### **Time frame – key mile stones**

#### *Ballast Seed Garden outline design phase*

- Dec 2009                      Develop partnerships  
                                    Meet with BCC Parks Dept and Landscape Architect  
                                    Research funding streams
- Jan 2010                      First steering group meeting & agree working process for outline design  
                                    and costings  
                                    Develop consultation strategy with Head of Interaction, Arnolfini  
                                    Fund raising on going
- March 2010                      Artist visit to meet partners, visit Botanic Garden and work on outline  
                                    design with landscape architects  
                                    Steering group approve outline design and approve costs with landscape  
                                    architects  
                                    Local consultation starts
- April 1 2010                      Agree production schedule
- June 2010                      Artists talk, Art in the City, Arnolfini/BCC event June 16  
                                    Botanical Garden Public Event June 17  
                                    Link to Festival of Nature

#### Stage two Production Ballast Seed Garden

To be confirmed dependent on successful first stage and funding

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