

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)

Minutes of meeting held at the Nova Scotia Public House on 18th November 2010

Attended by: John Purkiss (Chair), Sara Worth (vice Chair), Derek Hughes (Secretary), Liz Payze (Treasurer), Adrian Mantle, Roy Gallop, Chris Murray, Kean Lamb, Ed Scammell, Martha Van der Lem, Paul Van der Lem, Rosie Tomlinson, Peter Tomlinson, Margaret Fay, Angie Tonge, Ed Hall.

1. **Welcome** – John opened the meeting with a round of introductions.
2. **Apologies** – were received from Tess Green, Chris Hanmer, Steve Fay and Ben Barker.
3. **Minutes of last meeting** (15th April 2010) – these were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. It was noted that Roy Gallop and Richard Clutterbuck were nominated as FrANC's official "Otter Watchers" at this meeting.

4. Matters arising

The following matters were raised from the meeting on 15th April 2010 and the FrANC AGM held on 23rd September 2010:

- 4.1 **Ballast Seed Garden** – John reported that planning permission has been granted for this joint Arnolfini/University of Bristol project, so it looks as though it will go ahead provided suitable funding is found. FrANC's reservations about the project have been advised via the Arnolfini website on 17th July 2010.
- 4.2 **"Wild City" Project** – this project was discussed at the AGM, and FrANC will be participating in it for the next three years. John reported that the post of Project Officer has now been filled – in fact, the job will be shared between Helen Adshead and Paula Spiers. Helen is well known to the FrANC membership as she was until recently the South Bristol Riverscapes Project Officer. Paula is currently working as the Avon Frome Development Officer, and will be continuing this post part-time. Both will take up their "Wild City" responsibilities from 29th November 2010.
- 4.3 **Result of "Have your say on £15,000 of local money" competition** – from April – June of this year the Cabot, Clifton and Clifton East Neighbourhood Partnership ran an on-line voting competition for residents to submit their views on how to spend £15,000 of the "well being" fund in this neighbourhood area. On FrANC's behalf, Margaret posted an application for £2,000 of this money to be used to promote the New Cut to young people, by providing guided tours and information packs for schools. Derek reported that the results of the competition were recorded in the minutes of a Neighbourhood Partnership meeting held on 13th July, and the rating/number of votes system used by the Partnership had produced the following top five ideas:

Title	Summary	Votes x score	Overall score
Street play Events	Events that allow kids to play in the street, usually by closing the road to traffic	4.79 x 48	230
Integrative Art & Nutrition	Bridging the gap for people with mental health issues through the use of art and nutrition advice	4.4 x 49	217
Avon New Cut	Part time guidance and education packs	4.6 x 26	119
Water fountains	Get them working again	4.25 x 20	85
Ark project	Grant to be able to do more for the community	5 x 17	70

Only the top two proposals in the above list that received the highest number of votes and overall scores were subsequently invited to make formal applications to the Neighbourhood Partnership for funding. Hence FrANC's suggestion, although a credible third, was unfortunately unsuccessful.

5. **Treasurer's report** – Liz reported that the balance of the FrANC Account was currently £1539.25, i.e. unchanged from that reported at the AGM. There are no major outstanding items of expenditure at present.
6. **Events Planning 2011** – the following events are planned for next year:
 - **Riverbank clean-ups** – two have been scheduled for next year, on the Coronation Road side of the Cut on Saturday 29th January and on the Cumberland Road side on Saturday 26th February. It is planned to extend the clean-up on 26th February to include the Harbour Railway rail track adjacent to Cumberland Road. John offered to contact Dave Martin to check that the Harbour Railway will not be running on that day.
 - **“Privateers/Adventurers/Pirates” Walk** around the Bathurst Basin/Redcliffe Hill area of Bristol to be led by Roy Gallop, provisionally scheduled for Thursday 19th May (date to be confirmed by Roy).
 - **Wild Flower Walk** led by Pam Millman – Adrian confirmed that this would be held on Thursday 23rd June.
 - **Boat Trip up** in July/August. Roy suggested that this year's boat trip should not include the New Cut, and that instead we plan a route through the Floating Harbour, along the Feeder Canal and then through Hanham Lock to the river, stopping at Beeses Bar and Tea Gardens. We would then return along the same route to our starting point in the Floating Harbour. Because this trip does not involve the New Cut, we would not be dependent upon tide times, and consequently would be able to depart a little later than in previous years. Also, there would be no risk of us being “locked out” of the Floating Harbour, as happened during this year's boat trip. We would also learn about an aspect of the Harbour that we haven't previously explored.
 - A guided **“Bat Detecting Walk”** one evening around selected areas of the New Cut to observe the local bat population, to be held in September. Adrian reported that he had attempted to contact Angus Tillotson (a FrANC member and experienced bat detector) to arrange a date for this event and was awaiting a reply from him.
 - **“Wild City” Project** – a list of proposed project milestones affecting FrANC and the New Cut was included in the minutes of last AGM. However, the activities to be completed during 2011 will presumably be agreed during our first meeting

with the new Project Officers, Helen Adshead and Paula Spiers, to be arranged in due course.

7. **Bus Rapid Transit**

Derek reported that he had visited the West of England Partnership website, but had found no up to date information on the current status of the Bristol Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project Team's application for a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO). It is understood that, as a result of the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, a decision on a whether or not a public inquiry will be held will be made by 10th January 2011.

However, an article on the Bristol Evening Post on October 27th states that the BRT Project has been put on hold until the end of 2011. The article is reproduced in these minutes in Attachment 1. According to the article, the Transport Secretary has asked Bristol City Council to cut the cost of the project and provide better value for money. Although the previous government was committed to BRT schemes, the Coalition Government is apparently rethinking this and considering alternatives such as an Ultra-Light Rail (ULR) system. There was some surprise at this at the meeting, as an ULR-type system had been one of the transportation options considered by the BRT Project Team but had been rejected, with others, as being more costly than the preferred "bendy-bus" solution!

The Evening Post article also contains several comments by the Bristol City Council Executive Member for Strategic Transport, Gary Hopkins. One comment in particular notes that the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads BRT route could still be built as a "bendy-bus" system, should it be decided that the plans are too far advanced to change to a ULR-type system.

John reported that he had been contacted by Pip Sheard of the Bristol Tramway Consortium, who had asked to brief FrANC on a tram-based system and revised route involving a station at Ashton Meadows that would serve both a tram route to the City Centre and a reopened rail line to Portishead. After consultation with Committee members, it had been agreed to delay this briefing until the status of the current BRT project became clearer in the New Year. John was therefore asked to invite Pip and her colleagues to present such a briefing at the next FrANC meeting.

8. **Any Other Business**

- ***Railings on Cumberland Road*** – Margaret had expressed concern over the state of the railings along Cumberland Road. These are the railings between the edge of Cumberland Road and the Harbour Railway which, unlike the railings on the other side of the track next to the Chocolate Path, in their present state do not enhance the image of the New Cut. Some sections of the railings have obviously been replaced over the years. Some are painted, some are not, and some appear to be temporary replacements which bear no resemblance to the original Victorian design. The railings between Vauxhall Bridge and Avon Crescent are particularly bad in this respect. After some discussion it was decided to form a "Railings Sub-Committee" who would find out who is responsible for the railings, and then write to them to ask what is being done about their replacement and refurbishment. Margaret, Martha and Sara offered their services as members of this sub-committee.
- ***Photographic Exhibition featuring the Cut*** – John reported that he had received details of a photographic exhibition by Stephen Mason of *Second Look*

entitled “Forgotten”, which includes four photos of where the Malago joins the New Cut. The exhibition is being held at The Photo Gallery, 31 Baldwin Street, Bristol from 3rd – 8th December. The flyer for the exhibition will be distributed to the FrANC membership via e-mail.

- **Insurance** – John reported that he had made enquiries about insurance, as he was concerned about whether FrANC was properly covered for events such as Riverbank clean-ups. In the past it was understood that FrANC were insured through their affiliation to the Southville Centre. However, the Southville Centre insurance policy only covers volunteer groups who report regularly in some capacity to them. This may no longer be the case with FrANC, as we have recently become more independent from the Southville Centre (e.g. we now have our own constitution, committee and website), and we certainly do not report to them on our activities. John had received an insurance quotation from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (a charity supporting practical conservation work by volunteers throughout Britain) for £153 per year (£35 to become a member of BTCV, plus £118 for insurance). It was unanimously agreed that FrANC should go ahead and purchase this, which would provide insurance cover for events such as Wild Flower Walks as well as Riverbank clean-ups.
- **Working Party at Butterfly Junction** – attendees were reminded that this will be the next FrANC event, on Saturday 4th December, meeting at 10.00am next to the CREATE Centre car park.
- It is planned to renovate the **Sea Scouts building** underneath Gaol Ferry Bridge – a possible project for FrANC to become involved in at a future date?
- **Funding of Future Events** – Sara suggested that, in order to conserve FrANC funds, maybe in future we should levy a small fee for specific events, e.g. next year’s Wild Flower Walk, Bat Detecting Walk and Pirates/Adventurers/Privateers Walk. A nominal charge of £2 per head was discussed, and agreed. The next big event was likely to be one organised in association with the “Wild City” Project.

9. Date and place of next meeting

- The next FrANC meeting will be devoted to the Bristol Tramway Consortium’s briefing on their alternative ULR proposal. It is planned to hold this at the Southville Centre. John was asked to liaise with Pip Sheard to arrange a suitable date and time (and to check whether a projector would be required).
- It was proposed that an update on the “Wild City” Project, and FrANC’s involvement in it, should be included in the general meeting following the above Bristol Tramway Consortium briefing. It was proposed to hold this meeting at the South Bank Centre, a suitable date and time to be arranged by Adrian who has been exploring this as a possible venue for future FrANC general meetings. It was noted, however, that the meeting would probably be held on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening, as usually there is a band playing there on Thursdays.

“Bristol's bendybus scheme has been put on hold until end of 2011”

[BRISTOL](#)'s bendybus scheme has been put on hold until the end of next year – and could turn into an alternative ultra-light rail scheme instead.

Transport Secretary [Philip Hammond](#) yesterday told the city council to cut the cost of the £48 million Ashton Vale to Temple Meads plan, telling the authority it is a good idea but should provide better value for money.

Officials will be encouraged to "think innovatively" and to go back to contractors and renegotiate deals that reflect the current economic circumstances.

But more details on two later stages of the bus rapid transit (BRT) system, which would use rubber- wheeled bendybuses that could run on their own guided track as well as existing roads, have to be supplied to Whitehall by January before they will even be considered for funding.

A final list of bids will then be drawn up and all projects will have to vie for cash from a £600m funding pot announced by the Secretary of State.

The city council's cabinet councillor for transport, [Gary Hopkins](#), said last night he was confident the Government would fund a new transport scheme in one form or another because the authority and its neighbours had proved the economic case for it.

He said: "I think the chances are extremely good for the Ashton line, perhaps a 90 per cent chance.

"It may not be exactly in the form originally applied for – we're going to be having discussions with the Government and listening to their advice."

[Liberal Democrat](#) Mr Hopkins said the previous government had been committed to BRT schemes but the coalition was rethinking this and considering alternatives such as ultra-light rail (ULR), which uses a tram-like vehicle that can run on branch rail lines and roads, does not need overhead electric cables and has tracks that can be laid down on road surfaces without needing to dig them up.

He said: "We're not saying we definitely will switch technology but we are saying we are more than happy, if the Government wants us to."

But no indication has been given of when the Government will make up its mind about its preferred system, so the council is now looking at both bendybuses and ULR.

Mr Hopkins said it was even possible that the Ashton Vale route could be built as a BRT system while later routes were ULR, if the Government decided plans for a bendybus on the first phase were too far advanced to change.

Proposals for a package of traffic improvements in [Weston](#)-super-Mare, including an extra lane on the M5 southbound sliproad at Junction 21, were also included on the list of "amber light" proposals that the Government has decided it likes – but wants costs cut before it will fund them.

Construction work on successful projects, which will be announced at the end of next year, is unlikely to begin before 2012/13, Mr Hammond indicated.