

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 4th March 2013

Attended by: Sara Worth (Chair), Roy Gallop (Vice-Chair), Derek Hughes (Secretary), Elizabeth Payze (Treasurer), Ed Hall and Margaret Fay (Committee Members) and Richard Clutterbuck.

1. Welcome

Sara welcomed the meeting attendees.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Chris Hanmer (Committee Member).

3. Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the last FrANC Committee Meeting held on 28th January 2013 were approved by those present.

4. Matters Arising

The matters arising from the previous meeting may be found in the list of Actions contained in the minutes of that meeting, the current status of which is summarised in Table 1.

5. Memorial for John Purkiss

- Having discussed various options for a memorial for John at the previous meeting, the Committee agreed that FrANC will plant a hawthorn tree next to the bench on the Chocolate Path, together with a commemorative post, in John's memory. It may be necessary for FrANC to contact the Harbourmaster to notify him of our plans.
- Derek had obtained a quote from *Streetmaster*, the company who had supplied the FrANC bench, for the cost of a commemorative tree post in iroko wood plus an engraved stainless steel plaque. It was expected that the total cost of the plaque, post and tree would be around £200. However, it was suggested that a metal rather than a wooden post might be a more vandal-proof option. Derek was actioned to source this and obtain a quote.
- The hawthorn tree was selected because it changes throughout the year and flowers in May. Ed will decide on the variety of hawthorn to be purchased and a suitable supplier.
- Ed also reported that he had attended a memorial ceremony for John at Windmill Hill City Farm on 22nd February, during which a plum tree had been planted together with a brass plaque.
- It was agreed that the FrANC memorial ceremony for John will be held some time in June or July (14th June was suggested as a possible date).

6. Wild City Project

6.1 New Cut Management Plan

- Chris and Derek had met with Helen Adshead (Wild City Project) and Ollie Roberts from Bristol City Council (BCC) on 22nd February to discuss the Management Plan. The main topic of discussion had been section 6 of the Plan, which contains the proposed 5-Year Work Plan. This consists of a list

of objectives, grouped under four themes – *Conservation and Enhancement, Access Visual and Physical, Maintenance and Information, Promotion and Education* – together with the lead organisation responsible for each objective.

- Chris and Derek's first impressions were that there were rather a lot of objectives assigned to FrANC as the lead organisation! It was agreed that we need to be clear about what FrANC can and cannot deliver. Sara offered to host a review of the Plan with Chris and Ed (and any other Committee Members who were available) some time during the third week of March.

6.2 Guided Walks (possible liaison with M-Shed)

- Margaret reported that Lee Hutcheson has replaced Jackie Wiltshire as the person responsible for organising M-Shed guided walks. Margaret has been responsible for processing the data from the M-Shed feedback forms.
- The M-Shed guided walks are based on the contents of two guides/leaflets published by the Avon Wildlife Trust which include (i) a short walk around the City, including the CREATE Centre and (ii) a nature trail which covers the Harbourside and Brandon Hill.
- M-Shed have a total of 20 volunteers who are nominally available to support their guided walks, but Ed noted that in practice there are only four people who actually provide this service. Consequently, it was agreed that at present a formal liaison with M-Shed would be of little benefit in terms of increasing the number of volunteers available to support FrANC Guided Walks, but that when our Guided Walk service is more established it may be possible to advertise it in M-Shed.
- A Bristol Walks Festival will be held between 4th – 12th May, organised by BCC, with a show on 11th May which may be worth attending to find out what guided walks other organisations are offering.
- Sara reported that she had received an enquiry from "Good Gym", an established organisation in other parts of the country who are now looking for opportunities for volunteering in the Bristol area. It was possible that "Good Gym" could provide a source of volunteers for Guided Walks or even future clean-ups.
- It was agreed that a request for more volunteers to come forward from within the FrANC membership to lead Guided Walks would be included in the next Newsletter.

6.3 Guided Walk request from NHS Bristol for Health Walk on 20th June

- Chris has received a request from Simon Carpenter (NHS Bristol), via Helen Adshead, to lead a Health Walk on 20th June. Roy offered his services as the second FrANC volunteer required to lead the walk.

7. Operational Matters

7.1 Spring Newsletter 2013

- The next Newsletter (No. 19) will be a Spring 2013 edition and will include
 - Date of next FrANC Meeting
 - Guided Walks – request for more volunteers
 - Wild City developments
 - Links to BCC Website for requesting removal of Graffiti
 - Update on BRT2
 - Memorial to John Purkiss

- News on Riverbank Clean-ups
- It was agreed that the Newsletter will be worked on at the same meeting to be held during the third week of March to review the Management Plan ¹.

8.0 Treasurer's Report

- Liz reported that the current balance of the FrANC account is £1801.74, but that this excludes outstanding payments for (i) clean-up refreshments and (ii) the annual maintenance fee for the FrANC Website.
- Regarding the FrANC application to the "Chestnut Fund" (a small grant scheme to enable volunteer groups to purchase tools), Liz was asked to check whether the available grant of £350 can only be spent on items for sale on the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) website.
- Liz said that her investigations concerning a public address system suitable for Guided Walks had unearthed the AKER MR-2800 Portable PA Waistband Voice Amplifier. Sara offered to obtain details of a portable PA system that had been used by a work colleague, for comparison. We need to acquire a suitable PA system in time for the Health Walk on 20th June.

9.0 Events Planning 2013

9.1 Bedminster Bridge – Gaol Ferry Bridge South Bank Clean-up on 9th March

- As agreed at the last meeting, a second clean-up is planned for the above area, focusing on the stretch of the riverbank adjacent to the ASDA car park. It is intended to meet at Bedminster Bridge at 10:00am. Photographs will be taken of the state of the riverbank before and after the clean-up.
- Bottles and cans will be taken to ASDA for recycling, while the rest of the rubbish will be transported to the BCC Household Waste Recycling Centre in St. Philips. *Café Grounded* or the Grant Bradley Café on East Street, Bedminster were suggested as possible venues for tea and cake afterwards.
- It was also suggested that we should write a letter to *The Post* to thank all the FrANC volunteers who had taken part in the three clean-ups organised so far this year.

9.2 FrANC support for *Bristol.99*

- Prior to the meeting, Derek had circulated information received from Lucy Gaze, who works for the Bristol Natural History Consortium, concerning *Bristol.99*, which is to be run from 3rd May to 16th July this year. *Bristol.99* is a celebration of Bristol Festival of Nature's 10th Anniversary, during which it is proposed to run a wildlife event on each of the 99 designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) – one of which is the Avon New Cut.
- Derek had previously been contacted by Helen Adshead, who had suggested FrANC's involvement in *Bristol.99* to Lucy and had offered to provide £200 of Wild City funding towards a wildlife event organised by FrANC.
- After some discussion, it was suggested that a suitable wildlife event would be an invertebrate (i.e. "bug") survey. In order to progress this, the following actions were placed:
 - Derek to contact Lucy Gaze to find out what support is available to run such an event – for example, it is understood that designated

¹ Subsequent to the meeting, the date for the review of the Management Plan / Newsletter working party was set for 21st March.

Bristol.99 pro-forma sheets must be used to record any data gathered during the survey;

- Margaret to speak to Tony Smith, from the Bristol Naturalists Society, to see if he is prepared to lead the survey and, if so, to check his availability during the proposed May - July timeframe ²;
- Chris to find out if the students from St Mary Redcliffe School would be available to take part in the survey – *Bristol.99* are keen that the event should involve as many members of the general public as possible.

9.3 Herb Walk

- A Herb Walk is planned for later this year. Richard suggested that this could perhaps be led by a colleague, Ian Stewart, who has an interest in herbs with medicinal properties, and would therefore be different from previous Herb Walks organised by FrANC. Richard was asked to contact Ian to find out if he is prepared to lead such a walk, and to check when he is available ².

9.4 Bat Detection Walk

- Another Bat Detection Walk is planned for September, so Derek was asked to contact Angus Tillotson to agree on a suitable date.

10. Update on BRT2

- It was reported that, following Mayor George Ferguson's rejection of the proposed BRT2 route along the Harbourside and over Prince Street Bridge, five possible alternative routes were being studied.
- It was understood that the modification of the Harbour Railway next to the Chocolate Path to accommodate a guided busway does not feature in any of these five new options, and that instead if necessary the BRT2 buses will be routed along Cumberland Road. This is good news for FrANC, in view of our concerns regarding the environmental impact of the original route on the New Cut. However, at least one of the options still requires the busway to be routed over Ashton Avenue Bridge and so there are still concerns that the butterfly habitat at Butterfly Junction could be destroyed during the construction process.
- Sara and Derek said that they were planning to attend a *Stop BRT2* meeting the following evening (5th March), at which a further update was expected.

11. Any Other Business

- **Review of North Bank/Harbour Railway Clean-up on 23rd February** – this clean-up had been well-supported on the above date by 18 volunteers, during which the complete stretch of riverbank/rail track from God's Garden to Avon Crescent had been cleared of litter. The three recently-purchased extended-reach litter-pickers had been deemed to be a great success.

² Subsequent to the meeting, it was agreed with Helen Adshead that the *Bristol.99* FrANC event will be the Medicinal Herb Walk, instead of the Invertebrate Survey. Consequently, there is no need for Tony Smith to be contacted. Richard has also contacted Ian Stewart, who is available to "run a Herb Walk looking at the medicinal properties of the herbs that we find" on the evenings of 4th, 5th, 11th or 12th June. Any of these dates would be within the *Bristol.99* timeframe.

- **Update on Travellers Camp on Coronation Road** – it appears that, since the last meeting, the Travellers Campsite on Coronation Road behind the *Harvest Energy* Service Station has been reoccupied, and that consequently more litter has started to accumulate in the area that was cleared during the FrANC clean-up at the end of January.

Ed reported that he had maintained contact with BCC officials, and that now the matter had been escalated from Steven Hersey (member of BCC Gypsy and Travellers Department) to Richard Hawkrige (Acting Streetwise Co-ordinator Bristol City Council, Neighbourhoods Anti-Social Behaviour Team). Richard has apparently exhaustively researched all the options available to have the encampment and its occupants permanently removed, but for legal reasons achieving this will take some time. The matter is complicated by land ownership issues - apparently BCC own the river bank, and access to it by Cornwall Garages is leased from them (Cornwall Garages actually only own the frontage to the garage). The court order prohibiting the encampment appears to have been ignored.

The problem of removing the litter on the river bank that was considered to be inaccessible during the FrANC clean-up has been passed to Carol Donovan, who is a BCC Environmental Protection Enforcement Officer. It seems pointless in trying to do this, however, while the campsite is still occupied. In summary, many BCC officials are currently assessing the situation, together with the options available for having the campsite permanently removed.

Ed also noted that he was due to meet another BCC official (Nick Pates) to discuss signage on the Chocolate Path for shared access by cyclists and pedestrians, as well as the quality of the surface which features many ad-hoc repairs.

- **Follow-up to Committee Walk along New Cut** – members of the Committee had walked around the north and south banks of the Cut between Bedminster Bridge and Bath Road Bridge as planned on 24th February. Notes had been made of the location of litter and various discarded items along the south bank, and the location of river bed debris along the north bank.

It was agreed that the next step will be to compose a letter describing our findings, with supporting photographs if possible, which will be sent to the relevant BCC officials and perhaps also the Mayor. The purpose of the letter will be to enquire what assistance can be provided by BCC to help clean up this part of the Cut, as this is considered to be beyond the capabilities of FrANC volunteers at present. Councillor Tess Green had suggested contacting Richard Fletcher of BCC for advice on management. An extreme measure would be for FrANC to involve the National Rivers Authority (NRA), with a view to them serving an injunction on BCC to clear the debris on the river bed!

- **FrANC appearance on “Shepherd’s Way” Radio Show** – Derek had been contacted by Niall Addicott, a member of FrANC, who is also a member of the broadcast team on Bristol Community Radio (BCFM). One of the radio shows is “Shepherd’s Way”, hosted by Steve Shepherd, which is a nature and conservation show broadcast on Wednesday evenings. Niall had suggested that a member/members of the Committee be invited to appear on the show at a future date, in order to raise awareness of FrANC and the volunteering work that we do.

It was agreed that this was an excellent idea, and that Sara and Derek would put their names forward as FrANC's interviewees. As both preferred the option of a pre-recorded interview, as an alternative to appearing live on the show, Derek was actioned to arrange a suitable time and date for an interview with Niall, with 22nd March being a possibility,

- **Meeting with Harbour Railway Representative** – Sara reported that she had been contacted by Chris Ecclestone (David Martin's boss), who wants to set up a meeting with FrANC and other interested parties to discuss how the Harbour Railway can be maintained in future. This assumes that there is no longer any possibility that the rail track will be immersed in a concrete guided busway as part of the BRT2 route at some future date.

Apparently Chris Ecclestone is concerned about the uncontrolled growth of vegetation along the route and its deleterious effect on the railway sleepers. It was suggested that if some sort of maintenance activity is proposed to control the vegetation then maybe this should be included as part of the Avon New Cut Management Plan.

- **FrANC Leaflet Distribution and Printing** – although in the past attempts have been made to distribute FrANC leaflets to the BCC tower flats around Bedminster Bridge, there has always been a problem with gaining access. It was suggested that maybe some of the Wild City funding could be used to have the leaflets professionally distributed, and additional leaflets printed if necessary. We would also like the leaflets to be distributed to the residents of York Road. Chris was asked to find out, via her contacts at St. Mary Redcliffe School, if there is a local Residents' Association which could be a focal point for leaflet distribution in future.

12. Date of next meeting

- The next meeting will be held on 18th March and has been organised at the request of Helen Adshead to discuss plans for the proposed Wild Waters Riverside Festival. The meeting will be held at 88 Cumberland Road, starting at 7:30pm.
- It was agreed that the next FrANC Meeting will be open to all FrANC members and will be held at the Southville Centre. Suggested dates were 15th or 17th April. Liz was asked to check the availability of a suitable room at the Southville Centre on either of the above dates.³
- The new actions placed at this meeting are listed in Table 2.

Derek Hughes
Secretary, Friends of the Avon New Cut

³ Subsequent to the meeting, the next FrANC Meeting was arranged for 17th April in the Osborne Room at the Southville Centre, starting at 7:30pm (the room is booked from 7:00pm to 9:00pm).

| Action No. | Description | Actioned by | Status |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 12-03-01 | Distribute New Cut Management Plan, when available, to Committee Members. | Derek | <i>In Progress</i> |
| 12-03-02 | Talk to Jackie Wiltshire of M-Shed about possibility of future liaison with FrANC for provision of Guided Walks for adults and school parties. | Margaret | Completed |
| 12-03-03 | Provide names of school contacts for organising Guided Walks. | Helen | <i>In Progress</i> |
| 12-03-04 | Obtain copy of Guided Walk Feedback Form used by M-Shed (subject to their agreement). | Margaret | <i>In Progress</i> |
| 12-03-11 | Compile and publish FrANC Winter Newsletter 2013 (now updated to Spring Newsletter, to be worked on during 18 th – 22 nd March): Newsletter to be published before date of next FrANC Meeting | Sara, Derek, Margaret | <i>In Progress</i> |
| 12-03-12 | Investigate Chestnut Fund and submit application for grant towards cost of items for Riverbank Clean-ups/Guided Walks. | Liz | <i>In Progress</i> |
| 13-01-01 | Suggest dates for Riverside Festival Boat Trips | Roy | <i>In Progress</i> |
| 13-01-02 | Confirm date for New Cut Management Plan meeting with Ollie Roberts (22 nd February or 1 st March) | Helen | Completed |
| 13-01-03 | Investigate cost of Commemorative Plaque for John Purkiss Memorial | Derek | Completed |
| 13-01-04 | Walk along New Cut between Bedminster and Bath Road Bridges on 24 th February | Committee | Completed |
| 13-01-05 | Source Portable PA system for Guided Walks | Liz | Completed |
| 13-01-06 | Provide CD of photos of Travellers Camp litter | Richard | Completed |

Table 1 **FrANC Committee Action List – Actions Completed or In Progress from last Meeting**

| Action No. | Description | Actioned by | Status |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 13-02-01 | Investigate cost of Commemorative Plaque and Metal Post for John Purkiss Memorial | Derek | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-02 | Propose suitable type of Hawthorn Bush for John Purkiss Memorial, where this can be purchased from and cost estimate | Ed | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-03 | Inform Harbourmaster of our proposed Memorial for John and where it will be sited | Derek | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-04 | Review content of New Cut Management Plan (when available), provide feedback to Ollie Roberts (BCC) and Helen Adshead (Wild City) | Chris and Committee | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-05 | Advise Chris that Roy is available to support her on Guided Walk requested by Bristol NHS (Health Walk) on 20 th June | Sara | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-06 | Find out details of PA System used by BANES colleague | Sara | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-07 | Contact Lucy Gaze re. FrANC participation in Bristol.99 (suggest Medicinal Herb Survey), confirm what support is available | Derek | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-08 | Contact St. Mary Redcliffe School to discuss participation in Bristol.99 via FrANC (Medicinal Herb Walk) | Chris | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-09 | Contact Ian Stewart to find out if he is prepared to lead FrANC Herb Walk, and confirm date when he is available | Richard | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-10 | Contact Angus Tillotson to confirm September date for Bat Detecting Walk | Derek | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-11 | Meet BCC contact to discuss signage for shared cyclist/pedestrian access on Chocolate path, plus quality of surface | Ed | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-12 | Supply electronic copies of FrANC photos downloaded onto memory stick | Richard | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-13 | Compose letter to Mayor, BCC, etc. describing findings from Committee Walk between Bedminster and Bath Road Bridges | Sara, Ed | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-14 | Contact Niall Addicott re. FrANC appearance on <i>Shepherd's Way</i> (suggest interview on 22 nd March) | Derek, Sara | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-15 | Contact Chris Ecclestone to discuss FrANC involvement in future of Harbour Railway | Sara | <i>New Action</i> |
| 13-02-16 | Use contacts at St. Mary Redcliffe School re. local Residents' Association on York Road (distribution of FrANC leaflets) | Chris | <i>New Action</i> |
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Table 2 FrANC Committee Action List – New Actions