

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC) Minutes of Meeting held on 17th April 2013

Attended by: Sara Worth (Chair), Roy Gallop (Vice-Chair), Derek Hughes (Secretary), Elizabeth Payze (Treasurer), Ed Hall and Margaret Fay (Committee Members), Kean Lamb, Richard Clutterbuck, David Batchelor, Martha van der Lem, Paul van der Lem, Stephen Mason and Eric Dougall.

1. **Welcome**

Sara Worth (Chair) welcomed the meeting attendees. An especially warm welcome was extended to Eric Dougall, Estate Services Officer, Harbour Office who is based in the Underfall Yard and whose responsibilities include the upkeep of the riverbanks along the New Cut.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Chris Hanmer (Committee Member), Mike Ginger, Pip Sheard, Lewis and Joan Semple, Pat Fung and Tess Green.

3. **Activities since last AGM**

The activities that the FrANC membership have been involved in since the last AGM (September 2012) were briefly reviewed:

- **Maintenance of Butterfly Junction**, held in December 2012. This had been completed successfully, though Sara noted that she was still chasing May Gurney to get them to collect all of the recyclable plant waste and cuttings.
- **Three Riverbank Clean-ups**, held during the first three months of this year – two on the south bank, and one on the north bank. During the last clean-up, the stretch of the south bank between Gaol Ferry Bridge and Bedminster Bridge had been tackled by FrANC for the first time. Some 25 volunteers had spent a rewarding two hours amassing a total of 27 bags of rubbish (plus other assorted items). Much of this had been collected from the riverbank adjacent to the ASDA car park, where the recyclable waste had been deposited. Sara will write to ASDA to see if they are prepared to support FrANC during future clean-ups as one of their local community projects.
- A member of FrANC, Chris Murray, has also been assisting the Committee with the management and updating of the **FrANC website** (www.franc.org.uk). Future plans include the creation of a photo library and establishing links to other websites (e.g. Friends of Troopers Hill).

4. **Events planned for 2013**

The following events are currently planned for the remainder of this year:

- a **Medicinal Herb Walk**, to be led by Iain Stewart on Wednesday 5th June. The findings from this walk will be documented as FrANC's contribution to *Bristol99*, a celebration of Bristol Festival of Nature's 10th Anniversary.
- a **Literary Walk**, to be organised by Roy Gallop, which will be held some time during the summer.
- A **Bat Detection Walk**, to be led Angus Tillotson (subsequent to the meeting, it was agreed that this will be held on Wednesday 11th September).

Although no boat trip for FrANC members is planned this year, the resurrected *Bristol Ferry Boat Company* are now operational and their programme includes several trips up the New Cut as far as Netham Weir. It was suggested that if there is sufficient interest then we could pick a suitable date for a boat trip and advertise it in the next

FrANC newsletter. However, it would be up to FrANC members to book their own tickets.

5. Memorial for John Purkiss

- It was reported that, having considered various options for a memorial for John Purkiss, the Committee had agreed that FrANC will plant a hawthorn tree behind the FrANC bench on the Chocolate Path, together with a commemorative plaque mounted on a post. Ed Hall has identified a suitable variety of ornamental hawthorn.
- It was suggested that the wording on the commemorative plaque should read “*In memory of John Purkiss – the first Friend of the Avon New Cut*”.
- Sara had spoken to Jane Purkiss and had agreed that we will contact her when we have picked a suitable date for the tree planting ceremony. Eric Dougall suggested contacting *TreeBristol*, a community-led campaign for planting trees across the city, for advice on providing plaques, posts and tree protection.

6. Discussion with EricDougall

- Sara explained that she had invited Eric to attend the meeting as the Committee had recently surveyed the stretch of the New Cut riverbank between Bedminster Bridge and Bath Road Bridge. The Committee were keen to extend FrANC’s clean-up activities to include this area, but the survey had revealed a considerable amount of rubbish that had accumulated over the years as a result of fly tipping.
- The removal of the bulkier items of rubbish was considered to be beyond the capabilities of FrANC’s volunteers, but is necessary before an organised clean-up can be started. There are also several items of miscellaneous debris partially buried in the riverbed along the north bank of the river between the two bridges.
- Eric explained that the removal of rubbish along this part of the river is not part of the contract agreed between BCC and May Gurney. Eric is currently awaiting the results of a health and safety assessment from May Gurney, plus a quote for completing the additional work. Eric said that a total of £2500 from the Estate Services budget has been allocated this year to support such activities, some of which could be made available to FrANC.
- Ed noted that some landscaping of the riverbank would also be helpful, as has been done in other parts of the New Cut, as the rubbish and litter tends to collect in the brambles and bushes. It was suggested that clearance of the brash by a three-person BCC team could be scheduled to coincide the proposed FrANC clean-up.
- With regard to the clearance of debris from the riverbed, Eric noted that this requires rope access by specialists and is very expensive, costing around £1500 per day! There may be some budget available, however, once the cost of the removal of the riverbank rubbish by May Gurney was known.
- It was agreed that the future points of contact between FrANC and the Estate Services organisation would be Eric and Stacy Bartlett.

7. Update on Wild City Project

- **New Cut Management Plan** – a review of the latest draft of the New Cut Management Plan, prepared by Ollie Roberts of BCC, was held by Sara and other Committee members in March. Following this, Chris Hanmer has collated the Committee’s views on this draft and forwarded them to Ollie for consideration. Our first impression was that there are rather a lot of objectives in

the Plan that have been assigned to FrANC as the lead organisation! Further discussions concerning what FrANC can and cannot deliver are anticipated before the Plan is officially released.

- **Boat Trips** – some Wild City funding will be used to pay for two boat trips up the New Cut this summer. It is intended to offer these trips to local people/organisations/schools in the Redcliffe area, in order to foster interest in the New Cut. The first of these boat trips will be held on 4th June and will involve members of CLASS (Continued Learning at South Street) and the University of the Third Age (U3A).
- **CLASS Booklet** - Roy has been working with members of CLASS to produce a booklet on the different trades and industries that grew up in the Redcliffe area after the Cut was built. It has been agreed that Wild City will contribute towards the publication costs of this booklet.
- **New Interpretation Board at Bath Road Bridge** – it is proposed that some Wild City funding should be used to produce an Interpretation Board at Bath Road Bridge, similar to those recently installed at Bedminster Bridge and the Banana Bridge. This would mean that an Interpretation Board would then be sited at all the bridges between Temple Meads Station and the CREATE Centre. It was hoped that some Wild City funding could also be used to refurbish the existing Interpretation Boards, where necessary. Stephen Mason offered to supply photographs of Bath Road Bridge.
- **Recognition of New Cut as Local Nature Reserve** – a recent communication from Helen Adshead, the Wild City Project Officer liaising with FrANC, has suggested that it is very likely that the New Cut will be officially recognised as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in the near future. This is a result of the various Wild City activities undertaken by FrANC during the last three years.

8. Volunteers for FrANC Guided Walks

- One of the Wild City activities that FrANC has been involved with concerns leading guided walks around the New Cut. The Committee have agreed that we will offer this service primarily to local schools, and consequently we now wish to start building a team of volunteers to lead these walks. Any FrANC members who wish to become involved in this should contact Chris Hanmer, who will provide further details, via the FrANC website.
- M-Shed have also started to provide guided walks for adult groups, one of which includes a short walk around the city as far as the CREATE Centre. It is the Committee's intention to discuss a possible liaison between FrANC and M-Shed at a future date, once the number of volunteers who currently provide the M-Shed service becomes more established.
- Roy and Chris have agreed to lead a Health Walk for NHS Bristol on 20th June, starting from the City Centre.
- It was noted that a Bristol Walking Festival will be held between 4th – 12th May, organised by BCC, with a Walk Fair on 11th May which may be worth attending to find out what guided walks other organisations are offering.

9. 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 had been studied, as a result of which two preferred routes had now emerged:

- (1) along Brunel Way, crossing the Plimsoll Bridge, and then along Hotwell Road and Anchor Road
- (2) across Ashton Avenue Bridge and along Cumberland Road
- The modification of the Harbour Railway next to the Chocolate Path to accommodate a guided busway does not feature in any of the proposed options. This is good news for FrANC, in view of our concerns regarding the environmental impact of the original route on the New Cut. However, with the Cumberland Road option there are still concerns that the butterfly habitat at Butterfly Junction next to Ashton Avenue Bridge will be destroyed during the construction process.
- Derek was actioned to contact the FrANC membership to urge them to write to the Mayor to express their preference for the Hotwell Road/Anchor Road option.

10. Any Other Business

- **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 to discuss the future maintenance of the Harbour Railway. Recently, some of the Harbour Railway staff have been involved in the controlled burning of vegetation next to the rail track.
- **Update on Travellers Camp on Coronation Road** – since the AGM, various members of the Committee have been involved with BCC in trying to get the occupant of the encampment on Coronation Road (behind the *Harvest Energy* Service Station) moved on. Although this area was cleared during the FrANC clean-up at the end of January, since then even more rubbish has been generated, much of it empty beer bottles and cans which have spilled down the sides of the riverbank. The rubbish is visible from the adjacent caravan campsite on Cumberland Road.

Ed reported that the matter had now been escalated to Richard Hawkridge, who is the Acting Streetwise Co-ordinator BCC, Neighbourhoods Anti-Social Behaviour Team. Ed has supplied Richard with the names of several FrANC members who are prepared to support an application for a stronger legal order prohibiting the encampment.

There are also a number of items such as fridges and washing machines that appear to have been dumped on the riverbank behind the metal treatment works on Coronation Road.

- **Chocolate Path** - 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 of the Chocolate Path which features many ad-hoc repairs.
- **Graffiti** – more unwelcome graffiti has been seen on the stone walls on the Cumberland Road side of the Cut next to Goal Ferry Bridge, and also underneath Cumberland Road Bridge. Margaret Fay offered to report this via the BCC Graffiti website.
- **Recycle your Bike** – Sara circulated a leaflet about BikeBack, a scheme run by local charity Life Cycle UK, whereby unwanted bicycles are refurbished (by the inmates of Horfield Prison) and then resold at affordable prices. Bicycles to be donated to this scheme may be dropped off at the CREATE Centre during weekdays.

Derek Hughes
Secretary, Friends of the Avon New Cut