

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 11th March 2014

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

1. Welcome

Sara welcomed the meeting attendees.

2. Apologies for Absence

There were no Apologies for Absence as all Committee Members were present.

3. Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the last FrANC Committee Meeting held on 7th October 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.

Additional comments were provided concerning the following actions:

Action 13-03-01: it appears that guided walks around the New Cut are not organised by the Southville Centre, but by another organisation.

Action 13-03-02: Margaret has circulated, via e-mail, a draft feedback form for FrANC Guided Walks for consideration by the Committee.

Action 13-03-03: Sara has been in regular contact with Eric Dougall (Estate Services Officer) to establish the expected start date of the proposed Bedminster Bridge – Bath Road Bridge riverbank clean-up by May Gurney (post-meeting note: on 14th April Sara was contacted by a May Gurney representative to find out if FrANC could assist with this clean-up – even though it had been agreed previously with Eric that this task was beyond the capabilities of the FrANC membership! After contacting Eric about this, Sara was informed the following day that “due to other work pressures and health and safety concerns”, May Gurney were now unable to carry out the work clearing these riverbanks, despite having previously submitted a quotation for doing so! This is unfortunate, as it means that another contractor will now have to be found by Eric to do this, and with the riverbanks becoming increasingly overgrown with vegetation it is likely that work will not start until later this year or even next year. This effectively means that a year has been lost in progressing this task).

Action 13-03-12: Chris Murray has modified the FrANC website to enable a library of FrANC photographs to be accessed. The photographs are stored on a Flickr account, which is linked to the website. Chris is of the opinion that the website design is old-fashioned, and that it is very hard to change – as confirmed by other Committee members who have tried to post updates to FrANC events on it – and will make some suggestions for improvements at this next tutorial session.

5. Conclusion of Wild City Project

5.1 Items purchased for FrANC at the end of 2013

- At the end of October last year a list of suggestions was sent to the Wild City Project Officer, Helen Adshead, as to how the remaining funding allocated to FrANC in the Wild City budget could be spend. The current status is that
 - the refurbishment of the three Interpretation Boards at Butterfly Junction, Vauxhall Bridge and Goal Ferry Bridge has been completed and the replacement boards have been installed. Spare copies of the artwork for these boards are currently held by Sara and Derek;
 - two Aker MR2800 Portable Voice Amplifiers (PVRs) have been purchased by Derek for use on guided walks;
 - it was not possible to obtain two additional Bat Detectors using Wild City funding, but Paula Spiers (the other Wild City Project Officer) is investigating the possibility of obtaining these from another budget. Derek was asked to check with Paula whether these items are likely to be purchased and, if so, when;
 - unfortunately it was not possible to use the surplus Wild City funds on the other three items suggested to Helen – the completion and publication of the CLASS booklet, the provision of litter bins on either side of the Langton Street/Banana Bridge (apparently this was rejected because the Council would also have to fund the periodic emptying of the bins) and the donation to FrANC to cover future riverbank clean-ups.
- Wild City funding has been used, however, to reimburse FrANC for costs incurred on the Medicinal Herb and “Literary Lives” Walks held in June and July of last year, respectively.
- There were sufficient Wild City funds remaining, however, to cover a boat trip down the Avon Gorge held on 13th December, on which FrANC were represented by Roy and Ed.

5.2 Status of New Cut Management Plan

- A further draft of the Management Plan as been provided by Oli Roberts from Bristol City Council. Derek sent comments on this draft back to Oli on 4th March, and Chris will also provide feedback on the photographs used, as well as suggesting the use of alternative photos on some pages.
- To date we have supplied all the material that was requested from FrANC for inclusion in the Management Plan, though it is expected that a final draft will be provided for review before it is published. There was some concern that it was not possible to complete this document before the conclusion of Wild City, as this was supposedly one of the key deliverables from this project and it is known that Oli Roberts will be moving to another job within the Council shortly. It is understood that the existence of a Management Plan is one of the pre-requisites for the granting of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status for the New Cut, which as far as FrANC is concerned was one of the main objectives of Wild City.

5.3 Timetable for granting of LNR Status

- In her last Wild City communication, Helen Adshead advised that the application for LNR designation for the New Cut is going ahead (slowly). It will take the Council’s legal department three months to process the

application, which will be submitted in March, in which case it should be possible to declare the New Cut as an LNR by June of this year.

- The contact in Bristol City Council for future updates on the status of the New Cut LNR application is Becky Coffin.

6. Operational Matters

6.1 Spring Newsletter 2014

- It was agreed that a Spring Newsletter should be published to update the FrANC membership on forthcoming events. Sara, Chris and Margaret offered to produce an initial draft of this Newsletter by the end of April.

6.2 Review of Butterfly Junction Management Brief

- Towards the end of last year it had been decided that a review of the Butterfly Junction Management Brief, published in 2006, was required. Concerns had been raised by some FrANC members as to whether the current practice of scheduling our annual maintenance activity on this site for the last month of the year was in agreement with the recommendations in the Management Brief.
- Derek was actioned to set up a meeting to review the Management Brief. It was proposed to invite Ben Barker, Barney Smith and Angus Tillotson to this meeting, which would review the contents of this document. One of the objectives of the meeting would be to set the date for this year's Butterfly Junction maintenance activity.
- The possibility of organising butterfly surveys at Butterfly Junction during the course of this year will also be discussed at this meeting, in order to decide how best this could be done.

7. Treasurer's Report

- Liz reported that the only changes to the FrANC accounts since the last meeting had been the cost of providing refreshments for the Butterfly Junction maintenance at the end of November (£71) and for the first riverbank clean-up this year (£45), plus a payment to ClearMedia for the support of the FrANC website (£62). Derek reported that the cost of refreshments for the second riverbank clean-up, which Liz could not attend, was £45.60. Derek had also paid for the purchase of the two PVRs (£80.44), but this would be refunded by the Wild City Project. One of FrANC's members, Laura Murgatroyd, had also donated £10 to FrANC's funds which she had found during the first riverbank clean-up in January.
- The current balance, taking the above items into account, was therefore just over £1000. It was noted that the cost of providing refreshments for volunteers after clean-ups was one of the major items of expenditure. Sara said that she intended to contact ASDA for help in subsidising the cost of the final clean-up planned on 22nd March, which would include the part of the riverbank opposite the ASDA car park on Coronation Road.
- There was some discussion about whether or not we should levy a membership fee to help cover our costs, or charge volunteers a small fee towards the cost of refreshments after clean-ups. It was felt, however, that doing so would put people off, especially as, although we have a membership of more than 150, only around 30 members are actively involved in

supporting clean-ups and other events. It was decided to review this at the next AGM, should there be a significant reduction in the FrANC balance over the coming months. It was agreed, however, that we would continue to charge a small fee of £2 per person to cover events such as guided walks. The major annual costs incurred are those associated with clean-ups (refreshments), insurance for volunteers and the ClearMedia contract for maintaining the FrANC website.

- Sara offered to ask Eric Dougall if there is any money left over from his budget that could be used to purchase additional litter pickers.

8. Wapping Wharf Development – Considerate Constructors Scheme

- Sara reported that she had been contacted by Noel McDonnell, Contracts Manager for John Sisk & Sons Ltd., who are the principal contractors for the new residential development at Wapping Wharf. Sisk are part of the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS), which is a nationwide scheme aimed at improving the image of construction in the UK. One of the key aspects of the scheme is to provide goodwill or legacy to the local community, and to this end Sisk have asked for suggestions regarding any local schemes or initiatives in the harbourside area in which they could become involved.
- Margaret and Chris said that they had recently taken part in a tour of the Wapping Wharf building site as part of a “Near Neighbours” Consultation, and confirmed that Sisk were keen to establish links with the local community.
- After some discussion, the following suggestions were made for potential activities/projects that could be sponsored by Sisk through the CCS:
 - (i) a contribution towards funding for the CLASS booklet on the history of the Redcliffe and Bedminster area, to be prepared by Ken Griffiths of Fiducia Press. This booklet was originally planned to be part of the Wild City Project, but could not be completed in time owing to Ken’s ill health. The working title for this booklet is “The Upper Cut”, and it will cover the development of industry on both sides of the river following the completion of the New Cut. The booklet is intended for use in schools and is aimed at the top juniors/2nd years age group;
 - (ii) sponsor a reprint of the FrANC booklet entitled “A Celebration of the Avon New Cut”, first published in 2006;
 - (iii) clean up the ramps on each side of Gaol Ferry Bridge;
 - (iv) sponsor the design and installation of another Information Board in God’s Garden or in Bathurst Basin, i.e. somewhere close to the Wapping Wharf development. It was noted, however, that God’s Garden is very likely to be affected by the construction of a second bridge between Cumberland Road and Commercial Road as part of the proposed Metrobus (formerly BRT2) scheme, in which case it may be prudent defer the selection of a suitable location for the Interpretation Board until the conclusion of the Metrobus project.
 - (v) the installation of more litter bins between the Louisiana pub and Gaol Ferry Bridge, on either side of the road. As the Council already funds the emptying of other bins in this area, it was felt that this task should not require substantial additional budget – unlike FrANC’s proposal for litter bins to be placed near Langton Street/Banana Bridge as part of Wild City.

- (vi) the purchase of additional litter pickers for FrANC volunteers to use during riverbank clean-ups;
- (vii) take photographs of the New Cut and Harbourside from the top of the cranes on the Wapping Wharf site, which offer a unique vantage point.
- Sara offered to write to Noel McDonnell to suggest a meeting to discuss the above proposals. Rough cost estimates for each suggestion would have to be provided in due course.

9. Events Planning 2014

- **Riverbank Clean-ups:** it was reported that two successful riverbank clean-ups had been completed so far this year along the Coronation Road (25th January) and Cumberland Road (22nd February) sides of the New Cut. The latter clean-up had included the Harbour Railway rail track. A final clean-up was planned for 22nd March covering the riverbank between Bedminster Bridge and the traffic lights at the end of the ASDA car park on Coronation Road. As noted previously, it is intended to ask ASDA to help subsidise the cost of refreshments for volunteers and, if possible, to allow us to use a room on their premises after the clean-up that is available for hosting community events.
- **Guided Walks:** two guided walks are currently planned for this year:
 - a guided walk around the New Cut and harbourside for the *Walking for Health* group, to be held on Monday 14th April. This walk will be led by Sara and Chris.
 - a **Medicinal Herb Walk**, to be led by Iain Stewart, which will be organised by FrANC as part of the Bristol Walking Festival. This walk will be available to the general public as well as the FrANC membership, and numbers will be limited (25 max.). The date of the walk is yet to be confirmed with Iain (*post-meeting note: the date for this event has been scheduled for Tuesday 20th May*).
- **Themed Walks:** Roy reported that this year he would be involved in organising a “*Treasure Island aboard the Matthew*” boat trip around the Floating Harbour. This event is the grand finale to the Big Green Treasure Hunt, and will feature a re-enactment of Robert Louis Stevenson’s literary classic by members of the Long John Silver Trust, including Mark Steeds and Marie Clifford who participated in last year’s successful “Literary Lives – Real and Fictional” Walk. There will be two sailings on Sunday 22nd June, from 1 – 2pm and 2.30 – 3.30pm. This event will be open to the general public, and is not exclusive to FrANC members. Tickets can be purchased at the M-Shed “Big Green Box Office” or by visiting *The Matthew of Bristol* website at www.matthew.co.uk. It is also intended to publicise this event on the FrANC website.
- **Butterfly/Bird Surveys:** following last year’s AGM, Ben Barker had suggested organising a Butterfly Survey this year at Butterfly Junction. The survey would be timely, given the decrease in and recovery of the butterfly population throughout the UK that has been reported over the past two years or so. It was suggested that this could also be extended to include a Bird Survey along the New Cut. The objective of both surveys would be to confirm whether the different species of butterflies and birds recorded in previous surveys undertaken by FrANC were still present. It would be necessary to

produce visual material to support these surveys, in order to identify the butterflies and birds observed. Derek was actioned to discuss with Ben how best to proceed with this. It was noted that a bird “talk and walk” had been given by Alison Leaf following the first FrANC AGM on 7th June 2007, and that maybe a similar event could be arranged this year.

- **John Purkiss Memorial Event 2014 – Geological Walk:** it had been suggested previously that FrANC should organise an annual lecture or guided walk in memory of John Purkiss. Roy proposed a Geological Walk as this year’s event, to be led by Pete Andresson, a professional geologist. The walk would cover the geology of The Cut between Bedminster Bridge and the Underfall Yard. Roy offered to contact Pete to find out if and when he is available (*post-meeting note: the date for this event has been scheduled for Wednesday 9th July*).
- **Informal Walks:** Sara added that she was keen to run a number of “Informal Walks” around the New Cut during the coming year, during which the opportunity would be taken to use litter pickers to collect easily accessible items of rubbish. It was hoped to get more of the younger members of FrANC involved in this activity.
- **Celebration of New Cut becoming an LNR:** assuming that LNR status is awarded to the Avon New Cut this year, it was agreed that this should be celebrated in a suitable manner when the time arrives.

10. Any Other Business

- **Memorial for John Purkiss:** the memorial plaque that was purchased last year was installed in front of the hawthorn tree next to the FrANC bench on the Chocolate Path on 16th February.
- **Metrobus Planning Application:** it was reported that this is to be voted on by the Council on 19th March. A meeting of the Planning Officers is to be held tomorrow (12th March) at which it is expected that they will give a recommendation to the Council to proceed with the planning application.
- **Cycle City Ambition Grant:** Sara, Chris and Derek reported that they had attended an awareness meeting organised by John Usher from Sustrans on 9th February to discuss the status of the various Bristol cycling projects that will be funded via this grant. One of the more ambitious projects concerns a new bridge across The Cut, the northern end of which will be sited near the spot where the Harbour Railway is routed underneath Cumberland Road.
- **Funding:** Chris reported that she had recently attended a Neighbourhood Partnership meeting at which she had become aware of the existence of the *Cabot/Clifton/Clifton East Wellbeing Fund*. This source of funding is apparently available to community organisations whose work is of benefit to their local neighbourhood. Chris said that FrANC meets all the criteria used to decide if an organisation is eligible to apply for this funding.

Grants are awarded by the Neighbourhood Partnership to fund projects submitted by applicants. The following projects were suggested that could be submitted by FrANC:

- removal of the wall on Coronation Road adjacent to the Harvest Energy garage, and transform the area behind it into a community space so that it would be less likely to be used as an encampment for vagrants in

future. The only issue with this proposal is that this site may be outside the Cabot/Clifton/Clifton East neighbourhood boundary;

- install benches at Butterfly Junction;
- landscape Butterfly Junction, so that some areas are preserved for butterflies while others could be adapted for recreational purposes. It was suggested that this could be discussed further at the meeting to be organised to review the Butterfly Junction Management Brief.

11. Date of next meeting

- No date was set for the next meeting, but it is intended that this will be a General Meeting to which the FrANC membership will be invited to attend.
- Note that Table 1 includes any new actions raised at this meeting.

Derek Hughes

Secretary, Friends of the Avon New Cut

Action No.	Description	Actioned by	Status
12-03-01	Distribute New Cut Management Plan, when available, to Committee Members.	Derek	Completed
13-02-06	Find out details of PA System used by BANES colleague	Sara	Withdrawn
13-03-01	Contact Southville Centre to find out if they are planning to run Guided Walks around the New Cut.	Liz	Completed
13-03-02	Draft feedback form for FrANC Guided Walks.	Margaret	Completed
13-03-03	Contact Eric Dougall to confirm when May Gurney Bedminster Bridge – Bath Road Bridge riverbank clean-up will occur, and co-ordinate any possible involvement by FrANC. Also discuss removal of buddleia from Harbour Railway stone walls.	Sara	<i>In Progress</i>
13-03-04	Contact Chris Ecclestone to find out if/what FrANC assistance is required for Harbour Railway maintenance activities.	Sara	Completed
13-03-05	Source, select and purchase hawthorne tree (<i>cratageus oxycantha plena</i>) for John Purkiss Memorial Tree Planting Ceremony	Ed	Completed
13-03-06	Advise Eric Dougall of FrANC's intention to plant a hawthorne tree as a memorial to John Purkiss, where it will be sited, and find out if we need any special permission from Eric or another BCC officer (e.g. Tree Warden) before the tree can be planted.	Liz	Completed
13-03-07	Contact Mo Mulligan to help source metal memorial plaque for hawthorne tree.	Liz	Completed
13-03-08	Write to Helen Adshead with FrANC suggestions for final spend of Wild City Budget, plus FrANC views on current status of New Cut Management Plan.	Derek	Completed
13-03-09	Write and publish Autumn 2013 FrANC Newsletter	Sara, Chris, Margaret	Completed
13-03-10	Contact Angus Tillotson to find out if he is available for Butterfly Junction maintenance (strimming) on 30 th November 2013	Derek	Completed
13-03-11	Contact ASDA for assistance with Riverbank Clean-up opposite ASDA car park on 22 nd March 2014	Sara	<i>In Progress</i>
13-03-12	Contact Chris Murray to arrange FrANC Website maintenance tutorial	Sara	<i>In Progress</i>
14-01-01	Contact Paula Spiers to find out if alternative funds are available to cover the purchase of two bat detectors	Derek	<i>In Progress</i>
14-01-02	Write and publish Spring 2014 FrANC Newsletter	Sara, Chris, Margaret	<i>In Progress</i>
14-01-03	Organise meeting with Ben Barker, Angus Tillotson and Barney Smith to discuss Butterfly Junction Management Brief, possible Butterfly/Bird Survey in Summer 2014 and suggestion for "landscaping" Butterfly Junction (Wellbeing Fund proposal)	Derek	<i>In Progress</i>
14-01-04	Contact Eric Dougall to find out if surplus Estate Services funding is available to cover the purchase of additional litter pickers	Sara	<i>In Progress</i>
14-01-05	Organise meeting with Noel McDonnell to discuss FrANC proposals for projects funded by Considerate Constructors Scheme	Sara	<i>In Progress</i>
14-01-06	Confirm availability of Pete Andresson for New Cut Geological Walk on 9 th July 2014	Roy	<i>In Progress</i>

Table 1 FrANC Committee Action List