

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 11th July 2017

Attended by: Sara Worth (Chair), Tess Green (Vice-Chair), Derek Hughes (Secretary) and Richard Clutterbuck, Margaret Fay, Roy Gallop, Chris Hanmer and Angie Tonge (Committee Members).

1. Welcome

Sara welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Ed Hall (Committee Member) and Steve Fay (Treasurer).

3. Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the last FrANC Committee Meeting held on 10th April 2017 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 concerning some of the actions are given below:

Action 16-03-11: Derek has written to the supplier of John Purkiss' plaque, Brunel Engraving Company, requesting a cost estimate for restoring the black lettering on the stainless steel nameplate which is now virtually non-existent due to weathering. Derek also enquired as to whether the company provides some form of guarantee/warranty on the durability of the lettering, as the plaque was only installed 3½ years ago. If the cost of restoring the black lettering is excessive, Roy offered to do this himself. *(Post-Meeting Note: subsequent to the meeting, Sara and Derek decided to have the nameplate lettering restored by Brunel Engraving Company as the cost quoted for the restoration work, including return postage and VAT, was only £28.74. The company has also offered to rework any future re-occurrence of the deterioration of the lettering within a 12-month period free of charge.)*

Action 16-04-02: Roy confirmed that unfortunately *acta Community Theatre* had been unable to obtain funding for their show entitled "*Blood on the Coal*" and consequently the date of his proposed Bedminster/Southville Colliery Site Walk was no longer dependant upon this (see item 5.3 below).

Action 17-01-01: Roy and Tess reported that they had been unable to locate any individual photos of the "Boat Race" held to mark the anniversary of the start of the digging of the New Cut. However, these could be reproduced by photographing some of the images shown on the "Celebrating Gaol Ferry Bridge" poster supplied by Roy at the previous Committee Meeting.

Action 17-01-03: Derek said that he had written to the Environment Agency's Melvin Wood, requesting further details (and costs) concerning his "Origin of River Frome" Walk, and was awaiting a reply.

Action 17-01-04: following the abolishment of the Neighbourhood Partnerships, the Bristol City Council (BCC) process for allocating Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds is unclear at present. It was agreed that we would await further developments.

Action 17-02-03: Derek reported that FrANC Newsletter 28 (Summer 2017) was released on 21st June and is also accessible from the FrANC Website.

5. Status of Events Planned for 2017/2018

5.1 Environment Agency Clean-up in September 2017

Sara reported that we have been asked by Fiona Davies, who works for the Environment Agency, to organise a riverbank clean-up session for their Media and Corporate Communications staff on Thursday 21st September, starting at 10:15am. This is likely to be similar in scope to two events that FrANC ran last year for Environment Agency volunteers, with morning and afternoon clean-up sessions separated by a lunch break. The part of the riverbank to be tackled will be decided in due course, but as the volunteers will be split into several groups we will need some Committee Members who have completed the BCC "Health & Safety Training for Community Groups" course to be available to act as Group Leaders. Richard noted that there will be a high tide on the date of the clean-up.

5.2 Walks/Talks Completed

- **"Exploring the Cumberland Basin" Walk** – on behalf of the Committee, Sara gave a big vote of thanks to Ed Hall for leading the four walks in May that were FrANC's contribution to this year's *Bristol Walk Fest*. The walks had been attended by a total of 43 people, plus at least one baby. Sara noted that we had been unlucky with the bad weather on 17th May which had resulted in only seven people (including two FrANC stewards) attending this evening walk.
- **Botanical Walk around the New Cut** – a vote of thanks was also given to Richard Bland (Bristol Naturalists' Society), who led this walk during the morning of Sunday 25th June. It was felt that, although Richard was his usual informative self, this is the third riverbank walk that he has undertaken in as many years and that consequently we have now covered most of the plants and trees along it. It was suggested that next year we should perhaps organise a different walk instead. Margaret said that she knew a botanist from the Bristol Naturalists' Society who might be prepared to lead a Herb Walk.
- **Tour of Thomas Ware & Sons Tannery** – we were able to accommodate a total of 26 people on the evening tour of the Thomas Ware & Sons tannery on 4th July. We are indebted to the tannery's Sales Manager, Barry Knight, for giving us a fascinating insight into the workings of the tannery and explaining to us the lengthy process used to convert animal hides into quality tanned leather. Sara also collected donations totalling around £96 during the tour which will be used by Barry to support a charity in India that helps young people. Barry is keen to promote the tannery to as many locals as possible, so we will consider repeating the tour for other FrANC members at a future date.

5.3 Walks/Talks Planned

- **Bedminster/Southville Colliery Site Walk** – it was agreed that Roy will lead this walk on Sunday 17th September. The walk will start at 2:00pm from Gaol Ferry Bridge and will end at Vauxhall Bridge. The walk will last around 2 hours and it is intended to visit three locations in the Bedminster/Southville area that

were previously coal mines. Roy said that there would be a stop for coffee at his garage about halfway round where various artefacts from the coal mining industry would be on display. It was suggested that the number of people on the walk should be limited to around 20, and Roy said that he would like to invite members of U3A (University of the Third Age) as well as FrANC.

- **Tributaries of the New Cut Walk** – as Stephen Mason expects to be involved in the Windmill Hill & Victoria Park Arts Trail during the weekend of 7th/8th October, this walk is likely to be held in the latter half of that month (i.e. on Sunday 22nd or 29th October). Sara and Derek will agree a date for the walk and the walk content with Stephen in due course.
- **Origin of River Frome Walk** – as noted in item 4 above under Action 17-01-03, Derek is awaiting a reply from Melvin Wood regarding the content and cost of this walk. It was agreed that if we do decide to go ahead then, as our events programme is quite full for the remainder of this year, we will schedule the walk for some time in 2018.

6. Butterfly Junction

6.1 *Big Butterfly Count 2017*

Derek reminded those present that we will be running our fourth annual *Big Butterfly Count* at Butterfly Junction between 14th July and 6th August. Derek said that this event was publicised in the recently-published Newsletter and full details on how to participate in the survey, including a butterfly identification chart and survey form, have been distributed to the FrANC membership.

6.2 **Date for “Meadow Management” in 2017**

The date of our annual “Meadow Management” activity at Butterfly Junction was provisionally set for Saturday 18th November, starting at 10:00am. The date will be checked against what is recommended in the *Butterfly Junction Management Brief* before it is finally confirmed. The usual complimentary refreshments will be offered to encourage FrANC members to participate (it was noted that only six people had supported the last event held in December 2015).

7. FrANC Website – Progress on Photo Review

Sara, Chris, Richard and Derek met as planned on 10th May to review the photos that are currently displayed in the *Gallery/Photos* section of the FrANC Website. Over 50 photos were identified for removal, and more up-to-date photos will be added in due course. Richard supplied a memory stick (at this Committee Meeting) from which the replacement photos will be selected, and Derek will update the Website in due course (i.e. as soon as he works out how to do it !).

Richard has also produced a time-lapse video showing the rise and fall of the tide in the New Cut. It was suggested that this could also be added to the Website in the *Gallery/Video* section, provided the video content can be amended to include copyright protection.

8. Rough Sleepers on New Cut Riverbank

Sara reported that, following a meeting of the Bristol Parks Forum on 24th June, she wrote to Councillor Asher Craig (who is Bristol’s Deputy Mayor and responsible for Communities, Public Health and Integrated Public Transport) to outline the current situation regarding rough sleeper encampments on the New

Cut riverbank. Councillor Craig appears to be sympathetic to FrANC's concerns regarding the effect of these encampments on the New Cut and duly contacted two BCC officers who Sara has previously dealt with, Richard Fletcher (Interim Service Manager, Parks & Estates) and Richard Hawkridge (BCC Streetwise Co-ordinator), to expedite matters. Sara noted that, within days of Councillor Craig's intervention, the abandoned encampment at God's Garden had been cleared by Council workers – though another tent has since appeared there.

Sara, Chris and Steve Fay had also cleared litter and rubbish from around the tents on each side of Gaol Ferry Bridge on 6th July. Three tents that were no longer being used had been dismantled and bagged, the one on the Coronation Road side of the bridge being left on site. As the camp site at the bottom of the slipway on the Coronation Road side was deserted at this time, photographs were taken of drug litter and drug-dealing apparatus that could be seen inside one of the tents. Sara has since written to the neighbourhood police team about the drug-related activities that are obviously going on at this encampment, with the photographs taken attached as evidence, and is awaiting a reply.

Richard suggested contacting the *South Bristol Voice* should we wish to publicise these issues further.

9. Any Other Business

- **Updating lists of Plants and Trees along New Cut** – during Richard Bland's recent Botanical Walk, several species of wild flowers were noted along the Harbour Railway rail track which prompted discussion about whether or not they are included in the *Flowering Plants List* on the FrANC Website. As the lists of plants, trees and wildlife that can be downloaded from the Website have not been updated for many years, Tess suggested that the Committee should conduct three or four walks ourselves to check that the content of these lists is still valid.
- **Removal of boards protecting Butterfly Junction** – with the MetroBus CREATE CENTRE bus stop and busway between Ashton Avenue Bridge and Cumberland Road now nearing completion, Sara offered to contact Balfour Beatty to find out when the wooden boards that were erected to protect Butterfly Junction while these works were in progress will be removed. It was suggested that the opportunity could also be taken to query Balfour Beatty's plans for the future landscaping of the area. Also of interest is whether these plans are in agreement with recommendations made by Dr. Nick Michael, a BCC Nature Conservation Officer, following a previous meeting between FrANC (represented by Derek, Margaret and Ben Barker), Balfour Beatty and BCC held on 6th February 2015 (Derek has a copy of the email from Dr. Michael that contains his landscaping proposals to encourage butterfly breeding).
- **Funding for new Interpretation Board(s)** – as the process for applying for Section 106 or CIL funding is unclear at present (see item 4, Action 17-01-04 above), there was some discussion regarding alternative funding sources that could be tapped to cover the cost of designing and installing new Interpretation Boards. Roy offered to obtain a copy of this year's *Bedminster's Secret Gardens* booklet as this featured an advertisement for one of the companies associated with the Wapping Wharf Development on its back page. It was thought that the advertised company may have sponsored the booklet, and could therefore be approached to see if they were prepared

to do the same for one of our Interpretation Boards (or, if too expensive, to perhaps fund the cost of refreshments after one of our Riverbank Clean-ups).

- **Removal of Rubbish from New Cut Riverbed** – Sara reported that this item was due to be discussed at the next meeting of Chris Whale’s local Caving Club. It was also suggested that we contact City and Country, the developers of *The General* (formerly Bristol General Hospital), to see if their contractors can help with the clearance of rubbish (especially parking cones) that has accumulated along the Commercial Road riverbank over the past year as a result of their construction activities.
- **Podcast about New Cut** – Sara has been in contact with Sarah Connolly, who is about to start a new project combining podcasting, photography and walking projects based around the tidal River Avon in Bristol and would like to interview someone about the history of the New Cut. Roy was unanimously proposed as a suitable interviewee, and Sara offered to provide Sarah with his contact details. It was suggested that, with Sarah’s agreement, the podcast could be added to the FrANC Website once the project is completed.
- **Letter to BCC re. the Collapsing New Cut** – in Ed’s absence, Sara reported that he had drafted a letter expressing his concerns about the subsidence of parts of the New Cut riverbank, especially along Coronation Road which appears to have increased over the past two years. Although Ed had intended addressing this letter to Karin Smyth, MP for Bristol South, Tess pointed out that this problem should really be addressed by BCC as the maintenance of the New Cut is their responsibility and not that of HM Government or government departments such as the Highways Agency. An action was placed on Ed and Tess to jointly draft a letter to BCC outlining FrANC’s concerns, referring to both the present-day situation and examples of collapses that have occurred in the past.
- **Date and venue for Annual General Meeting (AGM)** – after some discussion, and recognising that this falls on the same day as Guy Fawkes Night, the date of this year’s AGM was provisionally set for **Sunday November 5th**. It was suggested that, for the second year running, we should hold the AGM in the Education & Meeting Room at the Underfall Yard. Chris noted that the facilities available in this room had improved since last year’s meeting, and in order to encourage a good turnout from the FrANC membership it was suggested that the AGM could be followed by a tour of the Underfall Yard. Although the Yard will also be open to the general public on the proposed date, it should be possible to arrange a private tour that would include a visit to the machine shop (where the forges are being restored) and the pump room (with the possibility of witnessing a pump run). Chris was asked to confirm the proposed date and the possibility of a tour with Sarah Murray, the Community, Learning and Volunteering Officer.

10. Date of the next Committee Meeting

- The date of the next FrANC Committee Meeting is **Tuesday 12th September 2017**, to be held at 88 Cumberland Road starting at 7:30pm.
- Note that Table 1 includes any new actions raised at this 11th July meeting.

Derek Hughes
Secretary, Friends of the Avon New Cut

Action No.	Description	Actioned by	Status
16-03-11	Clear overgrown vegetation around John Purkiss' Memorial Tree and investigate how to repair faded lettering on Plaque	Derek	<i>In Progress</i>
16-04-02	Contact <i>acta Community Theatre</i> to discuss involvement in proposed Bedminster/Southville Colliery Site Walk	Roy	<i>Completed</i>
16-04-04	Contact Thomas Ware and Sons Ltd. to arrange evening talks/tours around tannery for FrANC Committee and members	Chris	<i>Completed</i>
17-01-01	Find out if any photos exist of the "Boat Race" that was held to mark the anniversary of the start of the digging of the New Cut	Roy, Tess	<i>Completed</i>
17-01-02	Publish details of "Exploring the Cumberland Basin" Walk in next FrANC Newsletter and on FrANC Website	Derek	<i>Completed</i>
17-01-03	Contact Melvin Wood (Environment Agency) to find out more about his "Origin of the River Frome" Walk	Derek	<i>Completed</i>
17-01-04	Investigate application process for Greater Bedminster Section 106 funding and find out how much of 2017 budget remains	Tess	<i>In Progress</i>
17-02-01	Committee Members to advise Sara of their availability to support Ed Hall as stewards during his <i>Bristol Walk Fest</i> walks	Committee	<i>Completed</i>
17-02-02	Publish updated "Friends of the Avon New Cut" leaflet by the end of April	Derek	<i>Completed</i>
17-02-03	Provide contributions to next FrANC Newsletter by the end of April	Committee	<i>Completed</i>
17-03-01	Committee Members to advise Sara of their availability to support Environment Agency clean-up on 21 st September	Committee	<i>New Action</i>
17-03-02	Investigate whether there is a botanist from the Bristol Naturalists' Society who is prepared to lead a Herb Walk in 2018	Margaret	<i>New Action</i>
17-03-03	Update <i>Gallery/Photos</i> section of FrANC Website (remove unwanted photos and add new (more recent) photos)	Derek	<i>New Action</i>
17-03-04	Contact Balfour Beatty re. date for removal of protective wooden fencing around Butterfly Junction and landscaping of area	Sara	<i>New Action</i>
17-03-05	Obtain copy of this year's <i>Bedminster's Secret Gardens</i> booklet and, if possible, name of sponsor	Roy	<i>New Action</i>
17-03-06	Provide Sarah Connolly with Roy's contact details	Sara	<i>New Action</i>
17-03-07	Draft a letter to Bristol City Council re. FrANC's concerns about historical/present-day subsidence of the New Cut riverbank	Ed, Tess	<i>New Action</i>
17-03-08	Contact Sarah Murray to confirm whether AGM can be held at the Underfall Yard on 5 th November, followed by guided tour	Chris	<i>New Action</i>

Table 1 FrANC Committee Action List