

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 12th September 2017

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

1. Welcome

Sara welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

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

3. Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the last FrANC Committee Meeting held on 11th July 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 reported that the black infill lettering on the nameplate of John Purkiss' plaque has now been restored by Brunel Engraving Company. Derek has also sanded and re-varnished the wooden plinth on which the nameplate is mounted, and the plaque was reinstalled below the hawthorn tree on 10th August. However, some degradation of the newly-restored lettering has since been observed by Chris. Derek offered to investigate this further.

Action 17-01-04: the Bristol City Council (BCC) process for allocating Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds following the abolishment of the Neighbourhood Partnerships (NPs) still awaits clarification.

Action 17-03-01: Ed and possibly Margaret have confirmed their availability for the riverbank clean-up with the Environment Agency planned for 21st September.

Action 17-03-02: Margaret reported that she had attended a committee meeting of the Bristol Naturalists' Society at which there had been a "nod of heads" with a view to providing a botanist to lead a FrANC Herb Walk next year. The botanists' section of the Society is in some disarray at present, owing to illness, but Margaret will make contact via the Secretary to find out the name of a suitable candidate. Also of interest would be whether the Society's botanists would be interested in helping with a botanical survey of the New Cut to update the lists of flora and fauna on the FrANC Website. This could perhaps take the form of a series of walks on both sides of the riverbank that would be carried out during different seasons.

Action 17-03-03: Derek reported that Richard had provided a memory stick containing photos of more recent FrANC events and a selection of these were used to update the *Gallery/Photos* section of the FrANC Website. Sara noted that we should try to update this part of the Website regularly.

Action 17-03-04: The protective wooden fencing around Butterfly Junction was taken down at the end of July. Sara reported that she had since written to Dr. Nick Michael (BCC Nature Conservation Officer) who was previously involved in advising what butterfly-friendly plant species should be planted at Butterfly Junction once the MetroBus works are complete. Other BCC officers and representatives from Balfour Beatty and design consultants CH2M (formerly Halcrow) had been included in the correspondence, and Sara subsequently received an email from Douglas Barnett, a CH2M Project Manager, which contained a drawing showing the contractors' landscaping proposals. As the area that was fenced off will remain untouched, the area shown on the drawing that is to be replanted is quite small (most of it is either busway or a paved surface). Although the plant species to be used are specified on the drawing they are difficult to read (small white lettering on black background). Derek offered to identify the plant species from the drawing and Sara will then confirm with Dr. Michael (who did not respond to her original email) whether they agree with his original recommendation. However, as the replanting has already taken place (as evidenced by recent plant growth in the landscaped area), it is considered unlikely that any differences between what has been planted as opposed to what should have been planted will be acted upon.

Action 17-03-05: Roy reported that the sponsor of the *Bedminster Secret Gardens* booklet was thought to be Riverside Garden Centre and not Wapping Wharf Development. Riverside Garden Centre is (currently) not considered to be a potential sponsor for future FrANC Interpretation Boards.

Action 17-03-06: Roy said that he had met with Sarah Connolly and had spent a period of three hours walking the New Cut with her, gathering material for her podcast, which is expected to be available in a month's time.

Action 17-03-07: Tess reported that she and Ed had not yet got together to draft a letter to BCC regarding our concerns about riverbank subsidence along the New Cut, though Ed has messaged where these areas of subsidence occur.

Action 17-03-08: Chris has arranged for this year's AGM to be held in the Education & Meeting Room at The Underfall Yard (i.e. same venue as last year). This will be followed by a guided tour of the Yard, to be led by Chris.

5. Status of Events Planned for 2017

5.1 Environment Agency Clean-up on 21st September 2017

Sara reported that plans for the riverbank clean-up with the Environment Agency's Media and Corporate Communications staff on Thursday 21st September were nearly complete. The morning session will be spent collecting litter along the Coronation Road riverbank, in God's Garden and on the Gaol Ferry Bridge slipways, while the Harbour Railway rail track will be cleared in the afternoon following a short lunch break. Sara has arranged for the Environment Agency volunteers to meet at L-Shed, where a room will be provided for their personal use. The required Health & Safety paperwork has been completed by Derek and approved by BCC, and Sara and Derek will walk the proposed clean-up route the previous day to check that the risk assessment is still valid.

5.2 Walks/Talks planned

- **Bedminster/Southville Colliery Site Walk** – Roy will lead this walk on Sunday 17th September, starting at 2:00pm from Gaol Ferry Bridge. Roy noted that the walk will now finish at his garage (where various coal mining industry

artefacts will be on display) and not Vauxhall Bridge, as was originally intended. Derek said that the demand for places on the walk had been extremely high amongst FrANC and U3A (University of the Third Age), with 31 places booked by FrANC members (plus four walk marshals) and a further 15 places reserved by members of U3A. It was agreed that a walking group totalling 46 people would be too many for us to accommodate, and that regrettably we would have to withdraw the offer of places to U3A. Roy offered to repeat the walk exclusively for U3A members on Saturday 11th November, and Derek was actioned to offer this date to U3A as an alternative.

- **Tributaries of the New Cut Walk** – four possible dates for this walk had been offered to the walk leader, Stephen Mason, and a date of Sunday 22nd October has been agreed, with a 2:00pm start. Sara and Derek will provide further support to Stephen in finalising the walk route and producing any supporting documentation for walk attendees, as well as co-ordinating bookings for places on the walk [*Post-meeting note: this walk was subsequently “re-branded” as “The River Malago and its Culverts in Old Bedminster” as it follows the route of The Malago through Bedminster, ending on Cumberland Road opposite one of the four culverts where the underground river discharges into the New Cut.*]

5.3 Butterfly Junction “Meadow Management” on 18th November

This event will start at 10:00am on Saturday 18th November and was last held two years ago – FrANC enlisted the help of *ParkWork* to carry out the required “meadow management” last year, which included grass cutting. No grass cutting will be carried out this year as this should only be performed once every three years, according to the *Butterfly Junction Management Brief*. The event will be publicised on the FrANC Website, and a reminder will be sent to the FrANC membership beforehand via email.

6. Update of FrANC Membership List

Derek proposed that an update of the FrANC Membership List was required. The number of “FrANC members” on our mailing list now totals over 200, but it is estimated that less than 50% of these actively support FrANC events (for example, only 53 members actually helped with the four riverbank clean-ups this year). The task of sending out emails to the 200+ people on our mailing list is made more onerous by the fact that the BT Mail contact lists that Derek has set up for the FrANC membership can only accommodate a maximum of 50 members per list. Consequently, every email communication has to be sent five times because five BT contact lists are required to cover the 200+ FrANC members.

Derek noted that we have gained over 50 new members since the new FrANC Website was launched last year. These are people who have entered their name, email address and telephone number in the “Join the FrANC mailing list” box at the bottom of each Website page and then sent this information to us via the “Subscribe” button. However, because anyone can visit the Website, it is suspected that many of these people may not live locally and many may not even reside within Bristol or even the UK (as evidenced by cases where the country code in the telephone number provided does not begin with “+44”).

Most of the email communications that Derek sends to the FrANC membership via the mailing list are reminders about forthcoming events. As these events are also publicised in advance on the Website in the *News & Events* section, the question arises as to whether it is really necessary to send out reminders to people who have opted to join the mailing list but are not likely or

prepared to support FrANC events. It was suggested that maybe the “Join the FrANC mailing list” box should be changed to say “Join the list of FrANC Volunteers”, in order to attract a more “active” membership. Sara suggested that alternatively we could try to restrict the membership list to only those people living within a certain distance of the New Cut.

After some discussion, it was agreed that for the moment it would be best for Derek to email the FrANC membership to ask if members wish to remain on the existing mailing list. If members do not reply to this email by a given deadline then they will be removed from the mailing list. Chris also suggested that, as a longer-term solution, we should investigate whether the use of an alternative form of electronic communication such as MAILCHIMP would be preferable to reduce the Secretary’s administrative workload.

It was recognised that currently all communication with the membership about FrANC activities is performed by the Secretary, with a resulting high workload. Derek was asked to itemise the various roles/tasks that he currently performs, so that if possible some specific tasks can be identified which could be undertaken by other Committee Members.

7. Rough Sleepers on New Cut Riverbank

Sara reported that she had been informed by Eric Dougall (BCC Markets & Estate Service Operations Manager) that BCC have now been granted an injunction to enable them to disperse any rough sleepers found camping on the New Cut riverbank. It was not clear, however, whether this injunction is for an indefinite period and what parts of the New Cut are actually covered. There are currently five tents along the Gaol Ferry Bridge slipways bordering Cumberland Road, and another tent has appeared recently near Ashton Avenue Bridge.

8. Any Other Business

- **Application for Section 106 funding for new Interpretation Board(s)** – the process for applying for Section 106 or CIL funding is still unclear (see item 4, Action 17-01-04 above). Although some NPs have now finished operating, it is understood that Greater Bedminster plans to revert to the way it managed its affairs before NPs were introduced. Looking to the future, it would be desirable for a consistent Section 106/CIL process to be adopted by all neighbourhoods. Tess offered to contact Deputy Mayor Asher Craig to find out the name of the BCC officer who is responsible for Section 106/CIL funding allocation in our local area.
- **Report on Big Butterfly Count 2017** – Derek reported that a total of 16 visits had been made by FrANC members to Butterfly Junction between 14th July and 6th August to record butterfly sightings for this year’s *Big Butterfly Count*. A total of 9 different butterfly species were seen, the most frequent being Large or Small Whites and Common Blues. Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Large Skipper, Red Admiral and Ringlet were observed during two or more visits, but the Peacock species was seen only once. However, there were apparently no sightings of Comma, Marbled White or Holly Blue butterflies this year. Derek thanked the four FrANC members who had taken part with him in the survey – Pat Fung, Rachel Sellers and especially the Clutterbucks (Jane and Richard) who between them had made the majority of the site visits. The results of the Butterfly Junction survey have been logged

with the *Big Butterfly Count* organiser, *Butterfly Conservation*, and it is intended to publish them in the next FrANC Newsletter.

- **Removal of Rubbish from New Cut riverbed** – Sara reported no progress on this to date, and said that she would again contact Chris Whale to see if the local Caving Club can help.
- **Goodgym offer to support FrANC activities** – Sara said that she had been contacted by Paul Becker from *Bristol Goodgym*, a group of volunteer runners who travel all over Bristol helping out community groups and isolated elderly people with any labour-intensive tasks that need completing. These volunteers run to the location of a particular task, work hard for up to 45 minutes and then run back. There are two groups, who meet on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings. Roy and Tess noted that *Goodgym* have already been of great help to the *Patchwork* group they are associated with.

After some discussion it was agreed that we would be best able to make use of *Goodgym's* services during a Saturday morning clean-up activity, but probably not until February/March next year before the riverbank vegetation starts to grow again in the spring. Sara was actioned to contact Paul Becker to advise him of this.

- **Future storage location for FrANC equipment, etc.** – Sara would like to find a central location for storing the FrANC equipment that is currently at 88 Cumberland Road. This includes all equipment used during clean-ups (comprising a wheelie bin full of litter-pickers plus various bags containing high-visibility vests, protective gloves, refuse bags and hoops) as well as boxes containing FrANC leaflets and books, various display boards and duplicate copies of some Interpretation Boards. Sara said that during the forthcoming clean-up with the Environment Agency she planned to investigate whether there is a cupboard available in L-Shed in which the above items could be stored. Relocating these items more centrally would make them more accessible to the FrANC membership – plus Sara and/or Derek would no longer have to be present for all clean-ups!
- **Preparations for Annual General Meeting (AGM)** – as noted in item 4, Action 17-03-08 above, this will be held on Sunday 5th November in the Education & Meeting Room at The Underfall Yard, starting at 2:00pm. It is proposed that the AGM will last about an hour and will be followed by an hour-long guided tour of selected buildings within the Yard, which Chris will lead.

The intentions of those Committee Members present as to whether or not they are prepared to stand for re-election to the Executive Committee are summarised below:

- **Sara** – prepared to carry on as Chair for another year, but will be standing down from the Committee after that;
- **Tess** – prepared to stand as Vice-Chair, but is not interested in taking on the role of Chair when Sara stands down. Ideally, would prefer to relinquish the role of Vice Chair if someone can be found to take this on with a view to training them up to succeed Sara as Chair next year;
- **Derek** – prepared to continue as Secretary for another year, possibly two if that is necessary to assist a new Chair in 2018/19;
- **Roy, Chris and Margaret** – all are prepared to continue as Committee Members for another year;

- **Richard** – because of family commitments, does not wish to stand for re-election as a Committee Member at the AGM, but is willing to continue in his unofficial role as FrANC's Chief Photographer.

It is clear from the above that we will need to find suitable candidates to fill key Executive Committee positions during the forthcoming year if FrANC is to continue. It was noted that there appears to be a problem in recruiting younger people to take on such positions, and that it would be helpful if particular roles/responsibilities (e.g. Website Manager, Newsletter Editor/Publisher, Walks/Talks Organiser) could be identified that could be assigned to different Committee Members and so make the job of running FrANC more manageable. It was felt that identifying specific roles/responsibilities such as those listed above might encourage (preferably) younger people to take them on.

It was agreed that Derek and Sara will include a request for some "younger blood" to get involved in helping to run FrANC's activities in the notification about the AGM that will be sent by email to the FrANC membership shortly.

9. Date of the next Committee Meeting

- No date was set for the next FrANC Committee Meeting (to be discussed at the AGM).
- Note that Table 1 includes any new actions raised at this 12th September 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>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>Superseded</i>
17-03-01	Committee Members to advise Sara of their availability to support Environment Agency clean-up on 21 st September	Committee	<i>Completed</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>Completed</i>
17-03-03	Update <i>Gallery/Photos</i> section of FrANC Website (remove unwanted photos and add new (more recent) photos)	Derek	<i>Completed</i>
17-03-04	Contact Balfour Beatty re. date for removal of protective wooden fencing around Butterfly Junction and landscaping of area	Sara	<i>Completed</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>Completed</i>
17-03-06	Provide Sarah Connolly with Roy's contact details	Sara	<i>Completed</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>In Progress</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>Completed</i>
17-04-01	Investigate reported degradation of newly-restored lettering on John Purkiss' Memorial Plaque	Derek	<i>New Action</i>
17-04-02	Contact Deputy Mayor Asher Craig to find out name of Council Officer responsible for Greater Bedminster Section 106/CIL funding allocation	Tess	<i>New Action</i>
17-04-03	Identify Butterfly Junction seed mixes from CH2M drawing and confirm with Dr. Nick Michael that these are acceptable	Derek, Sara	<i>New Action</i>
17-04-04	Advise U3A members of revised date of 11 th November for Roy's Bedminster/Southville Colliery Site Walk	Derek	<i>New Action</i>
17-04-05	Update FrANC Membership List – email membership to ask if FrANC members wish to remain on mailing list	Derek	<i>New Action</i>
17-04-06	List all FrANC roles/tasks currently undertaken by Secretary	Derek	<i>New Action</i>
17-04-07	Contact Paul Becker from <i>Bristol Goodgym</i> re. possible Saturday morning riverbank clean-up task in February/March 2018	Sara	<i>New Action</i>
17-04-08	Identify the different roles/responsibilities that are necessary to run FrANC and which could therefore be assigned to Committee Members	Derek, Sara	<i>New Action</i>
17-04-09	Include request in notification of AGM to FrANC membership for some "younger blood" to help run FrANC activities	Derek, Sara	<i>New Action</i>

Table 1 **FrANC Committee Action List**