

**Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)
Minutes of Annual General Meeting held at the Southville Centre –
13th October 2011**

Present

John Purkiss (Chair), Sara Worth (Vice-Chair), Liz Payze (Treasurer), Derek Hughes (Secretary), Roy Gallop, Kean Lamb, Cynthia Palmer, Martha van der Lem, Paul van der Lem, Ben Barker.

Apologies

Adrian Mantle, Tess Green, Margaret Fay, Chris Hanmer, Ed Hall, Stephen Mason, Richard Clutterbuck.

Minutes of the AGM held on 23rd September 2010

The minutes of last year's AGM were reviewed and were accepted as being correct (Proposed: Ben Barker; Seconded: Roy Gallop).

Matters Arising

The Chair noted two matters arising from the minutes of the last AGM:

- *Ballast Seed Garden* – although planning permission has now been granted by Bristol City Council for this joint Arnolfini/Bristol University project, no funding to proceed has yet been forthcoming. However, this has not prevented a tarmac cycle path from being built around “The Point” – the natural green space overlooking the river at Cumberland Basin where the Ballast Seed Garden was also to be sited.
- *Litter on the Chocolate Path and behaviour of Cyclists* – there was concern about the amount of litter around the FrANC bench next to the Chocolate Path. A large number of empty sherry bottles had been found on one occasion. The litter is regularly cleared up and disposed of by FrANC members, and also weekly by a Council workman. The possibility of having a bin sited next to the bench was briefly discussed, but rejected as it was felt that (i) there was no guarantee that the bin would be used and (ii) unless the waste is collected frequently the bin will smell. The aggressive behaviour of some cyclists using the Chocolate Path was still considered to be an issue, but no action was planned by FrANC.

Report on the past year

The Chair presented a report on activities in 2010-11. A copy of this report is attached to these minutes (see Attachment 1), and thanks were expressed to everyone who had helped during the year. The report was accepted by the meeting attendees.

Finance report

- The Treasurer presented the financial report for 2010-11 (see Attachment 2). Income amounted to £902.00 and expenditure totalled £1,321.13. The balance carried forward at the end of 2010/2011 was £1,230.54.
- At the request of the Chair, the Finance report has been independently audited by Keith Long, Senior Finance Assistant (retired), Knightstone Housing Association.
- The report was accepted (Proposed: Paul van der Lem; Seconded: Sara Worth).

Election of Committee for 2011-12

Prior to the AGM, Adrian Mantle had announced his intention to stand down, having served as a Committee Member for the past three years. The Chair had thanked Adrian for his services to FrANC after receiving his letter of resignation.

The following people were unanimously re-elected (Proposed: Ben Barker; Seconded: Paul van der Lem):

- John Purkiss (Chair)
- Sara Worth (Vice Chair)
- Derek Hughes (Secretary)
- Liz Payze (Treasurer)
- Roy Gallop (Committee Member)

Planning for the next year

The following activities were proposed for 2011/2012:

(a) Dates for riverbank clean-ups and Butterfly Junction maintenance

- Bramble Culling at Butterfly Junction on Saturday 3rd December, starting at 10:00am (it was noted that this date will coincide with the date of a craft fair at the CREATE Centre). Last year, Angus Tillotson had used a strimmer to thin out much of the overgrown grassy area, but subsequently concerns had been raised that too much of the grass had been cut, possibly contributing to a perceived reduction in the butterfly population this year. It was agreed that this year only certain patches would be cut, and that John would liaise with Angus beforehand to identify the designated areas. It would also be helpful if Angus could strim these areas some time during the week prior to 3rd December, so that only raking of the ground would be required on the day of this activity.
- Two riverbank clean-ups to be held in 2012, provisionally scheduled for the last Saturday in January (28th) along Coronation Road, and for the last Saturday in February (25th) along Cumberland Road, including the railway track and adjacent Chocolate Path. Both of these events will also start at 10:00am. The possibility of organising a third clean-up some time in the latter half of 2012 was raised. It was agreed to monitor the situation, and to decide later on next year whether an additional clean-up is needed.

(b) Involvement in the Wild City Project

- The Wild City Project, run by Bristol City Council, started this year and its aim is to encourage more people to enjoy the outdoors, especially those who might not normally be inclined to do so. The officer working with us on this project is Helen Adshead.

- From FrANC's point of view, a key objective at the end of this 3-year project would be for the New Cut to be granted Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status. In order to achieve this, five project activities have been identified that must be completed by FrANC. John had received an encouraging response from the FrANC membership following a request for volunteers, and thanked the 20 people now involved in 3 working groups. The following summary was provided of progress on the three activities that have been started this year:

- (i) **Management Plan for the New Cut** – one of the key requirements for FrANC to be recognised as a LNR is that a Management Plan should exist that defines who is responsible for what. The plan will also define what level of funding is required from each of the organisations involved, such as Bristol City Council and FrANC.

John reported that so far there has been one meeting with Bristol City Council, at which 5 representatives were present. There will also be a Stakeholders Meeting on Tuesday 8th November at the Council House, starting at 5:00pm, which FrANC members were encouraged to attend. The purpose of this meeting is to identify the priority topics to be included in the plan.

Ben noted that the Council had completed a review of a conservation area north of the river, and would now be doing the same on the south side, during which people would be asked to identify aspects of the area that are considered to be attractive or ugly.

- (ii) **Interpretation Boards** – two new Interpretation Boards are planned, to be sited at Bedminster Bridge and on the Clarence Road side of the Banana Bridge. These will complement the existing boards at Goal Ferry Bridge, Vauxhall Bridge and Butterfly Junction, and will provide information about the bridges themselves as well as the area of the New Cut nearby. The first meeting for those who have volunteered to be involved in this activity has been scheduled for Monday 14th November.
- (iii) **Guided Walk Training** – the objective of this activity is to train a number of volunteers to lead walks around the New Cut for school groups or other community groups/organisations. To date seven FrANC members have volunteered to receive training, and an inaugural meeting was held on 12th September which was attended by five of the volunteers plus Helen Adshead, representing the Wild City Project, and Ruth Worsley, who will mentor the trainees.

Sara gave an update on progress so far. The guided walks that have been conducted to date have been led by Ruth and Helen, and have involved the use of the FrANC New Cut "Treasure Hunt" which will continue to be used as the basis of these walks - especially for school groups. At the inaugural meeting, it was agreed that the trainees would shadow the walks planned over the next couple of months, to be led by Ruth or Helen, in order to gain an appreciation of what is involved in becoming a walk leader. A second meeting is planned for 30th November, so that feedback from these shadowing activities can be collated and reviewed.

It has been recognised that the trainees will need to build up their knowledge of the New Cut, and in particular of the various locations that feature in the FrANC "Treasure Hunt". Some effort will therefore be required over the coming months to produce a set of "crib sheets" that will contain useful background information.

The possibility of combining walks involving school groups with dedicated activities in the CREATE Centre has also been considered, as

many walks involving school groups in particular tend to start from there. Ultimately, it is intended (at least by Helen and Ruth!) that “Guided Walks around the New Cut” will be a service offered by FrANC, and will be booked via the FrANC website.

(c) Other ideas for activities in 2012

- As support for the annual Boat Trip appeared to be waning slightly, Roy instead suggested organising a sort of “Literary Pub Walk”, tentatively scheduled for a Thursday evening in June/July 2012. This would most probably start at *The Orchard* in Hanover Place, and end at *The Ostrich* near Bathurst Basin. Roy envisaged that, at selected points of interest during the walk, events from Bristol’s chequered history would be re-enacted by local actors. It was proposed that it would be possible to accommodate about 30 people in the walk, and that it would be necessary to charge a small fee to cover the actors’ expenses.
- John suggested organising a visit to one or two of the other local groups who are participating in the Wild City Project, such as the one at Lamplighter’s Marsh, to see what activities they have planned.
- As this year’s “Bat Walk” had been considered to be a success, it was requested that Angus Tillotson be asked to lead another one next year, but perhaps at a different location such as around Temple Meads where the local bat population is more numerous than that around the New Cut.

Any other business

- Regarding the current status of the proposed Bristol Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Derek reported that, should this project receive the go-ahead from the Government at the end of this year, then it is highly likely that a Public Inquiry will be held in March of next year.
- John said that he had been advised by OXFAM that a sponsored Plastic Duck Race up the New Cut had been organised for Saturday 22nd October. The ducks will be dropped into the New Cut from Vauxhall Bridge. Apparently the organisers are proposing to travel up the river in canoes to recover the ducks from the water after the race has finished. Those present wondered if the OXFAM organisers had given due consideration to local tide times.....

Date of next meeting

No date was set at the AGM for the next FrANC Committee Meeting.

Derek Hughes
Secretary
Friends of the Avon New Cut

Attachment 1

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC) Report on activities in 2010/11

This report covers the period from our last AGM (23 September 2010) to the date of our 2011 AGM (13 October 2011). Our activities were as follows:

Themed walks and talks

We organised:

- A guided walk to discover wildflowers on the Cut, led by Pam Millman of the Bristol Naturalists Society.
- A bat detecting a walk, led by Angus Tillotson of the Greater Bedminster Wildlife Group.
- A local history walk around Redcliff and Bathurst Basin, led by Roy Gallop.
- An evening boat trip up The Feeder, with informative commentaries from Roy Gallop, Mark Steeds and Rosie Tomlinson.

Maintenance and clean-ups

- A working party undertook maintenance work at Butterfly Junction.
- 30 volunteers assisted at 2 riverbank clean-up sessions.
- The City Council cleared debris from the riverbed along the Temple Meads to Bedminster Bridge section of the Cut. Discussions took place with a view to the Council undertaking further riverbed clean-ups in 2011/12.

Awareness raising

- We maintained and further developed our website (www.franc.org.uk).
- We published 3 editions of our newsletter.
- We sent regular e-mail bulletins to 155 contacts.
- We distributed copies of our book, information leaflet and wildlife leaflets.

Wild City project

FrANC is one of seven organisations involved in this Bristol-wide project aiming to encourage more people to enjoy the outdoors, including those who have little or no contact with the natural environment. We are pleased to have been selected for involvement in this project and hope that it will lead to the New Cut being formally recognised as a Local Nature Reserve.

Helen Adshead, who previously worked on the South Bristol Riverscapes project, has been appointed as joint project officer and will be working with us over the next 3 years. So far we have:

- Started work on the development of a 5-year management plan for the Cut
- Set up a team to design new interpretation boards to be located adjacent to the Banana Bridge and Bedminster Bridge
- Appointed a mentor to train a team of volunteers to guide and assist schools and other groups wishing to explore the Cut's history and wildlife.

Bus Rapid Transit System

- In February we organised a meeting to hear about plans put forward by the Sustraco Bristol Tram Consortium for an Ultra Light Rail transit system as an alternative to the proposed Bus Rapid Transit System that would run alongside the Chocolate Path. These plans were rejected by the City Council.
- FrANC members attended information meetings and submitted their views on the proposed Bus Rapid Transit System which the City Council is pursuing. It has submitted a funding application to the Department of Transport, the outcome of which should be known by the end of 2011. If funding is approved, there is likely to be a public enquiry on the scheme.

Thanks

We are grateful to everyone who has supported FrANC during the year. We thank City Council officers Eric Dougall, Stacey Hobbs, Denise James and Steve Sparks and Councillors Beynon, Green, Woodman and Wright for their assistance. We also thank the Greater Bedminster Community Partnership for its financial support from the Bristol Clean and Green Fund.

Attachment 2

Friends of the Avon New Cut

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st May 2011

Income

Book sales	£167.00
GBCP	£75.00
Boat trip ticket sales	£624.00
Redcliffe Walk	£36.00

Total Income £902.00

Expenditure

Volunteer expenses	£111.72
Room & equipment hire	£72.42
ANC Walks	£80.00
Boat trip	£575.00
FrANC website	£56.40
Leaflet design / printing	£215.00
BTCV (Insurance)	£190.63
Hi Viz vests	£19.96

Total Expenditure £1,321.13

Balance brought forward **£1,649.67**

Balance carried forward **£1,230.54**

Independent Examiner's Report

I have examined the Group's accounts for the year ended 31st May 2011. In the course of my examination of the records provided, no matter came to my attention which gave me cause to believe that the Group has not kept proper and accurate accounting records.

Name: Keith Long
Senior Finance Assistant (retired), Knightstone Housing Association

Date: 6 October 2011