

Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC)
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2022

held on Sunday 4th December 2022 at 14.00

in Underfall Yard Education Room

Present: Tim Wickstead (chair), Lizzi Testani (vice-chair), Laura Demery (acting treasurer), Ed Hall (committee member) Roy Gallop (committee member), Tess Green (committee member), Christine Cox, Cynthia Palmer, David Demery, Elaine Beckett, Pat Fung, Sarah Townsend, Stephen Mason

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Actions</i>
1.	Welcome Tim Wickstead warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting, the first in-person AGM since 2019.	
2.	Apologies for absence Anthony O'Neil, Bridget Everett, Rob Fuller	
3.	Minutes of the last AGM: held on 5th December 2021 - their approval and any matters arising Item 3i: Bridget Everett has not found someone to share the role of Social Media Correspondent but indicated she would be happy to remain on the committee on an ad-hoc basis if that was acceptable. It was agreed that ad-hoc attendance at committee meetings was both usual and workable for FrANC. Item 3: As a result of John Holland's email to members on 8 th February, two more people have volunteered for health and safety training for litter picking. Item 5iii: John Holland did notify Steve Clampin of the Jan-Mar 2022 litter picking dates. The minutes were approved as a true record: proposed by Tess Green, seconded by Cynthia Palmer.	Tim to email Bridget to confirm that ad-hoc is fine.
4.	Chair's report A copy of Tim Wickstead's comprehensive and entertaining report is appended to these minutes. It covers litter picking, our What's App group, Butterfly Junction, the Signs Project, BBC Countryfile, It's Your Neighbourhood award, our new safeguarding policy and much more. John Holland (ex-secretary) and Steve Fay (ex-treasurer) were both thanked for their conscientious work for FrANC over many years. Ed Hall explained that Chris Eccleston has confirmed that we cannot store items in Bristol City Council properties. Guy Malkerson currently drags a wheelie bin of gardening tools from his home to Butterfly Junction for each community gardening session so alternative storage nearer the site is much needed. The Chair's report was accepted as a true record of the year: proposed by Roy Gallop, seconded by Lizzi Testani.	

	<p>Tess Green proposed a vote of thanks to Tim for his consistently informative reports as FrANC's Chair for some years. This was resoundingly approved.</p>	
5.	<p>Financial report</p> <p>Laura Demery provided copies of FrANC's accounts for the year ending 31st October 2022. The accounts are appended to these minutes. They are in a new format which aims to provide clarity while still including sufficient detail, such as a clear breakdown between general funds and grant funds. She also explained that she and the previous treasurer Steve Fay are in the middle of moving FrANC's current account from Nat West to Lloyds and that the new account would have online banking.</p> <p>The highlights are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General receipts: £95 - General payments: £94.61 - Total general funds in bank accounts at year end: £965.63 - Both the Your Park grant of £1,000 and the Secret Gardens grant of £150 from last year have been almost fully spent during this year. - A new Secret Gardens grant of £300 has been received. - Total grant money in bank accounts at year end £300.06 <p>Tim thanked Laura for her report. The new format of the accounts seemed popular.</p>	
6.	<p>Election of the committee for 2022/23</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Laura Demery had been co-opted into the role of Treasurer mid-year and was willing to stand for election. Tess Green proposed her appointment and Cynthia Palmer seconded it. The vote was unanimously in favour. ii. Tim Wickstead described the friendliness of FrANC's committee meetings and encouraged the attendees to consider joining. Lizzi Testani described what's going well for FrANC, despite people being depleted after the pandemic – Whats App photos, litter picks, the website, newsletters, Butterfly Junction and the start of the Signs Project. iii. Stephen Mason expressed a willingness to help on an ad-hoc basis and was unanimously voted on to the committee. iv. As no nominations for the roles of Chair and Secretary had been received, Lizzi agreed to be Chair on an interim basis and Laura agreed to be Secretary, also only interim. These positions are required by the FrANC constitution. The constitution does allow members to hold multiple roles. These pragmatic appointments were approved unanimously. v. Elaine Beckett suggested role descriptions should be put on the website and Tess Green agreed to write these. vi. Stephen Mason said he would try to get the January to March litter picks mentioned in 'The Pigeon' and possibly 'South Bristol Voice'. vii. Stephen also suggested we hand out FrANC details to interested members of the public who approach us on litter picks. Tim 	<p>Tess to write role descriptions</p> <p>Stephen to try to advertise our litter picks.</p>

	<p>remembered we have leaflets left over which would suit the purpose and that these are held by Ed Hall.</p> <p>The Committee for 2022/2023 is as follows:</p> <p>Chair: Lizzi Testani (interim appointment, reverting to vice-chair when possible) Secretary: Laura Demery (interim appointment) Treasurer: Laura Demery Other committee members: Bridget Everett, Ed Hall, Roy Gallop, Stephen Mason and Tess Green</p> <p>Other non-committee roles are: Butterfly Junction Garden projects: Guy Malkerson Web editor: Laura Demery Sign Project Designer: Rob Fuller</p>	Ed to bring leaflets to next litter pick.
7.	<p>Signs Project</p> <p>After a break for refreshments, Tim Wickstead explained that the long list of about 30 sign topics had been whittled down to six and showed the attendees a sample sign layout. A QR code on each sign will link to a specific page on FrANC's website with more detail. A presentation paper about the project, also known as Short Cuts, is appended to these minutes.</p> <p>Tim divided the attendees into groups of three and set them the challenge of coming up with attention-grabbing titles and images or 'hooks' for their designated topic. The results were collated and will feed into the project.</p>	
8.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>Tim Wickstead presented Cynthia Palmer with the first ever 'FRM' – FrANC Rubbish Medal. Although the presentation was humorous (the medal is a silver clothes peg), the motives behind it were sincere as Cynthia's litter picking endeavours are epic. She received a warm round of applause.</p> <p>Stephen Mason proposed a vote of thanks to Tim, not only for his excellent report but for the way he has run FrANC so smoothly since taking over from Sara and Derek some years ago. Tess Green added that Tim has always gone beyond in his efforts and that we are very grateful. This was resoundingly approved by all present.</p>	

The AGM was closed at 15.50

Chair's Report 2022

Friends of the Avon New Cut

A warm welcome to all present. Thank you for coming.

First some figures.

We have held four meetings of the committee this year.

We have 201 subscribers who receive our mailings.

We have completed four **river bank clean-ups** in which a total of 202 human hours were spent, to quote our Vice Chair, 'patrolling the last line of defence before rubbish hits the river'. 101 members gave of their time, 55 separate individuals, 6 of whom completed all 4 meetings, and 8 attended three. A big thank you to all who have turned out - including most welcome sunshine on at least three of the days. Thank you to Steve Clampin, the Council's Parks Operational Co-Ordinator (South), who has so promptly ensured the piles are taken away. And to Stephen Mason who ensured we had good publicity beforehand in *The Pigeon*. Again this year, students from Ashton Park school are helping collect rubbish as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

FrANC's photos, the WhatsApp group dedicated to images of The Cut, recorded 74 fresh photographs so far this year contributed by 14 members. It serves as a rich reminder of how unique is this mix of city and natural riverbank habitat. I have a dozen favourites: 8 wonderful sunsets/sunrises, an orchid, May blossom, a vole, and the record of the fate of Gaol Ferry Bridge. If forced to pick only one favourite, it would be the picture taken by Eva Marcinek of a litter-picking volunteer enmeshed in the lower mass of branches of a tree on York Road like a bright spider in its web.

The **Butterfly Junction** team, ably led by Guy Malkerson have worked hard on the 12 first Saturdays of each month this year and the results are evident for all to see. Attendance on these Saturdays has varied between 6 and 20. Guy's ability to write a grant application has ensured funds have been available which initially most importantly made sure volunteers enjoyed a coffee afterwards at The Underfall Yard café. There is still a key need to find storage for the gardening equipment. Looking ahead, a Stop Press December update penned by Guy, is attached here:

At the last Butterfly Junction session in November, the volunteers did not want the recent Secret Gardens grant to be used for refreshments at Underfall Yard. There was a consensus that we should pay our own way and use the grant money in other ways to support our community gardening project. We met with Mo Mulligan and made a site inspection for the planting of native British Cherry Trees on the cycle/walk way leading from Butterfly Junction to Underfall Yard. Mo advised that eight trees would fit nicely and will make a statement. This is what we are planning for. The planting day has been set for January 7th. The Patchwork gardening group had some tree protector fence roll left over from their recent tree planting on West Street and they are donating that to us. Additionally, Mo said we do not need mulch if we are going to weed regularly. That will help to keep costs down. Mo will source the trees for us as well as the rest of the tree protection we need (stakes etc). Guy will cover any costs where our grant from secret gardens is exceeded. Liz will be in touch with Mo to coordinate the purchasing, timings and reimbursement.

Through the year.

I have held four meetings with graphic designer Rob Fuller pursuing the Signs project started by FrANC over a year ago. We have since had a generous sum of money earmarked for the project from a private individual linked to Aardman. Rob and I had to pause the plans mid-year but it is hoped after today's meeting they can be revitalised.

In **March** seven volunteers were filmed for the BBC's Countryfile programme; the episode, screened on April 10th, focussed on the need to keep rivers and beaches free from plastic.

In **April** we thanked James Savage for his well-thought response, on FrANC's behalf, to the Western Harbour consultation.

John Holland entered FrANC for the *It's Your Neighbourhood Award* organised by the RHS and Britain in Bloom. In **July** three of us met with Judy Pagano, the assessor, to explain FrANC's work over the years and show the recent progress at Butterfly Junction. Nothing was heard until November when we were awarded Level 5, Outstanding. I'll read the brief citation in full because it draws on the work of many involved with FrANC from the group's inception:

Friends of the Avon New Cut are a well-established group, preserving and monitoring this area of the River Avon in the centre of Bristol. They are a very knowledgeable group and have carried out several surveys of the flora and fauna of the area. The number and variety of species found here is incredible and the banks of the river provide a valuable salt marsh habitat. The group litter-pick the banks of the Avon four times a year. This is a popular activity with families joining in.

Butterfly Junction is an oasis of calm and a haven for insects near a busy road and underpass. It is well-managed by the volunteers once a month. The interpretation board here was of a high standard. The new project to clear the well-used walkway is ambitious but it will enhance the area in the future. The group are well funded through grants and local businesses.

Also in **July** we received an account of the work at Butterfly Junction written as a blog by Judy Gowenlock of Bristol and Bath's *Love Your Park* which, with details provided by Guy from his survey of participants, gave a heart-warming account of the value of community gardening in a world readjusting after the pandemic. There is a link to this on our website.

As a consequence of the successful bid for funding to launch the Butterfly Junction project, John Holland researched and worked at length to draft and finalise a Safeguarding Policy for our organisation, considered a good model for other Friends groups. This can be viewed on the website. Steve Fay stepped aside this year after many years as Treasurer, working with Laura Demery to ensure a smooth transition. The committee thanks John and Steve for the conscientious work they have given FrANC; and, from my own position, at a time in lockdown when it felt tough to keep the group together, they both, in different ways were the catalyst for moving things forward.

Now into my final paragraph: I have informed the committee that it is time for me to move on. Living on Coronation Road in a house with balconies but no garden, The Cut with its tides and river bank ecology, the cormorants in trees outside the kitchen window, its familiar walking/cycle route has been very special indeed. But, most of all I have valued the people I have met through my involvement, all friendly, knowledgeable, open to suggestions. It is no fib to say I have enjoyed the friendly committee meetings, especially when we digress (poetry, wild flowers, Gaol Ferry Bridge, lesser known aspects of Bristol's history). Thank you to all who have helped.

Friends of the Avon New Cut

Accounts for the year ending 31st October 2022

General Receipts and Payments Account

Receipts	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Book sales	35.00	84.00
Donations	60.00	-
Total	95.00	84.00
Payments		
Clean-ups	64.75	-
Walks & Events	-	24.00
Website	-	243.35
Miscellaneous	27.43	-
Transfer to Your Park Grant	2.43	-
Total	94.61	267.35
Surplus / (Deficit)	0.39	(183.35)

Balance Sheet

	£
General balance brought forward	965.24
Plus Surplus / (Deficit)	0.39
General balance at 31st October 2022	965.63
Grants balance brought forward	1,150.00
Plus Your Park Surplus / (Deficit)	(1,000.00)
Plus Secret Gardens Surplus / (Deficit)	(150.00)
Plus Secret Gardens 2 Surplus / (Deficit)	300.06
Grants balance at 31st October 2022	300.06
Total balance at 31st October 2022	1265.69
Represented by:	
Nat West current account	715.69
Lloyds current account	550.00
Total at 31st October 2022	1265.69

Grant Receipts and Payments Accounts

Your Park Grant

Receipts	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Grant	-	1,000.00
Transfer from general funds	2.43	-
Total	2.43	1,000.00
Payments		
Gardening	761.97	-
Publicity	186.50	-
Surveys	53.96	-
Total	1,002.43	0.00
Surplus / (Deficit)	(1,000.00)	1,000.00

Secret Gardens Grant

Receipts	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Grant	-	150.00
Total	0.00	150.00
Payments		
Gardening	149.94	-
Transfer to Secret Gardens Grant 2	0.06	-
Total	150.00	0.00
Surplus / (Deficit)	(150.00)	150.00

Secret Gardens Grant 2

Receipts	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Grant	300.00	-
Transfer from Secret Gardens Grant	0.06	-
Total	300.06	0.00
Payments		
	-	-
Total	0.00	0.00
Surplus / (Deficit)	300.06	0.00

ShortCuts

- a proposal created by FrANC [Friends of The Avon New Cut] for a new signs trail along part of The Cut
- The Cut is this extraordinary civil engineering project dug by Irish navigators in 1805
- It is a natural corridor in the heart of our city, home to trees, shrubs, flowers, insects...
- Many walk past daily and take weekend strolls, both local residents and visitors to Bristol; interest in the outdoors has increased since the pandemic; interest in this area has increased since the community development at Whapping Wharf.
- Signs are to be designed with all ages in mind but particularly the young
- Attention-grabbing, colourful, bite-size hooks of information with a QR code for those wanting more
- To be attached to the railings along the Cut
- Ideally, aiming for them to be ready for the reopening of Gaol Ferry Bridge and/or Chocolate Path

The six topics for which text has been prepared:

- (i) Sandstone
- (ii) Cormorants
- (iii) The Malago Culverts
- (iv) The Tidal range
- (v) Views across the Cut
- (vi) The Redcliffe Capstans

Many other topics suggest themselves but we have agreed to stick with these to start with.