

## Bristol Tree Forum meeting

8<sup>th</sup> November at the Council House 18.00 to 20:00

Present:

BTF Committee. Peter Harnett (Chair) , Mark Ashdown, John Tarlton, Stephanie French, Jim Smith, Chris Wallace

Councillors: Anthony Negus (Cotham), Clive Stevens(Clifton Down), Liz Radford(Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze), Jos Clark (Brislington West)

Council Officers : Richard Ennion, John Atkinson, Tim Brandram

Organisation representatives: Jon Clark (Avon Forest Trust), Catherine Brabner-Evans (Woodland Trust)

and others

Apologies: Vassili Papastavrou

The Chair welcomed more than 20 attendees to the public meeting.

The Chair spoke of the great contribution made by Richard Bland who died recently, not only to the BTF of which he was a long-serving and valued member, having this year instigated the Bristol Tree of the Year competition, but also his huge contribution to the public understanding and engagement with the natural world in general and the wild life of Bristol in particular. Richard Ennion and Clive Stevens added their memories of Richard. A Memorial Service is to be held on 5<sup>th</sup> January at Clifton College where Richard taught before his retirement.

### 1 Annual AGM

#### 1.1 To discuss and approve the aims of BTF as follows:

Provide a forum to encourage community engagement in Bristol's urban tree management decisions

Promote the importance and value of Bristol's urban trees

Work to increase tree canopy cover in Bristol through better protection of existing trees and planting new ones

The Chair gave an overview of these aims and the ways in which they were currently being promoted by BTF through liaison with BCC staff especially tree officers, involvement in the developing Bristol Tree Strategy, the Talking Trees initiative, the Bristol i-Tree survey and the launching of Bristol Tree of the Year Competition, and through the identification of tree planting sites and the successful work to get trees planted using funds from University and from Section 106/CIL monies

After some discussion from the floor highlighting the difficulties faced by the public and BCC staff in the light of current budgetary problems, the Aims were adopted unanimously.

#### 1.2 To discuss and approve the constitution. (Appendix 1)

Adopted unanimously with no discussion.

#### 1.3 Election of Officers

The current Chair, Peter Harnett is standing down after three years in the role. The following new committee was elected unopposed and unanimously:

Mark Ashdown: Chair

Jim Smith: Vice-chair

Vassili Papastavrou: Secretary

John Tarlton : Treasurer

Stephanie French: Planning Advisor

Chris Wallace: Datasmith

Peter Harnett thanked the members of the committee and the BCC officers who had supported himself and BTF over the past years

## 2. Report by Jon Clark of the Forest of Avon Trust on the i-tree survey

The i-Tree Eco sample survey of Bristol was commissioned in March and undertaken by the Trust in collaboration with Bristol City Council, Woodland Trust and Bristol Tree Forum over a period from May to September. In all, 29 volunteers guided by Anna Brunton from the Trust surveyed 201 plots, many by Richard Bland himself and other members of BTF. The survey has been completed and information is being checked and fed into the i-Tree software. Some adjustments are needed to align the US-based analysis to local and British conditions with the aid of Treeconomics, and results are expected to be available by the end of this year/beginning of next. Jon hoped that it would be possible to present and discuss the results at a future BTF public meeting.

There was some discussion about the value of the study and how the results should be communicated to the general public and used to influence decision-makers.

## 3. Report by Catherine Brabner-Evans on the Bristol Tree Strategy Action Plan

The need for a Bristol Tree Strategy Action plan is brought about by the lack of council funding for anything but statutory services. However the strong lead from Michael Gove and global and local concerns has generated increased interest in environmental issues. The Talking Trees project has been successful in raising the profile of trees and street trees in particular. The challenge of the plan is to take people on a journey from interest to action.

Representatives from Bristol Tree Forum, Avon Wildlife Trust and the council have been meeting to to evolve a Bristol strategy and the recent i-tree survey will be an important input to these deliberations. Such a plan will have to accept that there is no prospect of change in the financial climate in Bristol.

Suggestions raised by attendees included : Approaching WeTheCurious(@Bristol as was) to put on an exhibition on trees; incorporating good practice from BTF efforts in tree sponsorship and tree champions; placing plaques on trees which memorialise an individual; realising the benefits of scale to reduce the cost of trees for planting; need to understand and promote the health benefits of trees to tap into NHS funding; addressing the issue of planting in supermarket carparks through planning regulations.

## 4 Report by Richard Ennion and tree officers on council tree planting and maintenance

John Atkinson reported on the continued success of the OneTreePerChild program, as documented in data collated by Mark Ashdown (Appendix 2). The value of this program is not

only in the trees which are planted (and whose survival rate is good) but in the education in the pleasure and value of trees which the school children acquire. With around 36,000 children in schools in Bristol, 6000 entering education each year, the resultant increase in tree stock is very significant.

There have been 49 trees privately sponsored (@ £295 each) planted or planned this winter. There are also new planting planned for Stoke Park (450 woodland trees - Lockleaze Open Space, 1270 hedgerow mixed natives - Sir John's Lane and 360 hedgerow mixed natives - M32 ) and Merriman's Drive in Lawrence Weston (1250 woodland - mixed natives).

Richard Ennion emphasised that beyond the numbers lay powerful stories of engagement and long-term interest which have been developed. These stories vary by location and it would be great to see them being told.

5 Update on planting trees using section 106 and CIL funding (see Appendix 3)

Mark Ashdown reported on the progress of Area Committees who have been encouraged to make use of the S106 and CIL funds available in their areas to plan for tree planting over the coming winter. In all 120 trees will be planted from S106 and CIL monies (at a cost of £765.21 each) . Including historic orders, the tree stock will increase by 167.

6 The role of the Tree Champion

BTF are planning to increase the number and profile of Tree Champions in Bristol. This requires the creation of guidance notes for prospective tree champions. To this end, Jim Smith, whose area is Filwood, provided an insight into his activities since he started in this role 5 years ago. The activities which Jim instigated or promoted include: getting action to prevent damage to a TPOed tree; planting trees in a school and three other plots of land; advice to local citizens on tree matters; collaborating with the BCC tree officer to organise protection and watering for trees; working with Richard Bland on a tree walk on the Northern Slopes; writing articles for the local newspaper to promote trees.

The role is very rewarding but there were issues which need to be addressed over the relationship between tree champions and BCC and with local councillors. An agreed strategy for tree champions would help address these issues and encourage more tree champions to join up.

7 AOB

7.1 The Bristol Tree of the Year competition has been launched and received much interest. Voting will close on 15<sup>th</sup> November and the winner will be announced on 25<sup>th</sup> Nov in National Tree week. Voting by some support groups has been intense but the design of the voting process may have disenfranchised some of the public and may need to be reviewed.

The meeting closed at 20:00

Chris Wallace  
(locum secretary)