



## Minutes Bristol Tree Forum Committee meeting. 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Present: Mark Ashdown (Chair), Stephanie French, Sean Harding, Dougal Matthews, Vassili Papastavrou (secretary), John Tarlton (Treasurer), Chris Wallace (Trees of Bristol and datasmith)

1. Reports from officers. John reported slightly more than £4,000 in the account with outgoings for Arb Association membership and server costs for the Trees of Bristol website. The question was raised regarding the appropriateness of our bank account to receive donations and it was felt that this is almost certainly OK. A donate button has now been put on the BTF website

2. Sean suggested that BTF runs a tree photography competition linked to the Trees of Bristol site as a way of raising awareness of BTF and the Trees of Bristol website. The competition would conclude with an exhibition. The idea would be to have the trees located and described so that people can find them using Trees of Bristol. One spin-off suggested was a book along the lines of Paul Wood's *London's Street Trees*. Sean will lead this and promote the idea.

3. Bristol elections - implications for trees. The electorate of Bristol is clearly taking green issues seriously. The landscape has now changed and it is likely that all Councillors will now take green issues, including protecting existing trees, more seriously. This may be an opportunity to encourage BCC to develop an ash dieback policy. South Glos. has appointed an Ash dieback officer. BCC is now counting OTPC trees as replacements for trees that are lost through other means e.g., subsidence claims. However, this was never the purpose of OTPC. It was suggested that the BTF prepares a tree briefing document or video for new Councillors in order to help them get up to speed on the issues. Stephanie will lead on this and it will be an agenda item for the next meeting.

4. Chris presented the idea of a tree moisture sensor for newly planted trees. The device consists of a moisture sensor, and soil and air temperature with readings sent via a mobile phone. There was strong support for developing this project. As a first step, the BTF will reimburse Chris's expenses on this project up to £200 to get a few units up and running.

5. Tree Canopy cover. Chris reported that he has been working on the tool to apply the i-Tree Canopy methodology to determine canopy cover. We were disturbed to see in the press (Wales online etc) a report from OVO energy (with data from Bluesky) that Bristol is near the bottom of cities with only 8%. This conflicts with our own estimates of around 18% but after some investigation it turns out that Bluesky used the Unitary Authority boundary which includes the area of the Port of Bristol down to the Holms. Discounting this understandably treeless area (because it is water - being the Bristol Channel) gives Bristol a canopy of 17% well in line with our estimates. Bluesky is aware of the problem. Chris has now written [a blog](#).

We would encourage all BTF members to get involved with the full survey using the current 2020 images. When Google Earth next publishes new aerial survey data for Bristol (likely in 2022), the BTF will do another survey with a view to determining trends in Canopy Cover.



## 6. Ongoing issues

Management of trees on BCC sites that are leased to education and other entities. We briefly discussed the issue that the leases don't even mention who has responsibility for trees and maybe resulting in poor management of these sites. We decided to draw councillors' attention to this.

Stephanie reported on her efforts to get the Tree Management Policy clarified and if necessary amended, to state that council-owned trees cannot be trimmed or felled for light, even by others. A question to Council has clarified this issue but she has had no substantive reply to the request that the written policy be clarified.

7. Next committee meeting will be 5<sup>th</sup> July (Dougal to confirm venue), we would hope to open the invitation to Tree Champions. In addition, a separate meeting for Tree Champions needs to be organised.

Vassili Papastavrou 11 May 2021