

Bristol Tree Forum 11th August 2008 - The Pavilion

Present:

BB - Ben Barker - Southville Community Development Association
BG - Beth Garman - Admin Officer, BCC
CS - Clive Stevens - Redland and Cotham Amenity Society
DS - Darren Smith - Street Lighting and Highways Compliance Manager, BCC
HP - Helen Phillips - Kingsdown Conservation Society
KS - Kevin Stuckey - University of Bristol (Botanic Garden)
LA - Lesley Alexander - Councillor, representing the Conservative group
MD - Martin Deaville - Landscape Architect Coordinator, BCC (substituting for Steve Hardiman)
PB - Pete Bullard - St Pauls Unlimited Park Group
PW - Peter Wilkinson - Parks Operations Manager, BCC
RC - Rachel Coxcoon - Redland and Cotham Amenities Society
RB - Richard Bland - Bristol Naturalists
RE - Richard Ennion - Natural Environment Co-ordinator, BCC
RP - Robin Prytherch - Ornithologist
RS - Ron Stone - Councillor, representing the Labour group
RH - Russell Horsey - Senior Arboricultural Officer, BCC
VP - Vasilli Papastavrou - Bristol Street Trees

Apologies:

Vicky Welchman - Urban Design Project Officer, BCC
Richard Mond - Head of Parks, Estates and Sport, BCC
Michele Lavelle - Landscape Institute
Jim Fry - Forest of Avon
Hugh Holden - Civic Society
Grenville Johnson - Kensington Road Residents Association
Josie Sadler - Trees for Bristol Officer, BCC

Hand over:

Colin Knight - Head of Transport Operations - BCC. To be represented by Darren Smith

KEY to amendments:

RED - add in

BLUE - delete

GREEN - request clarification

1 Minutes from last meeting (6th May) and matters arising

a) 4c) - CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) - Councillor Ron Stone took a motion to full council on the 22nd July 2008 - see <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/item/committeecontent/?ref=ta&code=ta000&year=2008&month=07&day=22&hour=18&minute=00>

Excerpt from draft minutes:

- (i) that Council welcomes the work of Parks' Officers in running a pilot Project CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) for assessing a true value for our city trees, when facing new developments or regeneration schemes;
- (ii) that Bristol has taken a lead role, along with Barnet Council, as the first of 2 councils in the UK to develop this as part of a potential tree strategy for the city and its planted environment in future years;
- (iii) that CAVAT in placing valuations as high as £140,000 or more, on established, mature trees and their locations, not only protects them, but illustrates their true value to a quality environment for Bristol;

- (iv) that by so doing, protects them from casual or illegal damage or removal and true compensation levels to assist replacing where removal is a last resort; and
- (v) that Council therefore accepts this process to be adopted as part of an integrated planning and tree strategy for the city in future years, subject to the consequence of its' implementation being considered by scrutiny before the end of this municipal year.

b) The group expressed thanks to Cllr Ron Stone for progressing this.

c) 5c - Clive Stevens would like to amend section 5 c) to say that he has volunteered to identify some of the tree pits in Redland and Cotham, not all of the tree pits.

2 Nominating a Chair

a) It was decided to delay voting for a Chair of the Tree Forum until the next meeting because a number of potential nominees could not attend the meeting.

b) VP did nominate HH as chairman.

3 Presentation: Survey of tree pits in Redland - CS (additional agenda item)

a) CS gave a short presentation on his efforts to identify some of the empty tree pits in Redland and Cotham (item 5c minutes 6 May 2008).

b) Aim of investigation: to identify tree pits (covered over or open) which previously contained a 'street tree;

c) Methodology: starting with a Google Earth printout, a 5% walking survey of streets in Redland was undertaken by Clive Stevens and Bill Ambridge. This identified 23 possible locations previously occupied by street trees.

d) A form was devised to define how likely the location was previously occupied by a tree (some locations were identified based on historic displacement of the kerb as a possible indicator that a tree had previously grown here). The intention is that this form would be piloted in two further locations in Redland.

e) CS suggested that there could be 'packages' of e.g. £250 / £500 / £1,000 available for residents' groups to fund tree planting on various sites.

f) The work was well received by the group and there was some discussion about its 'roll-out' in other areas of the city. RB on behalf of Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society and BB on behalf of Southville Community Development Association both agreed to trial the 'tree pit' survey in their areas.

g) RE suggested that CS and RH work together to ensure that data collected could be fully utilised and incorporated with the council's tree management database (Confirm Arboriculture). Further work then needed to create a policy/protocol around replanting taking into account residents' opinions, site suitability and available resources. ACTION CS / RH

h) RS - development of a protocol should include Planners considering the relationship with land development and requirement / opportunities for tree planting.

i) CS asked if budgets could be allocated towards opening up old tree pits. RH stated that the aim for this year 2008-09 was to focus on replacing stumps and empty and 'open' tree pits to maximise the number of trees being planted.

4 Publicising works to council owned trees

4.1 Presentation by RE

a) RE gave an overview of the previously circulated paper entitled 'draft protocol for publicising works to council owned trees'. The paper gave background to current approaches to publicising works to council owned trees and suggested a draft protocol for discussion. The protocol relies on hierarchy (level 1, 2 and 3) matching the effort to inform the public / interested parties to the significance of the works. At minimum all works to council owned trees (with some exceptions) would be posted on a 'register', whereas level 3 publicity would trigger a site notice, letter to immediate residents, councillors and local interest groups.

- b) RE advised that the draft protocol for publicising works to council owned trees would require additional resources to run. In addition, the Tree Forum should consider whether it should consult a body such as the citizens' panel to comment on any approach to publicity.
- c) RE acknowledged that the protocol does not distinguish between consultation and information.

4.2 Presentation by VP

a) VP gave a presentation outlining the importance of public involvement in considering options for tree management. He argued that the public should be made aware when tree works are being considered via the posting of a site notice on the tree affected. In addition, he argued that the public should be made aware of management options and that the council should respond to comments made by interested parties.

4.3 Comments by group

- a) BB questioned whether the level of consultation was worth the expenditure is it better spent on trees? Consultation can build good relationships with the community.
- b) PW advised that the council is working to 'streamline' its approach to consultation and that he is part of a working group.
- c) PW advised that via the Neighbourhood Partnerships - parks is in the process of loading up the website with all things Highways / Housing / Trees.
- d) LA - Not everyone looks at website - notices on trees don't always stay
- e) RS - no substitute for notices on trees. Should not say what will happen, but suggest question over tree's future. There is not enough info as to why other options have not been considered.
- Website should have all scheduled tree work
 - Neighbourhood Partnerships should have info of all tree works and TPO applications.
- f) RE - have to decide level of consultation commensurate with level of work - surely we would not want to put up site notices if the job was to remove epicormic growth from around the base of the tree.
- g) VP - suggest a pilot using notices on trees
- publicise felling work only (felling any tree): put up site notice,
 - identify the problem with the tree, identify options, seek community
 - comment. The level of interest generated would tell the council how much options should be considered.
 - one area only
 - six month trial period
- h) CS- Neighbourhood partnerships could be briefed to do consultations on local trees - or asked to comment.
- i) BB - Greville Smythe Park. RH took park group around to point out reasons for tree work - this allowed the park group to inform local residents

RE - in summary

- group agreed to trial an alternative form of consultation to that drafted by the council: only where felling is one option, restricted to part of the city, site notices to be erected inviting comment
- resource implications of such a pilot to be agreed with senior officers before trial starts
- register of information on council website
- more debate needed on how to present options - see below which relates to 'high value trees'

5 Dealing with 'High Value' trees

a) RH expanded upon the previously circulated draft protocol: 'options when working High Value Trees'. RH gave a short presentation using Mall Gardens, Clifton as a case study. VP asked BCC for the target value that was inserted into the QTRA calculations. RH explained that the officer who was qualified to do such assessments (Stuart Swann) was not present and RH was not qualified to answer this question. Management options for various trees in Mall

Gardens have been prepared in response to concerns raised from some local residents (see report posted on council web site). Using one tree in Mall Gardens as an example, RH identified the problems with the tree, agreed that the tree was 'high value' and according the draft protocol explained how management options has been explored considering a range of issues such as public safety, cost, arboricultural best practice and amenity (as tree is current and how it may look after works).

b) The debate was wide ranging and included challenge to risk evaluation, options to retain trees, significance of including risk to property damage in the overall risk evaluation and **what should be the objective of the BCC Tree Forum. Suggestions included minimising cost, maximising tree canopy and maximising CAVAT value of the city – no decision taken.**

c) RE declined to discuss options for managing trees in Redland Green because officers had not had enough time to appraise a consultants report. VP said that they did not know how to appeal against a council position and had commissioned a report to explore options. VP said that they had wanted to work with the council on commissioning such a report and in debating the options for managing the four ash trees in Redland Green. RE said that it was important that we share ideas and work to a preferably common position, but that it was not appropriate for the council to fund (or part fund) a consultants report. **It was noted that RCAS had offered £1,000 to help with the maintenance costs of the Redland Green ash trees.**

d) PB raised concerns about the lack of consultation about trees in the St Paul's area. Agreed that PB would raise his concerns outside the meeting and contact RE direct. Action PB

e) Concern was raised by some members that the Tree Forum was overly focussing on issues in Redland and that the meeting **should look at policies across Bristol rather than detailed issues in one or two areas.** (*was being hijacked – proposed deletion.*) **There was a number of voices saying that they would not wish to attend future meetings if the debate was not widened to be more reflective of** issues of tree management and planting across the city – is this true ?

f) The draft protocol for high value trees was discussed. CS explained that the logic was flawed since the first step is "risk assessment suggests tree removal is the preferred option". CS also explained that **High Value Trees should include trees that local communities/residents think are high value.** Despite the lack of consensus **BCC decided to ask the Forum to trial the draft protocol for dealing with high value trees and to appraise its effectiveness** (linked to protocol for publicising works to council owned trees). Action BCC

6 Agenda for next meeting

a) Time ran out to discuss setting the agenda for the next meeting. It was suggested that this would be done via email - based on the Tree Forum's agreed Action Plan. Action RE to seek views via email

8 Date of next meeting a) 20th October 2008 6 - 9 pm. Venue to be arranged. Items not discussed during the meeting but update as below: Disposal of council owned land and protection of trees

Working to the Parks and Green Space Strategy (PGSS) the council is, over the next two years, in the process of developing Area Green Space Plans for the 14 (planned) Neighbourhood Partnership Areas across the city. The PGSS includes the option to dispose of some low value green space allowing reinvestment in parks an green spaces citywide. Sites being considered for disposal are being reviewed, including the contribution made by any trees within the site. Should it be decided to dispose of sites containing trees worthy of protection, but not yet protected, it is anticipated that such trees would be made subject to a Tree Preservation Order before disposal.