

Better Bristol

The Bristol Civic Society magazine

Issue 07 Autumn 2015 bristolcivicsociety.org.uk



INSIDE

Society leads fight to save Heritage buildings

Solving Bristol's transport crisis

Best of Bristol design

And much more

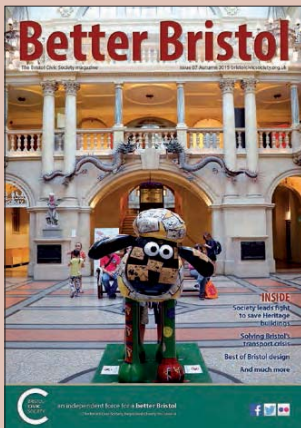


BRISTOL
CIVIC
SOCIETY

an independent force for a **better Bristol**

The Bristol Civic Society, Registered Charity No. 244414





Front Cover, Shaun in the Museum.
Combines the best of Bristol in 19th century art and architecture and 21st century art and entertainment. Photo credit – Tracey Feltham

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CHAIRMAN'S PIECE

How do we measure success as a Civic Society?

Is it by the number of members, by our bank balance? Or by that elusive measure – our influence on the outcome of planning proposals, either at pre application or planning application stage? Can we measure the impact of our comprehensive programme of talks and walks?

Of course in the past there were great campaigns to oppose appalling development projects – reading our 100 year celebration booklet brings home the stirring efforts to successfully oppose that hotel in the Gorge, the GPO tower next to Kings Street and the plans to effectively fill in the Floating Harbour. Without wishing to encourage such projects wouldn't it be great to have a simply awful proposal so that we could spearhead a campaign, whip up opposition, and then be 100% successful so that we could sit back and appreciate what Bristol might look like without the efforts of the Civic Society!

Today the majority of development schemes lack that "horror" quality, many are simply dull and few have high design quality.



Simon Birch
Chair, Bristol Civic Society

We have changed our annual awards to focus on championing and celebrating design quality and these are described elsewhere in BB07.

I think there is a continuum in terms of the Society's activities - ranging from the very important social level where like minded citizens get together, often in a pub (currently we use the Famous Naval Volunteer for many of our meetings), and discuss issues facing the City.

At a slightly more challenging level lies our programme of events, talks and walks, designed to educate and enliven!

Much of our more technical work is designed to influence planning proposals – by getting involved in pre-application discussions (before schemes are finalised and become much harder to change) and in commenting on planning applications. A lot of unseen work where our influence is often difficult to pick out. Design awards may also fit into this influencing role as we are aiming to celebrate quality designs and influence future developers to raise their standards!

Should we go further and do more campaigning? Certainly some of you think

we should. A good example at the moment might be St Michael on the Mount where we have two options. We can attend meetings, and be given progress reports (usually lack of progress reports) or we can actually set out to make something happen – and help to find a sustainable use for this prominent building.

Transport is a particularly difficult area for the Society – how should we engage most effectively on this complex subject? Many transport schemes are immensely complex and difficult to influence, at the same time there are already numerous transport groups – for railways, for cycling – and the role of the Society is not that clear.

Heritage is a second area where we are considering how best to be active – in terms of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings (including Local Listings and Buildings at Risk) – together with the potential for increased community involvement.

Certainly in my view a successful Civic Society will have a portfolio of activities, attracting a wide range of citizens to be actively involved, and this will change through time as the city experiences different development pressures and initiatives.



Not already a member? Why not join TODAY!

See page 26 for more details...



AGM and Awards

We definitely raised the tone of the event this year with the inclusion of a string quartet to start the proceedings at the Great Eastern Hall beside the SS Great Britain. Dispensing with tradition, the AGM and Awards presentations were rolled into one event. Moving quickly

from the formalities, the hall was filled with the excitement of an Oscars ceremony, even though the winners were probably the worst kept secret.

See page 14 for the full story of the winning designs

Bristol's remarkable sons and daughters

Forget 'Shaun the Sheep'. A round-up of all Bristol's Blue Plaques makes a far more interesting story about a galaxy of celebrities who were born or brought up in Bristol. A plaque marks the birthplace of Sir Michael Redgrave, nearby at the school of St Michael on the Mount another records Elsie Griffin, doyen of the D'Oyly Carte opera company who sang for the troops in two world wars. More opera dames: Clara Butt was brought up in Totterdown, and Eva Turner attended St Anne's school. Though he claimed to be a Londoner, a plaque on the entrance to St Georges Park records Bob Hope's early life in Redfield. Russ

Conway's childhood home is in Dean Lane, Bedminster.

Not just entertainers: the home of the political giant Ernest Bevin in St Werburghs is marked as is the home of the giant of quantum physics, Paul Dirac, in Bishopston, and the great publisher, Sir Allen Lane, founder of Penguin Books, in Cotham Vale. And there is a plaque for Nipper the Dog, star of the HMV label, whose master worked at the old Prince's Theatre in Park Row as a painter. And possibly a plaque too far, for the infamous "Princess Carraboo". Where? On Princess Street Bedminster of course.



Blue Plaque scheme: The Society has taken over administration from the Council. See page 6

Vacancies

Key officer roles were confirmed at the AGM. However there remains a number of important vacancies to be filled:

Vice Chair:

Currently vacant

Secretary:

The current Secretary is already busy with other Society business

Editor: For this magazine

Writers, artists, cartoonists photographers:

For all the Society's publications

Walks and cycling events organiser

Activists to join working groups: PAG, MSG, Heritage, Public Spaces

Civic Voice Convention October 2015



Because of the European Green Capital Year, eyes are on Bristol. Bristol Civic Society is hosting the Civic Voice annual convention. The programme for the 2-day event has now been announced.

Members are welcome to participate in the event, but will be expected to pay the registration fee of £43 which includes the reception and dinner on Friday evening. See page 27

Got a point of view?

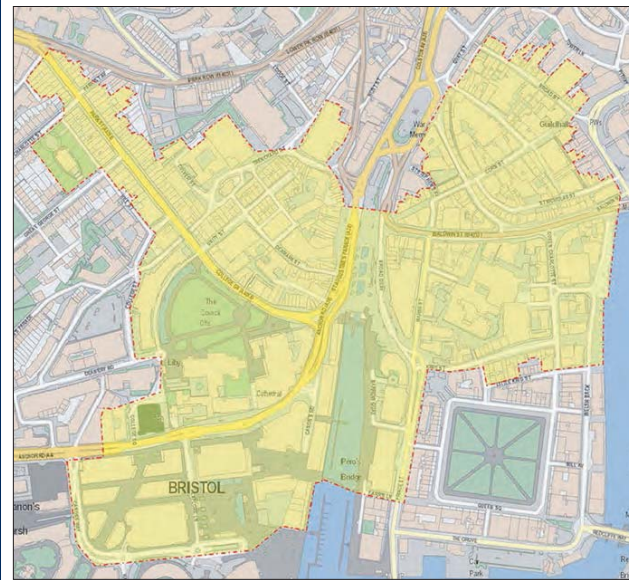


Please contact the editor: mageditor@brstolcivicsociety.org.uk

City Centre BID

The proposal to create a Business Improvement District (BID) for the city centre stems widely from the work Destination Bristol has been undertaking with the city centre business community over many years. The vision is to improve the trading environment and give visitors a first-class experience day and night in:

- Old City and King Street
- Park Street and College Green
- The Centre Promenade
- Parts of Harbourside



Housing

Bristol City Council has released its draft housing strategy. Bristol faces a number of key housing issues over the 2015 -2020 period.

(see "Housing – what crisis" in BB05)

New use for old swimming pool

The redundant swimming pool at Bishoppsworth has now re-opened as a popular indoor skateboard park

(see "A tale of two swimming pools", BB06)

Metrobus gets underway

Work is clearly under way in many locations. Adjustment of the Redcliffe roundabout has already been finished. The site at Ashton Vale is now occupied by contractors and a diversion for the Ashton Avenue bridge implemented while repairs are carried out. Users of the A38 are well aware of the South Bristol Link about to cross it. In the middle of September, work started at the Centre Promenade with the new road layout at Baldwin Street.

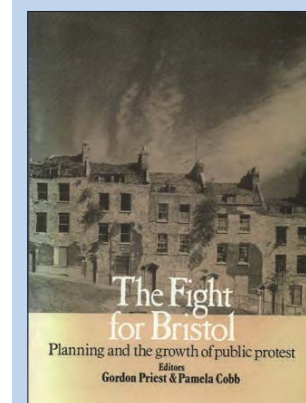
Chris Carley 1962-2015

We are very sorry to report the death of Chris Carley. An architect by training, Chris had over recent months been making valuable contributions to Society comments on major new developments, via his work for Major Sites Group. He had joined the Executive Committee with effect from last May's AGM.

Chris had been playing an active role in the Carriageworks Action Group, which has during 2015 been responding to the major planning proposals for Westmoreland House and the Carriageworks on Stokes Croft. For a number of years, he had been an active contributor to both People's Republic of Stokes Croft (PRSC) and the Bearpit

Pamela Cobb 1928-2015

Pamela Cobb, who was Chair of the Society between 1982 and 1984, passed away in Sheffield last May.



Only a few now involved in the Society knew her personally, though one recalls her as Chair being very patient, thorough and resourceful - organising lots of things - and above all, very kindly. Many know her name because of the seminal book "The Fight for Bristol" which she co-authored with Gordon Priest. Some of us were inspired to get involved with the Society because of it.

The book, published in 1980, came at a turbulent time in the city's history and chronicled the rising public protest against insensitive post-war development of the 1950s-70s.

A graduate of Edinburgh University, she worked in adult education in Leeds and with the Open University, and developed a concern for environmental matters. She had a passion for inland waterways, becoming a senior member of the Inland Waterways Council.

Perhaps it was Bristol's waterways that prompted her to move to Bristol and take up a post at the University in 1973. The Civic Society and City Docks group benefited greatly from her energy.

Improvement Group, and he will be greatly missed by both organisations. It was Chris who proposed that the Society promote an initiative to conserve and restore the surviving parts of Brunswick Square, and this would be a fitting way of acknowledging his contribution.



Plaque for Bob Hope at entrance St George's Park

Blue plaques

Eugene Byrne shows how we can commemorate our worthy predecessors

Fancy putting up a blue plaque to some great woman or man who once lived in Bristol? Is there someone in the city's past who you and your family or friends think deserves more recognition?

Then the Civic Society can help! BCS this year took over responsibility for the blue plaques scheme previously run by Bristol City Council and a BCS 'Blue Plaques Panel' is now up and running.

There is nothing to stop any group or private individual sticking up a plaque (of any colour) on any building provided the owner agrees.

The Civic Society, however, is responsible for Bristol's "official" blue plaques. This means information is carefully checked; is the person honoured with a plaque genuinely connected with the building or site? Did they live or work there? Were they born there? And do their achievements merit the honour of a plaque?

The Panel has drawn up a set of basic ground rules. Nobody can be nominated, for example, until at least 12 months have passed since their death, to allow for a more objective assessment of their contribution. Advertising is not permitted and the Panel must approve the design and wording.

The Panel does not itself nominate people for plaques, and nor does the

Civic Society have a budget for them. The person or group nominating someone to be honoured must raise the money (currently about £500), provide evidence of connection with the site, secure the owner's consent and put the case for the nominee's commemoration.

The Panel can advise on research, plaque manufacture, publicity and give tips on how to run a successful unveiling event. (The Lord Mayor may well be able to turn up.)

We are now looking forward to the unveiling of the first two plaques to be installed under the aegis of BCS this autumn. Details will be on the BCS website nearer the time.

Simon Birch, who chairs the Panel says: "We want to take advantage of people's enthusiasm for blue plaques by encouraging Bristolians to come forward and nominate men and women connected with the city who have made an impact.

"They do not have to national figures. We are just as interested in those who worked tirelessly for their own communities. And they don't have to be people from the distant past. It is just as important to honour more recent figures, so that the scheme can also reflect Bristol as it is today."

If you would like to nominate someone for a plaque the details of how to go about it should be on the BCS website by the time you read this.



St Michael on the Mount Without



A church Without. That is, outside the City walls. But also, sadly, a Church without many friends. Bristol Civic Society has started an initiative to bring new uses to this disused and unwanted Church

Rebecca Windemer, Andy Reynolds and Simon Birch lead the way

What a wonderful location, a truly medieval corner of Bristol! Situated at the foot of St Michael's Hill with views across the city centre to the hills of Dundry. But what a depressing state of affairs – a church closed, boarded up and festooned with creeper – and no sign of resolution to the situation.

St Michaels closed in 1998 and has been in "use-seeking" mode since then. Nearly 20 years have now passed. Proposals for a nursery, a running centre and, most recently, as a church (but with extensive alterations and additions) seem to come and go whilst this fine church continues to deteriorate.

There has been a church on this site since the 1100s. The current tower dates from the



15th Century and the main church from the 1770s. It's listed as 2* in terms of its historic and architectural importance.

Why then has it proved so difficult to find a new use for St Michael's? Ironically one answer must be its location – great in terms of views and character, challenging in terms of vehicle and even pedestrian access!

And there are so many churches seeking

new uses – with a variety of solutions including Circomedia, the climbing centre, Trinity Community Arts, and any number of residential conversions.

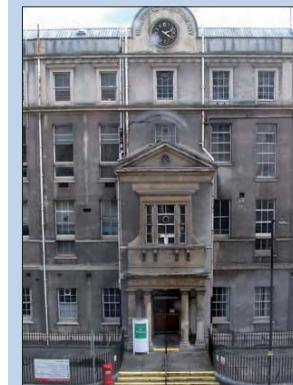
But St Michael's has potential advantages in its proximity to the University, the BRI and the City Centre, and surely these can be turned to generating new activity?

The Civic Society has decided to assist in finding a long term sustainable use for St Michael's. It's just too important to be left to its own devices any longer! An appeal to Society members elicited a gratifying response, all keen for a solution to be sought, and a project group has been established. A project plan is being drawn up majoring on research to find potential uses which will be sustainable, both financially and in terms of care for the building. We will be working closely with the Christmas Steps Arts Quarter and with neighbouring businesses and residents. And will liaise closely with the Diocese as the building owner and ultimate decision maker!

If you would like to join our small team please get in touch: chair@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Protecting and enhancing Bristol's heritage

Simon Birch



BRI Old Building Charity Universal - seriously at risk

The historic buildings and places of Bristol need to be carefully looked after. Dedicated resources are declining in both the City Council and Historic England yet the pressures on historic assets are increasing with development proposals and transport schemes. On the positive side lies significant community potential with a great many community-based groups showing interest in their heritage and frequently having the capacity to act.

Pulling this together is a challenge but one which must be faced if Bristol is to maintain and improve its built heritage!

Ongoing work is essential to ensure that all aspects of the planning framework take this heritage fully into account - including neighbourhood plans, conservation area character appraisals, buildings at risk register, and local listings.

There is also scope for initiating, co-ordinating and supporting specific projects - such as St Michael on the Mount Without, the overgrown "amphitheatre" behind Brunel House, the Purdow anti-aircraft batteries, the list goes on...

The challenge is clear - ideas positively welcomed on how best to take this forward.

Portland Square - a troubled history

*Alastair Brook discusses with Dave Cave its changing fortunes

OLD ST PAULS is an area whose fortunes have waxed and waned, enduring a degrading history with its grand mansions degenerating into doss-houses, used as boot-factories and warehouses, and nearly lost altogether at one stage.

Development started in Cumberland Steet around 1760, followed by Brunswick Square and Portland Square. These grand terraced mansions provided homes for a new affluent class of merchants who may well have profited from the infamous 18th century 'people-trafficking'.

When did it go into decline?

Some historians say around the time of the Bristol Riots of 1830. The surrounding area was becoming more built up and industrialised, with growth of artisan villages. For the wealthy, the new Italianate villas of Clifton were the place to be. The area declined, the houses entered multiple occupation or were converted into industrial use.

When did it reach rock-bottom?

Around the 1960s, abandoned even as industrial premises, badly damaged by bombing, the whole area was nearly swept away under council plans.

Turning the corner

Fortunately some enlightened individuals saw the quality of the buildings and the potential of the cheap property for social housing. Reversing the trends of the 1960s, the city council appointed a Conservation officer and with the support of Conservation funds set about enticing new inhabitants back. The office booms of the 1970s and 80s saw an insatiable demand for office space in Bristol. Many smaller professional businesses preferred a classical period address which had a cachet of prestige and established durability.

The fashion for 'facadism' peaked at this time when the innards of old houses were ripped out and replaced with modern concrete frames behind the facade. Not ideal, but it did bring about the restoration of much of the damaged square.

Decline again

But fashions even in offices, change. The office property market crashed in the 2000s, and many of those offices have been empty



for years. The demand is for purpose-built open-plan offices ready for the electronic age.

And rise again

So things have gone full circle: there is a huge demand for residential

The rise and fall and rise and fall and rise again of one of Bristol's finest squares

*Alastair Brook was Conservation Officer, then Head of Urban Design at BCC until 2008

The last decade has seen an intense amount of activity on the Square, with at least four current applications pending. The Society has commented on them all, generally supporting the conversion to residential use.

Some plans have lapsed despite getting approval

1-4 Portland Square - 15/02512/LA pre-app - Change of use from offices to residential use - 40 apartments

This group was rebuilt in 1975 and 2-6 Surrey Street (adjoining) built 1980. A prime example of 'facadism'. The Society supports the current application to reconvert this large office building back into residential use, but seeks a more sympathetic treatment of the Surrey Street facades.

Status: pending

6 Portland Square 14/06355/F 14/06355/F Proposed change of use of existing offices to 6 flats, with associated external alterations, car parking, refuse and cycle store.

Status: granted August 2014

10 Portland Square 15/04190/F Conversion to 7 flats and erection of extension facing on to Norfolk Street with more flats.

Status: pending

17 Portland Square - 15/03112/PREAPP - change of use from offices to residential to form 6 apartments and 2 family houses.

One of the best preserved houses, since it has suffered very little intervention during its lifetime and has many original features

Status: Pending conservation officer's response.

22 - 24 Portland Square Now fully restored in the last year for residential use. Previously used as offices. No. 22 was almost completely destroyed by bombing. A new concrete building was built behind the repaired facade in the 1970s. An application to convert into a hotel was made in 2008 but withdrawn when the applicant went into liquidation



25 Portland Square - 15/02941/F -

creation of 14 residential apartments, rear flat roof extension and rear extension with new facade to Chapter Street

PAG responded to this planning application - Extensions out of character.

Status: planning decision pending

27-28 Portland Square Application for renewal of earlier consent - change of use from Light Industrial & Offices to Training Centre) and 3 residential units.

Previously used as tea warehouse and boot makers. Once the Wills family home

Status: Granted Dec 2012

28 Portland Square & 2-8 Cave Street 14/06369/F Conversion and refurbishment into 13no. dwellings. Once the Wills family home.

Status: pending



29-30 and 31-32 Portland Square

06/00483/F Conversion and restoration to form 10 flats, demolition of existing warehouse and redevelopment of 29 and 30 Portland Square and 1 Cave Street to provide a further 49 units, erection of retail shop, car parking spaces and landscaping.

Status: Granted April 2009

The city's last remaining major bomb-site and Number 1 Blot on the townscape. No further action since.

How do we tackle the problem of the last bombsite and major eyesore at Nos. 29-32 Portland Sq. ?

Despite planning approval in 2009, nothing has happened. It is said that the owners cannot agree among themselves.

This impasse is not acceptable. Compulsory purchase, though a possibility, is a hugely risky and expensive route for a city council with more pressing demands on its resources. It would require a sustained

campaign from the public and a "back-to-back" developer in place and willing to fund the scheme to support it.

Can public opinion and an attractive offer persuade the owners to sell up? Would a compromise, allowing a new replica building on the whole of 29-32 (which would be lot cheaper) make it a more attractive proposition to a developer?

Bristol's dearth of transport planning

Gavin Smith, former Transport Officer at Bristol City Council gives a personal view on Bristol's transport problems – and cures

Newcomers to Bristol remark what a good place it is to visit and indeed to live. But they notice too it has no decent public transport system, and the traffic is congested. Compared to other big cities, its transport planning seems in a time warp.

In issue 4 of Better Bristol (spring 2014) we published a map of how the city centre could operate if its transport were organised in a modern manner. At the time, the Mayor was said to be thinking along similar lines. So what happened? Why no progress? The reasons are several.

Bristol's "planning" is effectively random. It operates on the "let's apply for a one-off grant if one's going" principle.

No lessons appear to have been learnt from the unpopular Bus Rapid Transit (now MetroBus) fiasco, which will see city residents subsidising out-of-town commuters.

Crucially, Bristol, unlike other metropolitan areas, has no team of skilled transport planning professionals. We are as yet still not a Passenger Transport Executive/ITA / Combined Authority. The self-interested suburban authorities of South Gloucestershire and North Somerset override the city's aspirations. There is a touching belief in private transport consultants. Our city in other words suffers from a severe democratic deficit.

Local MetroRail investment is virtually on hold due to the prior claim of the embarrassing MetroBus (But there is significant investment happening – see opposite –Editor)

A Workplace Parking Levy - which in Nottingham funds their trams – has yet to be adopted.

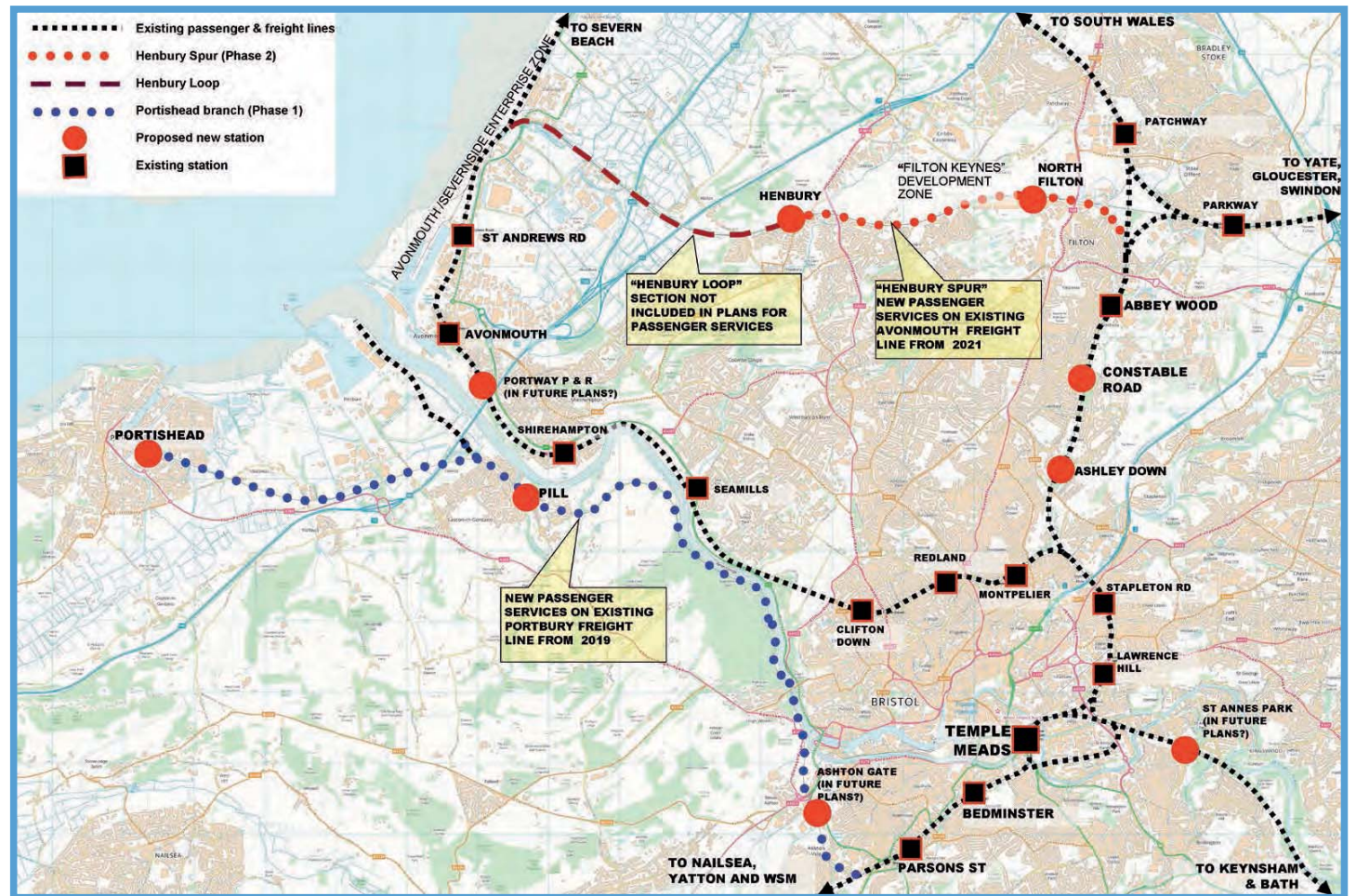
While there has been an unsung improvement in normal bus services, with more people using them, there are troubles ahead here too. The Traffic Manager has increased road capacity by updating the traffic signals, but installed few more bus-lanes or bus-only streets. This encourages general traffic: which before long will slow the buses down again. Backstreet "rat runs" are tolerated.

The timidity of our traffic engineers is such that although a 20 mph speed limit is being expanded, it is now beginning to omit the very roads – the main traffic distributors – where accidents actually occur. An annual road accident map must be published for public discussion, as it was in the first Bristol Local Transport Plan.

The planning of buses and the future MetroRail are not integrated, most obviously in the lack of bus interchanges at Temple Meads and at Filton Abbey Wood stations. MetroRail is seen as peripheral – with only a 30 or 60 minute frequency target – rather than as essential. Hard negotiation with the Port of Bristol and with South Gloucestershire to achieve the reopening of the Avonmouth-Henbury-Filton Abbey Wood Loop has yet to occur.

There is a fear of constructively engaging with users. Transport planning has to be negotiation, not public relations.

Net result: the city does not "do" – or "get" – transport planning. Councillors, the Mayor and some fresh officers should take themselves off to Nottingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Bordeaux or anywhere in Holland, to "look and learn".



Pill station 3D visual impression

Bristol's new suburban railway

Major expansion of Bristol's suburban railway system, sought by campaigners for many years, is about to become a reality. Phase 1 sees the re-opening of passenger services on the Portishead line, with half-hourly services between Bath, Oldfield Park, Keynsham and Bristol extending to the Severn Beach line being promised.

Public consultation on this has finished, and should open the way for two new stations in North Somerset. The Portishead line will re-open for passenger traffic by 2019, bringing fast and frequent train services between Portishead and Bristol.

The West of England Joint Transport Board has given the green light to Phase 2: proposals for restoring passenger services to Henbury in north Bristol with new stations at Henbury, North Filton and Ashley Down. Passenger services closed in the Beeching era, but the line has continued to provide an important direct link for freight traffic between Filton Junction and the port at Avonmouth. Services to Yate will also be increased dramatically.

Campaigners were disappointed that the most ambitious part of the project, seeking to restore the entire Henbury Loop and providing a direct passenger service between north Bristol and Avonmouth, was shelved for the time being. The Society supported their request for a review of the business case, as many felt it had undervalued the economic benefits of the line and the importance of this transport link between urban expansion on the airfields site, "Filton Keynes", and the Severnside Enterprise Zone.

The Society also felt that it was a mistake not to include a station at Ashton Gate on the Portishead line and this is a missed opportunity to provide an important travel link in south Bristol.

However, the Society warmly welcomes the proposals as they stand. We look forward to the case being made for a new station in the Ashton Gate area and completion of the Henbury Loop.

Is walking a neglected mode of transport?

Suzanne Audrey argues that walking gets a poor deal from transport planners and needs a campaign to address this neglect



The Oxford English dictionary defines transport as a system or means of conveying people or goods from place to place. Popular images of transport feature aeroplanes, trains, ships, lorries, buses or cars. Occasionally bicycles may feature but rarely, if ever, walking. It is true that traffic congestion, poor air quality, and public health messages about the dangers of sedentary behaviour have stimulated interest in active travel. But the predilection for vehicles is also evident in the world of active travel where 'walking and cycling' is frequently illustrated with a picture of a cyclist.

From a public health perspective, walking has been described as the nearest thing to perfect exercise. It is a low cost, year round, habit forming activity. Walking regularly at a moderate pace can reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, colon and breast cancer, and Alzheimer's disease. It helps maintain healthy weight, improves cholesterol levels, reduces blood pressure, builds healthy muscles and bones, improves balance and reduces the risk of falls.

Given the public health arguments in favour of walking, does it really matter if walking is considered transport? As far as infrastructure and investment are concerned, it does. In November 2014 the then coalition government announced a £214m investment in cycling 'to help make it easier and safer to get on your bike in the UK' bringing the total invested in cycling

to £588m. Some four months later, in its report, Investing in Cycling and Walking: the Economic Case for Action, the Department for Transport stated it had 'not funded significant programmes exclusively aimed at encouraging walking' and acknowledged 'this results in a lack of available case study

2008 and we're reviewing it at the moment because obviously it is now out of date. To be honest the walking initiatives will probably just remain as they are. We'll just role them forward to the next year because there is ... very little we can do to really actively promote it.'



Bad Walking route on important link between Old Market and Temple Meads

or programme wide evidence held centrally by the Department.'

Research in Bristol suggests this lack of clarity impacts on workplace travel plans. One manager suggested: 'I think perhaps some people don't even think about the walking side ... We don't have that many schemes for walkers like we do for cyclists and motor cyclists and public transport users.' And a travel planner revealed: 'We've had the travel plan since

Jayne Mills, Bristol City Council, examined the 2011 Census data and found significantly more people walk to work than cycle in Bristol. However, there were differences in the profiles of those who walked and cycled which may help to explain the higher profile of cycling in the city. The 'typical' cyclist was a white male, aged 25-39, with a degree, working full time in a professional occupation. It proved much more difficult to describe a 'typical' walker in terms of qualification, occupation or ethnicity, although walkers were more likely to be females under 30.

There is, in fact, a Walking Strategy for Bristol 2011-21 which argues: 'Walking is a key form of transport, particularly for short trips. Walking is the 'glue' that binds the transport system'. The vision states: 'Walking will be the first choice for local journeys and, together with public transport, a part of longer ones. People will be regularly walking along high quality, safe routes to work, school, the shops, for leisure and recreation.' Unfortunately it is not clear who is taking this strategy forward, and a campaign may be required to turn the vision into reality. If you are interested in contributing to such a campaign, please contact: suzanne.audrey@bristol.ac.uk or alan@morrisfastmail.com

Dr Suzanne Audrey is Senior Research Fellow in Public Health, University of Bristol

Bristol – whose city centre is it?

Roger Ayton suggests radical action is needed, but a "softly-softly" approach may be more productive than bloody revolution

The pedestrian experience of the city centre leaves much to be desired. We know that linked attractions, busy frontages, multiple uses and a distinctive, positive image can help generate great streets. If this was easy we would already have arrived, but we have not.

We need to reset our assumptions and focus on the pedestrian experience. Policy documents exist to help make this possible but progress is slow. As things stand, the pedestrian environment is fragmented and much of poor quality. The balance of advantage lies emphatically with wheeled traffic. The balance of advantage needs to be shifted. I suggest three reasons.

Commercial change

The commercial life of the centre is changing. Street footfall has grown, as functions emerge in places once designed for other roles. New businesses are small, agile and nomadic. Face to face contact has extended the working environment to the gym, coffee bar and restaurant. Spaces and streets, as places of exchange, reflect a looser network of social and commercial activity. New business encourages the shift from 'employment silo' to the smart networked city. The retail 'High Street' itself is being transformed.

Connected neighbourhoods

The distinction between centre and neighbourhoods has blurred. The functional centre has stretched along the connections to the neighbourhoods, as residential uses have moved back into the centre. Key routes, north of the river and south, west and east from the centre, are already part of an animated, if fragmented, public realm. This is a diffuse mix, but perhaps instrumental for a city that aspires to be both resilient and sustainable.

Visitor experience

Visitors are an integral part of the economy. They are consumers, investors, critics and promoters. Their engagement with the city will determine how the city is valued beyond its boundaries. The city's arts, music, festivals, media and eccentric attractions, like Shaun the Sheep, continue to draw visitors. Key spaces, busy with visitors, who might want to linger, are



Pedestrians compete with traffic on Bristol's Centre

compromised by traffic. Some have lost their historic role by the demands of wheeled traffic.

Making changes

The City could embark on radical change but experience is not encouraging. Interventions are often selective in their benefits and often beset by the unexpected. This may be related to the means by which change is affected. Centrally directed intervention may be predictable and manageable but is often self replicating.

Interventions seek to limit options, in order to get to the desired results. But behaviour of disadvantaged groups, cyclists, pedestrians and cars, may well become unpredictable and chaotic. A change in the mode of intervention might help change this outcome. Encouraging change by indirect methods, rather than by direct enforcement or instruction, might offer a more productive relationship. Nudge Theory is not widely used in traffic management but does seem to offer some potential, working creatively with what people do, rather than against. This would be challenging but potentially game changing.

Practical steps

Behaviours change as a result of preference. So we might start by 'designing choices' to improve the pedestrian environment. Small diffuse actions, connecting to build a network responsive to the preferences of the city centre user. The City Council engaged as enabling rather than enforcing

agency. The traffic in the centre evolving as a consequence of 'negotiation' between users adapting to time, season and event. To use a metaphor, a wildflower meadow rather than field of silage.

Bit by bit, we could make space to innovate, on Park Street at Old Market along Princes Street. We could reclaim streets like Rupert Street or High Street. We could change priorities, School Fridays that allow school groups priority across the centre. We could inform with real time displays for cross centre vehicle journeys. We could invent dedicated city centre public transport. We could take ownership, helping to re-invent the city centre.

Conclusion

For practical purposes there needs to be traffic in the centre, but wheeled traffic no longer represents the artery of commerce, as once it did. In making the change to different priorities, we need to encourage diversity and rely less on public authority intervention. That might indeed be closer to the character of the city evident in its artistic, cultural and intellectual diversity; perhaps closer to the emerging digital character that underpins future adaptation. This challenge is not unusual but, it is how we respond, with solutions that are relevant and particular, that will distinguish the successful, from the failing, city centre.

Roger Ayton is an architect, urban designer and member of the Bristol Urban Design Forum

Design Awards

David Mellor
Architecture Centre,
Gareth Mason
Junior Chamber
of Commerce, and
Simon Birch Bristol
Civic Society explain
this year's awards



Right, Southmead Hospital

Below, Clifton Suspension
Bridge Visitor Centre

Below right, Bishop Road
Primary School

Far right, The Hub,
Gainsborough Square,
Lockleaze



In 2015 we decided to refresh our annual awards in two ways. Firstly we created a new awards panel – from Civic Society members who had not previously been involved in the awards – together with representatives from our partners at the Architecture Centre and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Secondly we decided to focus on the high quality of design and away from the previously broader environmental remit. Why did we do this?

The value of good design

As the Civic Society well recognises, the quality of our buildings and places is a key part of the attraction of Bristol as a place to live, work and visit. However maintaining and enhancing that quality requires serious engagement by all concerned. Award schemes are a valuable part of encouraging good design as they help to raise aspirations of both designers and clients.

There will always be pressures – time, cost, the way buildings are procured – that mitigate against good quality design and so raising aspirations and giving public recognition to the best is very important. Such recognition also helps clients to select

good design teams which are a critical component of the best buildings and places.

Good design has integrity, gives delight, respects and enhances context and is sustainable. As such it also represents real value for all concerned – it is not a bolt-on extra.

The Civic Society Design Awards demonstrate these characteristics

Over twenty nominations were received and assessed against a series of criteria. Nominations were made by Civic Society members, by the public and by architects, developers and others involved in

development. Projects had to be located within the City of Bristol; completed within the past two years; and visible to the general public. In addition they were required to demonstrate a high standard of architectural design.

The Design Awards were presented in June following the Society's AGM at the SS Great Britain's Conference Centre. A member of the awards panel explained the reasons for making each award and each winning team was invited to make a short presentation

describing the design intentions together with the final outcome.

We welcome new members to the awards panel – if you would like to join us please get in touch.

We are also keen to receive nominations for next year's awards – projects must be completed by the end of 2015, and ideally occupied.

Contact: awards@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

The panel made four design awards:

The Hub, Gainsborough Square, Lockleaze

Commissioned by United Communities and designed by architects Kendall Kingscott, the "Hub" comprises 28 affordable homes, a community hub and business space. The panel considered the building to be inspirational in terms of its massing, choice of materials and detailing.

Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre

Commissioned by the Bridge Trust and designed by Alec French Architects. Although located over the border in North Somerset this scheme was considered to be umbilically connected to Bristol! The panel admired the self effacing character of this project, marked by stone walls and a limited palette of materials. Windows were positioned to provide intriguing views to the suspension bridge.

Bishop Road Primary School

Commissioned by the school and designed by Batterham Matthews Design Ltd, the scheme involved the provision of a new entrance to this large Victorian school, together with reception and library accommodation. The two storey building provides a landmark in the street building out to the very edge of the school site. The panel admired the choice of materials, the crisp modern design and the improvements to the public realm.

Southmead Hospital

Commissioned by the North Bristol NHS Trust and designed by BDP this is by far the largest of the award winners. Indeed the sheer scale of the new building took time to appreciate and the panel was impressed by the tremendous amount of design skill, experience and ingenuity which had been put into this project.



Civic Society student award

JOSH CORFIELD describes his project for an agriculture school at Sharpness.

When visiting Sharpness there are two dominant, contrasting qualities of the environment that strike the visitor; one of heavy, declining industry and the other, a sprawling patchwork of agricultural fields and farmsteads. The latter characteristic is one that existed before the introduction of the industrial dock in 1827, when farming and agriculture took a secondary occupation within the context of Sharpness.

Now in 2015 when the extensive dock is in a slow decline subsequent to multiple expansions in the past, farming and agriculture clings onto its tradition and heritage within the region. Although the farming landscape has not altered dramatically nor the fundamental responsibility of the farming industry in modern times, the popularity and public perception of farming has changed since the romantic paintings of landscape and farming by John Constable in the 1800s.

The rejection of farming and agriculture is concentrated within the attitudes of the younger generations who see the city as a contemporary model to follow, with many denying the past linked with the countryside and the valuations of land. Critical to the future of farming is

that those who work in it are skilled and ambitious, with a need to highlight the career prospects of the industry. Explicit within current planning policy is the encouragement to develop schemes that inspire young people to take up a career in farming and promote the benefits of it to a younger audience.

This project has developed a curriculum that merges the hands-on activities and knowledge based specifics of farming in a school that aims to ignite a passion within the younger generations for farming and agriculture. Integrated within a model farm and neighbouring farmsteads, the school provides a platform for those interested in the industry to begin acquiring the appropriate knowledge.

The school sits naturally within the existing agricultural backdrop, lining the trees to minimize the visual impact of the new development.

Continuing the spatial layout of vernacular farmsteads, the school emphasises the traditional values of farming, whilst promoting modern teaching practices within a contemporary building design. Based on the principles of open-plan learning and flexible design, the teaching spaces provide opportunities for the students to shape the physical environment to suit the way in which they want to learn.



Josh Corfield is a final year student at UWE. His project impressed the panel and made him an obvious choice for winner of this award.

OPINION

Who'd be a councillor?

Eugene Byrne ponders next year's elections and wonders why anybody wants to be elected as a Councillor.

Next year Bristol will elect a mayor and the entire roster of councillors as we switch from the old method of voting for a third of them at a time.

The outcome is anybody's guess. Will George get a second term despite all the unpopular things he's done? Will the Greens continue their remarkable surge of recent years? Will the Tories gain or lose from being in power at Westminster? Will Labour's new national leader energise support or drive the party over a cliff? Will the Lib Dems, once such a powerful force in Bristol, make a comeback?

Bristol's council currently comprises 30 Labour councillors, 16 Tories, 13 Greens, ten Lib Dems and a solitary Kipper, but, the whisper goes, not all are happy. City Hall gossip has it that some councillors are considering packing it in next year, wondering what the point is now that the elected mayor has so much power.

Getting decent people to be councillors has always been a problem everywhere, not least because you need a high pain threshold ... The meetings, the paperwork, the lunatics who ring your home number at two in the morning to complain about something. Then there's the breathtaking stupidity of some of your fellow councillors, not to mention rumours, magnified nowadays by anonymous web trolls, that you're only in it to line your pocket.

Aside from all that, the actual or would-be Bristol City Councillor must now also contend with a powerful mayor.

According to Mayor Ferguson's more forceful critics, we now have an electoral dictatorship, what with residents' parking, 20mph speed limits, closing the roads on Sundays, a plethora of arty stunts ... To the anti-Ferguson crowd, Bristol is like the carnival empire of Napoleon III (he wore red trousers, too, you know), with about the same level of democracy.

His defenders claim he's generally worked well with councillors (some are in his cabinet, after all) and nothing he's done has yet met unanimous opposition. But there are a few things that have been opposed by a majority, such as the sale of land to the Bristol Port Company earlier this summer.

He's Getting Things Done, say defenders of the mayoral system. Deputy Mayor Geoff



Gollop told Better Bristol: "For years before that we had hung councils and a situation where nobody wanted to make unpopular decisions with an election coming up almost every year. Now we have someone who almost revels in confrontation."

So why be a councillor? The money? Well, there's the annual allowance of eleven and a half grand, which is hardly a full-time wage to most. Admittedly there are additional responsibility payments for some - cabinet members, committee chairs, party leaders etc. You could maybe earn about as much as, say, a teacher or school head, but you'd be way easier to sack.

"If voting changed anything, they'd abolish it."
– Ken Livingstone

Better Bristol spoke to a few veterans of Bristol's council and they were unanimous in the view that the main point of the job is to represent your ward.

Helen Holland (Whitchurch Park, leader of the Labour Group) says: "I know it sounds well-worn, but there is still a huge desire among people to make a difference in their local community and find ways to make it better."

"It's also a privilege to make a difference to the lives of people you represent. For example with housing needs; if you can help get a family moved from a two-bedroom flat to a three-bedroom house then that for them as a family is of life-changing importance."

Gary Hopkins, (Knowle, leader of the Council's Lib Dem Group) is not a fan of the mayor or the mayor system and is actively working for legislation for a referendum on the abolition of the role. In this, he says he has the support of some unnamed local MPs.

For now, though, the role of councillors is "To protect their own areas from the mayor, basically. So many things are happening at the moment that we have to campaign on and unless active councillors are on the ground then things can get done to an area that the people living there don't want."

Geoff Gollop (Con, Westbury-on-Trym) was formerly Lord Mayor and is currently George Ferguson's Deputy Mayor. He is more bullish about the mayoral system.

"Why bother being a councillor? I can understand why you ask that question, but it applied just as much before the introduction of the mayoral system. Previously we as Conservatives were only the third-largest party on the Council. Now we're second, but you still only get things done by standing up and speaking your mind. You can be a voice for your community, and for the average councillor this is not very different to before ... If you want a strong mayoral system to work then you also need strong representation of people."

So there you have it. A small allowance, and the chance to do good for your neighbourhood. Not hugely different from how it's always been. If you're up for it, the party of your choice may well be interested in hearing from you.

Eugene Byrne is a popular local journalist who writes regularly for the Bristol Post.

The craft of collaborative planning

Working together:
Faster, cheaper, better!

Earlier this year, Bristol-based practice Place Studio won the Royal Town Planning Institute's national award as 'Small Planning Consultancy 2015', largely because of their focus on community engagement and collaborative working. In this article, Jeff Bishop* reflects on how their approaches might be relevant to Bristol

Too often in the past, planning, design and development were done to people (or at best for them), certainly not with them. Much has changed since those sad days but has it changed enough and in the right ways in Bristol? Are there better models available that build on careful, well-managed collaborative working between the professionals, our elected representatives and those whose lives they will affect?

First of all, we are in fact very lucky in Bristol compared to almost anywhere else we have worked. Engaging people in the task of Local Plan making in a city as large as ours is a major challenge and in our view the Council have done a lot of good work on that with limited resources; far better than most. Our Council is also one of the very few to have a genuinely strong Statement of Community Involvement and a Protocol about pre-application community involvement; both of which link in to the remarkable (and unique) Neighbourhood Planning Network. The Protocol may not always be used or used fully but it certainly outlines the sort of good practice that we got our award for. The Council has also been up ahead of most others in its coherent support for Neighbourhood Development Plans. Some of these are now close to completion while several other cities do not even have a single one underway.

So, we have a Council generally committed to good engagement (even if that is not shared by all councillors and officers) and the key building blocks are in place. But things can always be better, so what stops this and what can be done to shift it up another notch? Resources are a major challenge; planning departments nationally are on their way to losing 70% of their staff from 2010 to 2020. Despite the Localism Act, developers and applicants still cannot be legally required to do pre-application involvement. Few planners (and no architects or surveyors) are trained in community engagement. Communities in the greatest need of support in our city still



struggle to access it (and probably have little to do with the Civic Society).

The key lesson we have learnt, to build on the existing foundations, is about people – especially groups such as the Civic Society - working genuinely together. This is not about seeking separate meetings with the planners or making traditional representations through individualised consultations, but all (planners and councillors included) sitting together in the same room and sharing a dialogue about the best way forward for a plan or a project. This is challenging for all but it is often remarkably creative and works

because everybody takes responsibility for the outcome instead of sitting back and blaming someone else when their pet view or favourite idea is not taken on board. It's just a pity that 'collaborative planning' is the sort of phrase you can't use when chatting in the street. There again, it's better than in Italy where I soon learned to my cost that, as some people told me, 'we shoot collaborators'!

* This year also saw the publication of Jeff's very thorough practical guidebook to his work and that of Place Studio: 'The Craft of Collaborative Planning' (published by Routledge).



The stunning Bristol Whale sculpture resident in Millennium square during the summer reminded us of the beauty and fragility of life in the oceans. Climate change, acidification, overfishing and plastic pollution have played havoc with marine life. Some 8 million tons of plastic are said to end up in the sea every year.



Being PALL – Plastic a Lot Less

Michelle Cassar relates her personal anti-plastic war

In November 2008 I learnt firsthand about plastic pollution, that day I started Being PALL - (Plastic A Lot Less.)

Before that I was pretty normal in the plastic side of things. I bought a lot of plastics. Water in plastic, lazy soups, filled pasta, microwave meals for work, bags upon bags under the sink, bathroom full of plastics, drinking straws - I'd never noticed before - sacks of it. We took it to the recycling bins, most I didn't even know was plastic. That evening in the Surfers Path I found a small article that simply said:

"I recycled. Well, actually what I did was separate my plastics, and put them outside the front door in a separate box.

One day we went to a deserted beach, after campers had left. There was a vast amount of plastic waste - I'd never noticed before - sacks of it. We took it to the recycling bins, most I didn't even know was plastic. That evening in the Surfers Path I found a small article that simply said:

"Every piece of plastic that has ever been made still exists and much of it is in our oceans."

There was a YouTube link to "A Tale of Entanglement". This is a pretty graphic film of animals entangled in plastic. I was upset and looked around the camper... at all our plastics. The next day I started refusing single use plastics. Within weeks I was at the plastic sorting plant in my home town in Essex. There I learnt a hard lesson, recycling of plastic was not the happy solutions I'd assumed. From there forward, refusing single use plastics became a way of life for me.

With the Atlantic swell, it's hard not to notice the ever-changing plastic washing up. Especially when I was shooting, plastic lapped up around my feet. I was constantly reminded of the presence of plastic pollution.

I encountered a dolphin who had died from entanglement, and an endangered teenage leather back turtle who had died ingesting one plastic bag.

I couldn't help but do something. So as well reducing my own plastic drastically, I started

helping other people reduce theirs, and have been for nearly seven years.

In December 2014 I started blogging Being PALL. It is impossible to be 100% plastic free but being PALL is tangible action. I hope to encourage my readers to celebrate every refusal, 'every refusal adds up'.

We have produced as much plastic in the last ten years as we have the entire century before. To stop plastic pollution escalating, we need to turn off the tap. If people are not ready to turn it off, slowing it down is a great start. Every refusal counts to the millions of animals who are dying annually because of our mis-use of plastics.

Michelle Cassar is a photographer and surfer who has recently relocated to Bristol from Essex, by way of a small village, on the West Coast of Portugal, famous for its world-class surf.



City to Sea: Home is where the plastic starts

Author, TV presenter, producer, environmental campaigner Natalie Fee, founded City to Sea, after seeing the huge quantities of plastic waste being washed out along the River Avon following the spring tides in

March. City to Sea was set up to reduce the amount of litter flowing from the Avon, during Bristol's year as European Green Capital. This is a still from her film showing a round up of plastics gathered in just two minutes under Clifton Bridge. You can see the full film at www.citytosea.org.uk and www.nataliefee.com.

Local TV station MADE IN BRISTOL (Virgin 159) has broadcast a number of programmes on this subject.



Tomorrow's city

Better Bristol takes a look at local Neighbourhood Development plans for two very different parts of the city

Could two parishes be more different? Redcliffe, at the very heart of the congested city, one of the ancient mediaeval wards in Bristol's historic centre. The other, Lawrence Weston, on the most distant fringe, hurriedly assembled to meet post-war demand for housing in the war ravaged city and accommodate workers in the Avonmouth industrial area.

Yet both have their problems, and one thing in common. Both have just produced their Neighbourhood Development Plans.

What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

The Localism Act, of 2011, introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape future development. These new neighbourhood planning powers are used to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. These include housing, traffic and transport, parks and green spaces, jobs and skills, community facilities, retail, health and wellbeing and urban design.

How the Neighbourhood Development plan fits with other planning policies

The Neighbourhood Development Plan must be in general conformity with both National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local policies, in particular Bristol's Core Strategy.

Once approved, it will be made part of the Development Plan for Bristol and must be considered along with the Bristol Local Plan in relation to any development proposals, including planning applications.

LAWRENCE WESTON

This area enjoys a great abundance of open space. Perhaps that is its problem. It's almost like an island, detached from mainland Bristol and forgotten about.

Near neighbours are Avonmouth and Bristol's "spaghetti junction" to the west, with the more affluent Coombe Dingle and Henbury to the east. Wealthy Sir John Vanbrugh's Kingsweston House looks down it (and is now owned by a local resident). The Romans used to live here too.

The Plan cites some of the problems. Hurriedly built at the end of the 1940s, mistakes were made. Many of the houses were built using the notorious PRC method, and have had to be demolished, leaving



Kingsweston House

boarded up empty sites, and a legacy of poor quality, energy inefficient buildings. There is over supply of two bed flatlets in unpopular 4 storey walk-up blocks, when more family homes are needed. It's an area that has been allowed to decline: all five pubs on the estate have closed. It once boasted a further education college, but when City of Bristol College got into financial difficulties, this was the one chosen for sacrificial demolition, leaving a vast empty site. There are few employment opportunities locally, other than in the service trades.

Access to the island is difficult, along a narrow Kingsweston Lane. Bus services are seen as expensive and inadequate.

This suggests that LW is some sort of hell-hole, a pit of doom and despair. But the visitor is pleasantly surprised to find a leafy suburb nestling in the lee of the hills, tree-lined boulevards, a sort of village green surrounded by shops and church that would be the envy of the well-to-do Home Counties.

A mixture of new, refurbished and older houses and flats, not 'exciting' architecture, but comfortably laid out. Bodies are cared for with a NHS clinic next to the doctors' surgery, souls with the St Bedes RC school,



Lawrence Weston new flats

and several handsome modern churches. There is also a Community farm and a unique BMX track.

Even so, there are a number of problems that need to be addressed.

Action began in 2011 with production of a 'Community Plan' that set out local needs and aspirations, followed by the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The neighbourhood was awarded £1m over 10 years from the Big Local Lottery fund, in recognition that it had received little investment over recent years.

Key points of the plan

It identifies a number of opportunities. The brownfield sites left after demolition of the college and PRC houses provide opportunity for 360 new homes with a range of sizes and types and improvement of the quality of the housing stock.

The college site could also bring revival of the local retail offer with a new supermarket, and a community hub that accommodates a medical centre, library, employment support and voluntary services.

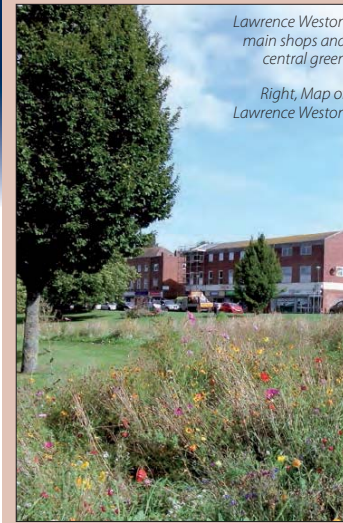
Importantly there is a need to improve transport connections with the city, Southmead and with the Severnside employment zone. The enhancement and improvement of cycle and pedestrian routes and development of a cycle path along Lawrence Weston Road is particularly pressing.

The Plan calls for better maintenance of the Public Realm and green spaces. It concludes with 5 site-specific recommendations.

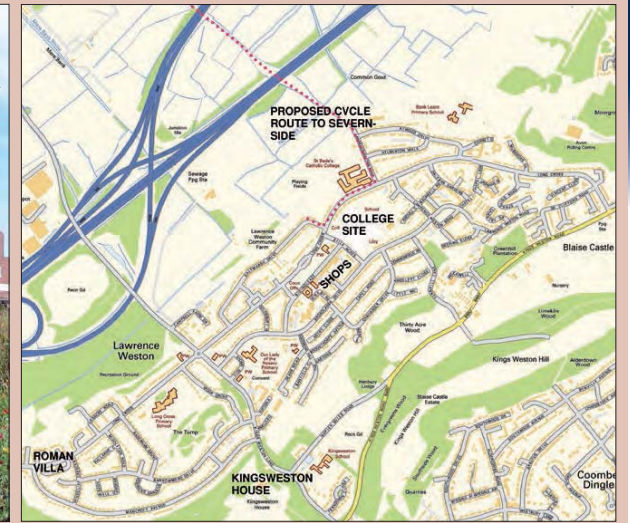
Actually, the Great Goram pub is now open daily from noon. Maybe the corner has already been turned.



Green boulevard in Lawrence Weston



Lawrence Weston main shops and central green
Right, Map of Lawrence Weston



REDCLIFFE

This area on the other hand, is almost too well connected in transport terms.

The forward to the plan tells us "Redcliffe is a neighbourhood that has been overlooked by planners and policy-makers. It has long been sliced in half by an over-sized dual carriage-way, once part of now abandoned western section of the Inner Circuit Road. St Mary Redcliffe Church is penned in by tarmac. All along Redcliffe Way and Redcliffe Hill, roads and carparks dominate so that the area more resembles a suburban bypass rather than an important part of the city centre fabric".



Moreover, Redcliffe Way marks a severe divide between north and south, with South Redcliffe experiencing high levels of economic, social and environmental disadvantage.

The Plan records the data-gathering process carried out to establish the community's needs, reviews the heritage sites in the area, and cites many examples from abroad.

Finally it discusses the pros and cons of a number of options for re-aligning Redcliffe Way, to the north or south. Either way, it will be downgraded. But the Plan at this stage does not commit itself to a final choice.

The Community's Vision

The aim of the Neighbourhood Plan is that Redcliffe Way becomes a new heart for the community, reuniting the north and south. It will provide a lively mixed-use city neighbourhood, which has both a grand boulevard and an impressive setting for St Mary Redcliffe Church, but also more intimate streets and spaces. It will be a place that is people friendly, creating a public realm that encourages congregation and exchange, as well as being the best place for family living in Bristol. It will look, feel and act green, in every sense of the word from energy use, biodiverse green and blue infrastructure, an urban form that encourages people to walk and cycle, through to flexible streets and spaces that encourage spontaneity. Importantly, it will require a level of innovation, rigour and a responsive master planning process to ensure the richness, delight and beauty that the community aspire is delivered.



Plans for grand plaza setting for St Mary Redcliffe main shops

Major Sites Group (MSG)

Spring and summer 2015, John Frenkel reports

HOSPITAL TRANSPLANTS

This is the story of the fortunes of three of Bristol's former hospitals, now unsuitable for their original use. One will convert to become new homes, the owners of the others propose demolition.

Bristol General Hospital

University Hospitals Bristol (UHB) sold the former Bristol General Hospital, which the City and Country Group are imaginatively restoring and converting into new homes. The new flats in this architecturally sensitive building immediately attracted buyers. C & CG have removed unsightly additions and will replace the missing cupola and upper floors to restore the 19th century facades. Lower Guinea will become shared space. If C & CG can redevelop this large and difficult site to produce exciting new homes, would that not be the best new outcome for the other former hospitals?

The Bristol Royal Infirmary

BRI Old Building (Charity Universal) stands to the south of Marlborough Street. In 2016, UHB proposes to demolish the whole site bounded by Marlborough, Lower Maudlin and Whitsun Streets. The replacement buildings would contain a small medical school and 800 student bed-sits. These massive buildings would rise to eight floors on Marlborough Street. The 18th century elevation is a distinguished façade, worth retaining. The elevation creates an interesting composition with Charles Holden's Edward VII Memorial Wing on the north side of the street. The



Society regrets that UHB adopts a narrow commercial attitude towards its public asset. The loss of Charity Universal would harm the city's character. 'Anywhere' student accommodation cannot compensate for the loss of the 200 year old building.

The Society supports the Council and Historic England who strongly object to the demolition of the historic buildings, which are nominated to the Local Heritage List. The Charity Universal Building and the Romanesque style chapel lend themselves to an alternative use. The new development should include the stone boundary walls at the southern end of the site. Refurbishment of the Charity Universal Building is a significant opportunity to enhance the scheme.

The Council says that it is unlikely that it would accept the height and scale of the proposed development.

The building mass would harm views from the Kingsdown Slopes and of the King Edward Building and views of/ into/ through nearby listed St. James Priory and the St James' Parade Conservation Area. The Society supports the development of a medical school and student accommodation but this large and important city centre site merits a more inventive scheme than a mass of monoculture of 830 student; bed-sits. The site must include other forms of residential

accommodation. The Society would support additional development to the southern end of the site.

St. Mary's (former Nuffield) Hospital Upper Byron Place

This is the third proposal to redevelop the site sold by Nuffield Hospital after they moved their clinical operation to the redeveloped Chesterfield Hospital in Clifton. The Council refused the first proposal to build student flats and the developer lost the planning appeal. Following the Council's refusal of a second planning application to build new apartment blocks the former developer sold the site to the current developer, Pegasus Homes. The reason to refuse the two previous schemes was that the new buildings would have been so much larger than the former hospital that they would have caused substantial harm to the unique townscape and landscape of Brandon Hill, which planning policy recognises as a heritage asset of high significance.

The current proposal would demolish the existing buildings to construct three six floor blocks of flats, which would have much the same height and mass as two schemes as the already refused schemes. The Society supports a change to residential use and the removal of the unsympathetic extensions behind the main building. It opposes the demolition of the former hospital, part of which is an unlisted building of merit. The building makes a positive contribution to the landscape and townscape of the northern slope of Brandon Hill. Three six



Before and After: Left, an artists' impression of how it will look.

Below, warehouses on Redcliffe Street

floor blocks is not an acceptable scheme of redevelopment. The substantial harm that the height and mass of the three six floor blocks would cause to Brandon Hill would outweigh any other consideration. The Society strongly supports redevelopment within the hospital building, which lends itself to that use. An attractive development within a heritage building in this location would be highly marketable.

OTHER MAJOR SITES

For years, much of the central area has been underused but between 2012 and 2017, there will be nearly 650 new homes.

New residential schemes are growing up all through the central area. New developments are in Wapping Wharf, the Dings, St. Philip's, and Old Market. Converted redundant buildings, mainly offices such as the Pithay and Electricity House become new homes. The return to city centre living adds to local activity and demand for local services.

The MSG has engaged numerous matters such as the conversion and development of the former Imperial Group Headquarters East Street Bedminster to residential accommodation. The redevelopment of the former Brooks Laundry St. Werburghs to new commercial space, promises 84

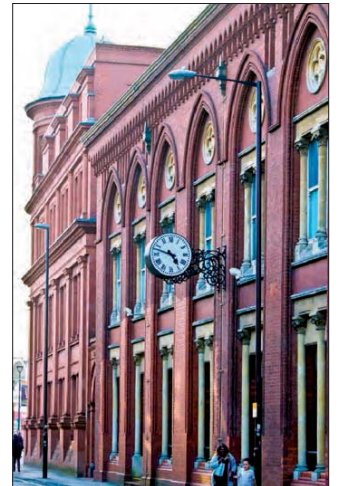
new houses and 26 apartments. The Glassfields scheme (the former Guardian Royal Exchange brown glass offices east of Temple Way) brings new offices in the Enterprise Zone. On transport matters: regarding the Portishead Railway, the Society suggested another station, and on the Henbury Loop that it should reopen and not stop at Henbury, and we have had discussions about the redevelopment of Temple Meads Station.

Redcliff

Previous plans for Redcliff St in the last decade have come to nothing.

The Society met Redcliffe MCC LLP who will develop a large block of brown field land between Redcliff Street, St. Thomas Street and Three Queen's Lane. Redcliffe MCC LLP has planning permission to build 'Sampson Court' a 127 flat development on about 40% of the site. The developer changed aspects of Sampson Court to satisfy the Council's requirements; the Society supported the Council. The new 'Redcliff Quarter' development will include offices, a hotel, a retail 'market area' within the building and 290 flats.

A new pedestrian corridor will link Redcliff Street and St. Thomas Street.



The Imperial Building

The MSG meets once every six weeks. The Group welcomes any member who wishes to join, please contact johnfrenkel5@gmail.com It is critical for the Society to meet developers at an early stage in the planning process.



Planning Applications Group

Spring and summer 2015
John Payne reports

Planning applications come in all shapes and sizes for many different types of development in all parts of the City. PAG has considered well over 100 applications, which we felt could have a noticeable impact on Bristol, since early spring and sent comments to the Council on about one third of these. They range from large refurbishments and developments as at Victoria House in Redland or 25 Portland Square, through proposals for student accommodation, development of important pieces of open land, to the use of front gardens for parking cars. We continue to campaign against inappropriate advertising particularly large LED screens. The Group has also considered early designs for bus shelters in the

Cabot and Clifton wards. Just a few examples are selected for further detail below.

25 Portland Square

This application was for internal alterations and external additional development to create 14 dwellings. PAG supported the residential use of the building, the improvements to the elevation facing Portland Square and the removal from the roof of the lift motor room all of which enhanced this Grade I Listed Building and the Conservation Area where it is located. However, PAG did have some concerns about the proposal. In particular, we considered that the extension and north elevation facing Chapter Street were inconsistent with the character of the Listed Building and the Conservation Area. They did not reflect the architectural context provided by surrounding buildings. PAG was also concerned about the level of open space provided and whether it was sufficient to provide a satisfactory

living environment for future occupants. A decision on this application is awaited.

Welsford Avenue, Stapleton.

PAG objected strongly to the proposal to build 12 houses on open land designated as Important Open Space on this site to the south of Welsford Avenue. We considered that the harm caused by the loss of open space far outweighed the provision of 12 dwellings. Designated areas of Important Open Space should only be changed when Local Plans are reviewed and not on an ad hoc basis otherwise these important protective policies for open space will be undermined. PAG also felt that one of the main purposes of the Conservation Area at this location was to maintain open space adjoining the River Frome. This application generated a massive public response the clear majority of which opposed the scheme. It has been recommended for refusal.

Rear of 50 Old Market Street.

This proposal was for the demolition of a warehouse and the construction of a three storey building for student accommodation. PAG had no objection in principle to the use of this site for residential purposes. However, we did object to this application. The proposal would provide accommodation for 27 students which we considered to be an over intensive use of the site. Coupled with the dearth of amenity space, we felt that this would not provide an adequate living environment. The intensity of use, limited amenity space and design of the proposed building did nothing for the character of the Conservation Area. PAG also questioned the suitability of this location for student accommodation. A decision is awaited.

1 Red cliff Street

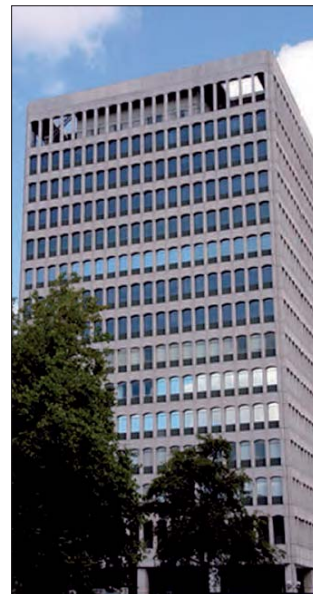
The applicant proposed an additional floor to this handsome twentieth century office block in the apex formed by Redcliff Street and Victoria Street. PAG did not object to the additional floor but we did object to the proposal to illuminate it in a pastel shade. Along with the Council's Urban Design Officer, we felt the additional floor



Example of high level advertising



12 houses would be built on the field in the foreground, which borders the River Frome and an important Open Space



No 1 Redcliff St

should be subservient to the main building. Illumination of it would make it dominant at night affecting views across the city centre. The application was given planning permission but the proposed lighting has to be specifically approved when further details are submitted.

Advertising

We have been greatly encouraged by the Council's record of refusing LED advertising screens. Three more proposals for these particularly intrusive forms of advertising, to which PAG objected strongly, have been refused. They were proposed for sites at the Old Market/Temple Way roundabout, the Island site at Temple Gate close to Brunel's building just outside Temple Meads and at Stapleton Road. Reasons for refusal included their harmful effect on the local street scene and potential danger to road users because of the distraction they could cause.

PAG has also objected to a number of high level advertisements which we consider not only to be harmful to their surroundings but unnecessary to locate premises and define the business occupying them. Lower level signage sympathetic to its surroundings, at or just above the top of the ground floor is often more acceptable. Reflecting this,

the Council has issued a number of split decisions where lower level signage has been approved and high level signs refused. We welcome this.

New Members of PAG are always welcome

PAG is more than happy to welcome new members. We normally meet every three weeks on a Monday evening generally for about a couple of hours. The meetings are informal and friendly and all you need is an interest in Bristol's buildings and street scenes to contribute.

If you are interested, please contact me on johnpayne997@btinternet.com or 0117 924 0634



Not already a member? Why not join TODAY!

MEMBERSHIP

Please enrol me/us as member(s) of the Bristol Civic Society

TITLE	FORENAME	SURNAME
Address		
Postcode		
Telephone		
Email		

As a member, the Society's magazine **Better Bristol**, will be delivered to you. You will be supporting a charity that endeavours to be 'an independent force for a better Bristol' and you will have reduced rates for attending BCS events.

membership@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

You will automatically receive email bulletins and news about Society events.

Please tick here if you DON'T want to receive them

Please return this page to the Membership Secretary with a cheque for your first year's subscription if not paying by standing order

Bristol Civic Society
47 Abbey Road
Bristol
BS9 3QN

Cheques made payable to Bristol Civic Society

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Bristol Civic Society is a registered charity No 244414

Bristol has distinctive features that make it special to us:



Its waterways, harbour, green spaces, hills, position, maritime history, industrial history, and the buildings, streets, spaces, and architectural design that history has left us. We wish Bristol to live up to its status as a regional and European Green capital, reflected in its cityscape, cultural activities and economic life, to be a place its citizens are proud of, and a place that people want to visit.

We are for blending the new with the old:

To recognise Bristol's assets and to implement change through good planning and design. We want to add to the beauty, character and diversity of the city, and to revitalise areas and improve the quality of life for all across the city. We do what we do because we care about the city we live in. We campaign in order to influence how Bristol develops.



Bristol Civic Society is an independent, voluntary organisation that exists to improve Bristol's built environment and celebrate its heritage. The Society has pursued these objectives for over 100 years.



New members from all walks of life are always welcome

Who's who in the society

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Events

October 2015 – March 2016

Another exciting programme of events has been planned. At the time of going to press, the following have been definitely confirmed. Venues vary, but are chosen to be most convenient for the majority of members. There may be others added including more walking and cycling events as well, but these depend on an active co-ordinator. There is a vacancy for this position.

Please watch your Emails for news



Civic Voice Convention 2015
October 23rd to 24th

Hosted by Bristol Civic Society

In 2015 Civic Voice, the umbrella group for Civic Societies across the country will be holding its fifth annual two day convention here in Bristol. Delegates will be attending from all corners of England.

Bristol Civic Society is assisting with the organisation of the event and members are welcome to attend all or part of the convention. However registration will be necessary. There is a delegate fee of £43.05 (payable to Civic Voice, not BCS) which includes the dinner at M Shed on Friday evening and all the events.

The Convention will commence at 11am on Friday 23 October and finish at 4pm on the following day.

Venues: Day one will be based in Bristol's oldest building, The Priory Church of St James, a Grade I listed building founded in 1129 as a Benedictine priory. Later, the evening reception and Convention dinner will be held in M Shed. The Saturday sessions will all be held back at St James Priory.

Outline programme

Friday 23rd October – St James Priory

11.00 – 12.15 Registration / refreshments / exhibition
12.15 – 12.30 Welcome from Bristol Civic Society & Civic Voice
12.30 – 16.30 Programme of site visits and talks.
18.30 – 21.30 Reception and Dinner at M Shed,
21.30 – late Sample Bristol's best! Pubs tour with CAMRA

Saturday 24th October – St James Priory

8.30 Registration / refreshments / exhibition
9.00 – 11.00 Civic Voice AGM, address and awards
10.15 – 10.45 Annual address, Chair of Civic Voice – Freddie Gick
11.15 – 15.00 Programme of workshops
15.00 – 16.00 Convention plenary / select a campaign
16.00 Depart

For further details and to register see the Civic Voice website <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/about/meetings/agsm2015>



Events

October 2015 – March 2016

November

BRISTOL EXPLORED

Tim Mowl – Tuesday 3rd November

Timothy Mowl's latest book, featuring 12 urban walks, explores Bristol's diverse architectural heritage, its maritime past and rich social history.

Where in Bristol can you find the remnants of a Sixties walkway in the sky? Or a huge altarpiece painted by our greatest satirist? Which 18th-century pub – still serving pints today – played a part in the nascent anti-slavery movement? And did you know Bristol has a perfect Elizabethan knot garden and that the cables holding up Clifton's

Suspension Bridge are second-hand?

From the very beginnings of the merchant city, the once fashionable Hotwell spa and Clifton's elegant terraces and crescents, raised in the teeth of bankruptcy, to an alternative way of living in the graffiti-ridden People's Republic of Stokes Croft, Bristol Explored encourages the walker to view the city through fresh eyes, to take pleasure in its historical idiosyncrasies, to challenge accepted wisdom on matters of urban style and, above all, to experience

Bristol's many changing faces.

Timothy Mowl is Emeritus Professor of History of Architecture & Designed Landscapes at the University of Bristol and is the author of over thirty books on architecture, landscape, historic gardens and conservation.

7.45pm: Unitarian Chapel, Brunswick Square, Bristol, BS2 8PE
Members £2, Non-members £5 suggested (minimum £2).
Booking not required

January

J S FRY AND SONS – A FAMILY BUSINESS

Alan Freke – Thursday 21st January

The story of how the famous chocolate business passed down the generations – with a few diversions along the way! Alan is chair of the Francis Tuckett Society and

is an expert on the fascinating history of Frenchay. The Tucketts were a prominent Quaker family in Frenchay from 1800 to 1928.

The society maintains Frenchay Village Museum, near the entrance to Frenchay Hospital, which has a wealth of information and memorabilia about Frenchay. The society is currently very active in securing artefacts for the museum from the former Frenchay Hospital, including items from the former American Chapel in the hospital.

Visit www.frenchaymuseumarchives.co.uk
7.30pm: Upper Meeting Room, Friends Meeting House, Hampton Road, BS6 6JE.
Members £2, Non-members £5 suggested (minimum £2).
Booking not required

March

THE BRISTOL RECORD OFFICE – Home to over 800 years of archives

Allie Dillon – Thursday 17th March

The Bristol Record Office, established in 1924, was the first borough record office in the UK. It looks after the official archives of the City of Bristol, besides collecting and preserving many other records relating to the city and surrounding area for current and future generations to consult. It moved from the Council House to the former B Bond warehouse in 1992. The office is formally recognised by the Lord Chancellor for holding public records, and it acts as a diocesan record office for the Diocese of Bristol.

Major deposited collections include those of J S Fry & Sons (1693 – 1996) and Imperial Tobacco (formerly W D & H O Wills (late 18th century to 20th century). Bristol Record Office, which is part of the city council's Museums, Galleries, Archives department, makes it possible for the public to research family history, or the history of houses, buildings, localities or the city itself. Bristol Record Office also has an excellent collection of around 250 archive films dating back to 1902. Allie's talk will include

old cine material, rare and some never seen before footage of the post-war demolition and redevelopment of some well known Bristol streets, as well as Bristol – British City 1951, a classic, evocative film for the Festival of Britain.

Allie Dillon is Senior Archivist at the Office.

7.30pm: Upper Meeting Room, Friends Meeting House, Hampton Road, BS6 6JE
Members £2, Non-members £5 suggested (minimum £2).
Booking not required.