

# BETTER

The Bristol Civic Society magazine

# BRISTOL

Issue 04 Spring 2014 [bristolcivicsociety.org.uk](http://bristolcivicsociety.org.uk)



An independent force for a better Bristol

Bristol Civic Society, Registered Charity No: 244414



Hello and welcome to the fourth issue of Better Bristol, the Bristol Civic Society magazine which is funded from members' subscriptions. If you are not yet a member and would like to support the Society, to receive Better Bristol twice a year, as well as receive reductions at our regular events, do consider joining us.

A warm welcome to new members Chris, Kate, Molly, Rhona, Richard, Jayne, Gavin, Alfred, Mary, Tim, Jane, Arne and Richard.

I know some of you are already active within the Society which is most encouraging. I hope you will be inspired by past Society members Dorothy Brown, Frank Kelf and Jerry Hicks, who did so much for Bristol's built environment and public spaces. We celebrate their lives inside this issue.

Regular readers will be aware that Better Bristol is in two sections. 'Features' includes articles that may be thought-provoking, sometimes controversial, sometimes amusing, hopefully informative and not always the views of the Society.

The second section includes Society news and information.

Please see the Annual Review and your invitation to the 2014 AGM. I hope numerous members and friends will join us on May 9 at the AGM when Simon Birch will take over as the next Chair of the Society. I will become Vice-Chair for 12 months and look forward to supporting Simon.

My two-year tenure as Chair has been interesting to say the least! I have enjoyed the opportunity to introduce new ideas, collaborating with other groups and creating Better Bristol magazine. I have often been disappointed by planning decisions and felt frustrated by the length of time it takes for positive change to happen - and no doubt this will continue.

The best part though, during the last two years, has been meeting many interesting people who care so passionately about the city that we share.

A big thank you to contributors and everyone who has helped produce this issue of Better Bristol and those who have supported me during the last two years.

*Heather Leeson*  
Chair, Bristol Civic Society



Cycle ride with Bristol Cycle Campaign, March 16, 2014 (Picture: Jeff Lucas)

Commissioning Editor	Heather Leeson
Sub-Editor	Christopher Brown
Designer	Spencer Tilley
Thanks to	Distribution volunteers and Editorial Board
Web	<a href="http://bristolcivicsociety.org.uk">bristolcivicsociety.org.uk</a>
Printed by	Sebright Printers

Cover Photo: Jeff Lucas ,  
Bristol Central Library rear facade

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# NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR A SOCIETY IN GOOD HEART

## *Simon Birch explains his priorities as he takes over as Chair of Bristol Civic Society*



I am delighted to be invited to be the next Chair of Bristol Civic Society. I have lived in Bristol for nearly 30 years and have 40 years' experience of working as a town planner, most recently with the Environment Agency as Head of Planning, with responsibility to stop planning permissions being granted for new houses in locations subject to flooding. Hopefully that work will be continuing.

I find the Society in good heart, following the successful leadership from Heather, and the first-class Better Bristol is a wonderful shop window for it. But there are always opportunities for change and evolution – nothing stands still for long.

I have some initial thoughts on my priorities for the next two years. In addition to the tremendous ongoing work commenting on and challenging development and transport proposals, there are many more opportunities.

- To further develop strong partnerships and collaborations with local groups with similar interests and with professional organisations in the city. There is much to be gained from working together – to oppose an inappropriate development, or a poorly drafted planning policy, or to support something which we all desire but which others might oppose or at least not see as a priority;
- To develop strong links through Civic Voice with other similar societies in other cities. For example, I am pleased that we have just held a Civic Voice meeting here in Bristol – at Trinity Community Arts Centre – at the far end of Old Market and West Street, a building emerging from a Lottery-funded refit, well worth a visit (I am Chair of Trustees there);
- To do more to safeguard and improve public open spaces, especially those where there is an absence of local community support;

- To focus on issues which are regularly debated but which don't seem to progress very much. One good example is “active shop fronts” – what to do at the ground level of new development where there is no retail market demand. We all like to walk past attractive shop windows rather than blank facades, or worse we face a dilemma with reduced retail floor space and little evidence of imagination in providing anything innovative. Is this an opportunity for the Society?
- To make an energetic case for safeguarding buildings at risk and bringing them back into use. I regularly pass by the Carriageworks in Stokes Croft and St Michael's on the Hill Without – both listed, both deteriorating. I believe that the Society should be much more vocal in highlighting the plight of these wonderful buildings, in raising their profile, and in working to secure their regeneration. And how about the derelict building on the corner of Prince Street and Royal Oak Avenue?

I'm looking forward very much to working with all of you, with our members and partners, to tackling issues, and to making a difference in the future of our great city. Do please get in touch if you have ideas or proposals which you think I could assist with or which could help increase the influence of the Society.

Simon Birch

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### JOIN US

Bristol Civic Society - An independent force for a better Bristol is a registered charity.

Individual membership for the first year is £10 if you set up a standing order and £20 annually thereafter.

A large part of our income, which comes from membership subscriptions, is spent on producing this magazine.

Contact Alex Dunn  
Membership Secretary  
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If you are not already a BCS member and would like to support us and have Better Bristol magazine delivered to your address, please consider joining us.

[www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/membership](http://www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/membership)

# CRACKING THE CODE OF A CITY'S CHARACTER

*Richard Guise explains how a special map notation can reveal what lies behind the lines that mark where we live*

**T**he urge to respect, preserve or conserve the character of a valued place or building in the face of unsympathetic development pre-dates the planning system in Britain and was one of the reasons that town and country planning was instituted in 1947.

It is something of a relief to know that the importance of the maintenance of local character and its role in contributing to the achievement of good design is still recognised as an aim of planning policy, even in the streamlined National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of 2012.

The question arises, however: how do we define the character at a local level?

Character is a concept which has not been fully defined in planning legislation nor in the glossary of the NPPF. Nevertheless, it has to be addressed in conservation area character appraisals and in the emerging neighbourhood plans.

The diagram opposite is my attempt to unpack the strands which comprise urban character, some having more emphasis than others, depending on a particular place.

How do we identify these interacting components on the ground?

To answer this question I have turned to the great prophets of urban design; Gordon Cullen, in his book 'Townscape' (and his later publication 'Notation') and Kevin Lynch in 'The Image of the City', both published about 1960.

Cullen and Lynch wrote eloquently about the effects of spaces and places on character, and how it is perceived by people. Importantly, they advocated types of notation which could be applied to maps, to convey the character of places.

This has influenced me throughout my professional career, especially when teaching generations of planning and urban design students in Bristol and elsewhere, in the appraisal of areas.

I have combined and developed Cullen's and Lynch's notation over the years and latterly it has been used in Bristol City Council's 'Our Place' programme, as a contribution to the Neighbourhood Plans which are currently being drawn up.

This notation has been used by a number of community and civic societies, and a variant of this by school groups from year four upwards. The feedback from all these groups has been enthusiastic, in that the technique has helped people to look and

assess their environment and to present their findings in a way which they can share with each other, after the fieldwork.

The notation sheet is used in conjunction with a map; usually an Ordnance Survey map, either 1:1000 or 1:1250 scale, divided up into A4- or A3-sized sheets, to use on clipboards. The layout of the area can be more clearly seen if it can be arranged for the map to have 'figure/ground' shading, where all the buildings are given a grey tone.

The notation sheet is divided into four parts. At the top, it focuses on defining the neighbourhood area as a whole. Inevitably, the area will have 'sub areas' of slightly different character and recognisable entry points to the area.

Most of the notation sheet is taken up by symbols which pinpoint elements which make up the townscape character of the area and are mainly self explanatory. Usually a short briefing at the outset helps to explain some of the concepts. The third section identifies the negative aspects which can be encountered and the fourth prompts the observers to identify the land uses which might be expected to generate neighbourhood or community activity.

The sheet has been designed to be relevant to most neighbourhoods. However, there may be other features which contribute to the distinctiveness of an area which should be added; hence the blank boxes. Surveys work most successfully if they are undertaken in small groups of about three people. In this way, features can be properly assessed, discussed and justified. The notation sheet key acts as a prompt, nudging the teams to keep a look-out as they traverse an area. Cameras and sketchbooks are useful additions in the process.

At the end of the survey, all the maps can be pinned up, providing an instant exhibition of the day's work.

It can provide an effective evidence base for a neighbourhood plan or character appraisal. The exhibition will stimulate considerable discussion, using the language of place appraisal, getting to the fundamentals in answering the question: what is the character of this area?

Richard Guise is an architect and planner running his Bristol-based consultancy specialising in urban design, conservation and training. He was previously urban design programme leader at the University of the West of England.

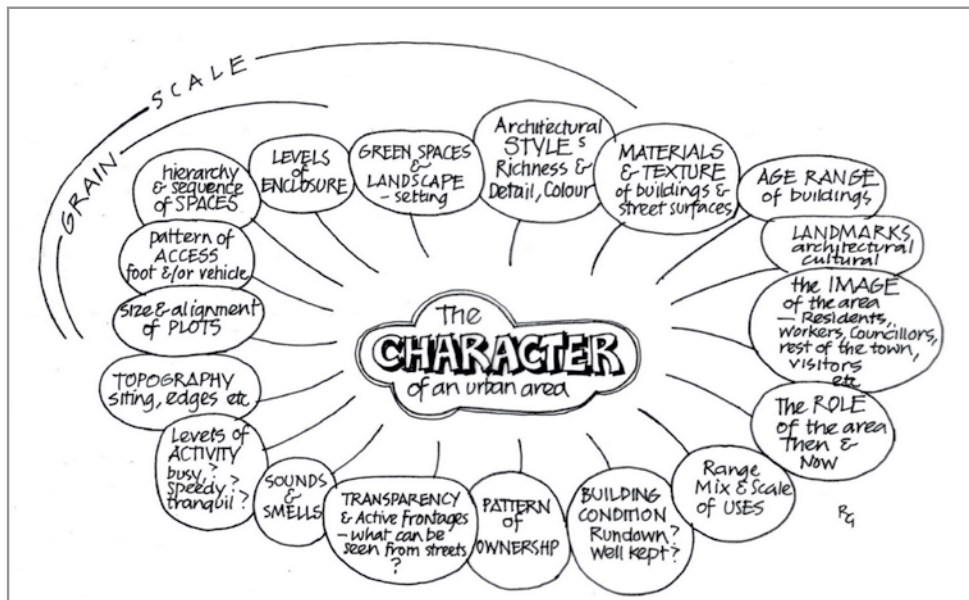
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# NEIGHBOURHOOD MAPPING NOTATION

© Richard Guise

Draw these on a map as appropriate. Use this key as a checklist on your survey. Add other symbols if necessary.

	NEIGHBOURHOOD BOUNDARY		SUB-AREA IN NEIGHBOURHOOD		NEIGHBOURHOOD 'GATEWAY'
	SENSE OF PLACE OR IDENTITY IN SMALL AREA		VIEW TO LANDMARK		LANDMARK, MAJOR OR LOCAL
	SIGNIFICANT GREEN SPACE		VIEW TERMINATED BY BUILDING		FEATURE OF LOCAL INTEREST - eg street furniture
	SIGNIFICANT TREE GROUP		DEFLECTED VIEW		SURFACE TEXTURE eg setts
	DISTINCTIVE LINE OF TREES		GLIMPSE VIEW		ABRUPT CHANGE OF LEVEL (in metres)
	DISTINCTIVE or TYPICAL HEDGE BOUNDARY		EXTENSIVE VIEW		HEIGHT OF BUILDING (No of storeys)
	SIGNIFICANT EDGE eg BETWEEN LAND USES		GOOD SENSE OF STREET ENCLOSURE		POTENTIAL CONNECTION
	IMPORTANT ROOFLINE		'PINCH POINT'		FOOT ROUTE
	TREE/LANDSCAPE SKYLINE		PIVOTAL CORNER		NOISY AREA (ff) QUIET AREA (pp)
	CREST LINE		RHYTHM: ie PATTERN OF REPETITIVE FEATURES		DISTINCTIVE BUILDING LINE
	SLOPE (pointing up) steeper		KEY/DISTINCTIVE BUILDING/S (thick line on front)		KEY VACANT SITE REQUIRING QUALITY DEVELOPMENT
	INTRUSIVE FRONTAGE		LACK OF ENCLOSURE		NEED FOR SEATING
	HAZARD (specify)		POORLY DEFINED AREA - DISORIENTATION		DEAD END
	LOCAL SCHOOL		PARKING AREA		MEETING POINT
	COMMUNITY FACILITY (specify)		AREA OF PLAY (informal/formal)		HERITAGE ASSET (specify)
	LOCAL SHOP GROUP		BUS STOP		



# Harsh lessons at Central Library

*Plans to convert part of city jewel have provoked strong opposition... but little is left to stop school moving in*



Bristol Central Library rear facade (Picture: Jeff Lucas)

**L**ate in 2013, Bristol's Mayor and Cabinet approved proposals to allow the lower levels of Bristol's Central Library to be converted into a primary school. Councillors Rob Telford (Green, Ashley) and Richard Eddy (Conservative, Bishopsworth) called in the decision, saying among other things that there had not been adequate consultation with users of the library.

The council committee responsible for considering the call-in decided, however, that the plan should proceed.

The proposal put forward by the governors of the new Cathedral Primary School (CPS), one of the new "free schools", is to lease the two lower levels of the Central Library building for 125 years. They will be converted to accommodate up to 420 children.

If everything goes according to the CPS plan, the new site will be open for the autumn term of 2015.

The Central Library is a Grade I-listed building, designed by Charles Holden expressly as a library. The lower floors currently contain much of the local libraries' service bookstock and archival material relating to Bristol's history.

The cost of re-homing, cataloguing and shelving this material is estimated at between £500,000 and £600,000, costs which the CPS is supposed to meet. It is not clear exactly where it will all go; Bristol City Council says the "most likely" destination will be B Bond near Cumberland Basin. Nor is it clear how much will end up in skips.

In addition to meeting these costs, the school is supposed to pay the council £60,000 per year in rent.

A report in the Bristol Post on the December decision said that the proposal had "split opinion and prompted months of heated debate in all corners of the city".

The divide in opinion is extremely uneven. The Mayor and many at the council favour the plan because of Bristol's urgent need for more primary school places. The proposal is obviously also backed by the Cathedral sec-

ondary school, to which the CPS is linked, and many parents of children at both schools.

It has also been promoted aggressively by a public relations company employed by both schools.

The overwhelming majority of other people who have any opinion on the matter are opposed.

There are fears over what the conversion will do to one of the most architecturally significant buildings in Bristol. The CPS will be taking pupils from all over Bristol, and from neighbouring areas as well, which will add to traffic congestion since very few pupils will be within walking distance.

It is also said that a building basement with little natural light and no playground is hardly the ideal environment for young children.

At the time of writing, CPS plans face a few remaining hurdles. It will require planning permission, of course, and Listed Building Consent.

There has to be consultation with key stakeholders which, according to the council, will include English Heritage and the Twentieth Century Society.

The key stakeholders apparently do not include library users nor indeed the people of Bristol to whom the library was gifted through the bequest of Vincent Stuckey Lean, who left the money for a new library on his death in 1899.

Library staff who might also be expected to have views on the matter every bit as trenchant as those of the school and its taxpayer-funded public relations people, have not been permitted to make any public comment.

Eugene Byrne  
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# BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY

## Some past achievements

**Post WWII** – Saved Orchard Street, Berkeley Square, Great George Street and Queen Square from the wrecking ball

**1969** – Prevented proposed infill of a large part of the Floating Harbour and a major inner city circuit road with an interchange on Spike Island

**1972** – stopped development of proposed Post Office slab block that would have dwarfed the Old Vic and King Street

**1973** – responded generously to the 'Plant a Tree in '73' campaign

**1990** – instituted the annual Environmental Awards Scheme for newly completed projects

**1992/3** – restoration of the Victoria Rooms Fountains

**2000** – prevented really bad proposals for Canon's Marsh

**2006** – overturned a flawed BCC Statement of Community Involvement at the Examination in Public and secured a reasonable replacement

**2006** – founder member with other community organisations of the Neighbourhood Planning Network

**2012** – objected to the the proposed Bus Rapid Transit route through Harbourside. The following year, Mayor Ferguson scraps the route through Harbourside and over Prince Street Bridge.



Photos: John Trelawny-Ross



Photo: Heather Leeson



Photo: Spencer Tilley

**JOIN BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY TODAY  
and become part of an independent force  
for a BETTER BRISTOL**

Whatever your passion – open spaces, the built environment, transport issues, planning, heritage – or whatever your skill – organising, writing, publicity, campaigning, communications – do get in touch and become an active member of your civic society.

Joining details on page 3





# Bristol's great transport debacle still en route

*James Smith updates on the latest project news from BRT2... AVTM... MetroBus... or whatever it's called by the time you read this*

**T**he greatest waste of transport cash in Bristol's history continues on with a seemingly unstoppable momentum. The Secretary of State accepted the inspector's report from the public inquiry that allowed the scheme to proceed.

The Mayor was only able to divert it away from the Harbourside since a "poison pill" contract signed by the previous Bristol City Council administration would have landed Bristol with the entire bill for costs to date, some £9million, if he had kept his promise to cancel it.

Given the construction and operating cost risks as detailed in the last issue of Better Bristol, this might have been a bargain lost.

A planning application was submitted on December 9, 2013 for the revised route along Cumberland Road. It has been out to consultation; there are more than 240 documents registered, including a long list of objections by local residents and others who have actually thought about the plan. The application was approved on March 19, 2014. It is worth reflecting that the application still claims, among other things, the scheme will "improve safety along the corridor by reducing the use of private cars".

The West of England Partnership's consultant's figures show a projected car journey reduction due to the scheme, by 2031, of 0.2% - with the car still accounting for 90% of journeys. This is about a 500-trip reduction in a total of 180,000 persons per day. The use of the Park and Ride is forecast to be less with the scheme than without it. Will anyone notice the difference? I very much doubt it.

The transport benefits are so nebulous that the latest PR ploy is to sell it as a flood defence and Ashton Bridge protection scheme. Laudable objectives, but not part of an integrated transport strategy.

If any of the scheme's champions, say Councillors Tim Kent or Gary Hopkins, would like to explain how this is good value for £42m and counting, in plain language, I am sure the editor of Better Bristol would be happy to publish it.

Meanwhile, stump up your £14m council tax contribution while we make £85m of cuts in the rest of the budget.

cycleways parallel to main traffic routes. In parts of the city centre, cyclists can share space with pedestrians; but in reality it is often better to clearly indicate through-cycleways; that's what I've done, partly in the knowledge of what the Bristol Cycling Campaign is up to.

## Buses

Buses have priority on a circuit including Victoria Street, Bristol Bridge, Baldwin Street, Lewin's Mead, Bond Street and Temple Gate. This would allow multiple interchange points including the centre, Broadmead, Cabot Circus and Temple Meads station. The exact operational characteristics are up for grabs, but this circuit could in future be converted to tram-train operation connecting into the suburban railway lines, as in Manchester or Croydon, or street trams along the old tram routes, as in Nottingham and Sheffield.

A specific city centre bus service could link in the BRI and the West End. Disabled accessible suburban feeder buses stay out in the suburbs, interchanging at Bedminster, Kingswood, Westbury-on-Trym and Fishponds. We would have interchangeable tickets similar to London's Oystercard.

## Servicing vehicles

These no longer cross the city centre, except licensed users using rising bollards or automatically controlled gates which are open to buses. These are placed on the centre, Baldwin Street, Park Street, Wine Street and perhaps St Philip's Bridge and Trenchard Street. Examples can be seen in Grenada and Cambridge.

Through traffic is confined to the Inner Ring Road of Bond Street / Temple Way / Coronation Road / Brunel Way / Hotwells Road; the poor road capacity passing the Bristol Royal Infirmary is met by making Upper Maudlin Street westbound only, paralleled by Lewin's Mead eastbound only.

Off this circuit, servicing access to all premises is gained via one-way access loops, allowing efficient junctions at the Inner Ring Road, and freeing up carriageway space within the city centre for other purposes.

Cars fit alongside servicing traffic; their excuse for getting into the city centre minimised by the conversion of many central car parks and kerbside space to residents and business only. A workplace parking levy, already in use in Nottingham, generates a cash flow for public transport. Most commuters, as in Delft, now arrive by cycle, train, bus or foot.

None of this is fantastical, it has already been achieved in many other cities.

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# Living, breathing, being Brunel

*Jenny O'Grady, senior projects manager at the ss Great Britain Trust, outlines major plans to bring the heritage of Brunel's life and works together for the first time*



IKBrunelChains / Wikipedia

After her launch in 1843, the ss Great Britain was the largest, fastest and most experimental ship in the world. A three-man building committee, lead by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, innovated and developed a vessel at the cutting edge of Victorian technology.

Testament to her design, the ship had an extraordinarily long working life, which ultimately came to an end off the coast of the Falkland Islands. Following a rescue operation in 1970, she was brought back to Bristol and now resides in the Dry Dock where she was originally built by the Great Western Steamship Company (GWSSC).

Since her homecoming, the ss Great Britain Trust has undertaken the preservation and restoration of Brunel's ship and opened her to the public. The surrounding buildings have been adapted for classrooms, workshops, visitor facilities and a museum; creating an authentic, industrial dockside landscape which attracts about 170,000 visitors a year. Brunel's ss Great Britain has also been voted Bristol's premier attraction on the TripAdvisor website.

The Trust is now embarking on 'Being Brunel', a project exploring the man and his remarkable story. 'Being Brunel' seizes a new opportunity to bring together the heritage of his life and works by making the major collections of Brunel material publically accessible for the first time. Visitors will be able to see diaries, personal possessions, drawings and plans; with highlights including Brunel's 'locked' diary, his cigar case, a gold table service presented by the directors of the Great Western Railway and original plans for the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

In 2013, the Trust surveyed a representative sample of 2,000 Bristol residents on the principles and core proposals for 'Being Brunel' through Bristol City Council's Citizens' Panel Survey. The vast majority (89%) thought that Bristol should do more to celebrate its unique Brunel heritage and 87% thought that the Trust should do more to provide the public with an opportunity to access, understand and enjoy Brunel's legacy and his significance today.

The proposed site for 'Being Brunel' includes the buildings along the starboard side of the ss Great Britain. In particular the Grade II\*-listed 1840 drawing office of the GWSSC; known as the Brunel Drawing Office and a rare example of vernacular dockyard building.

The building has great potential and this project will restore and bring it into public access for the first time. The office will be interpreted as it would have been in 1840, when Brunel was dramatically arguing to the directors of the GWSSC to switch the design of the ss Great Britain from paddle to propeller power.

The redevelopment of the adjacent, semi-derelict, 1940s buildings into a museum gallery will complete the recreation of the historic setting of the Great Western Dockyard around the ship, and also provide the means for disability access into the 'Brunel Drawing Office'.

Historic photographs of the north side of the Great Western Dockyard show just how atmospheric the GWSSC buildings, demolished in 1918, were. The redevelopment will recreate the mass, scale and atmosphere of these historical buildings; creating a sense of dockland ambience and industrial character in keeping with the rest of the dockyard.

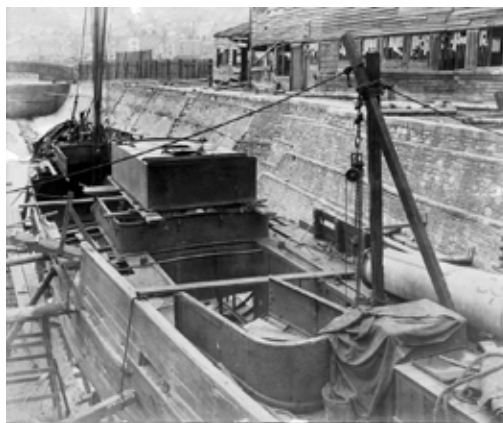
The Trust is in the initial stages of developing the project concept and is approaching funding bodies to seek financial support for the project. At the time of writing, the Trust is awaiting a decision from the Heritage Lottery Fund regarding funding for further development of the project during 2014. The Trust will seek to inform and involve the community at all stages of the project.

#### Further information:

News and updates on the project will be available on the Brunel's ss Great Britain website: [sfgreatbritain.org/about-us/future-plans](http://sfgreatbritain.org/about-us/future-plans)  
Jenny O'Grady  
[jenny@ssgreatbritain.org](mailto:jenny@ssgreatbritain.org)



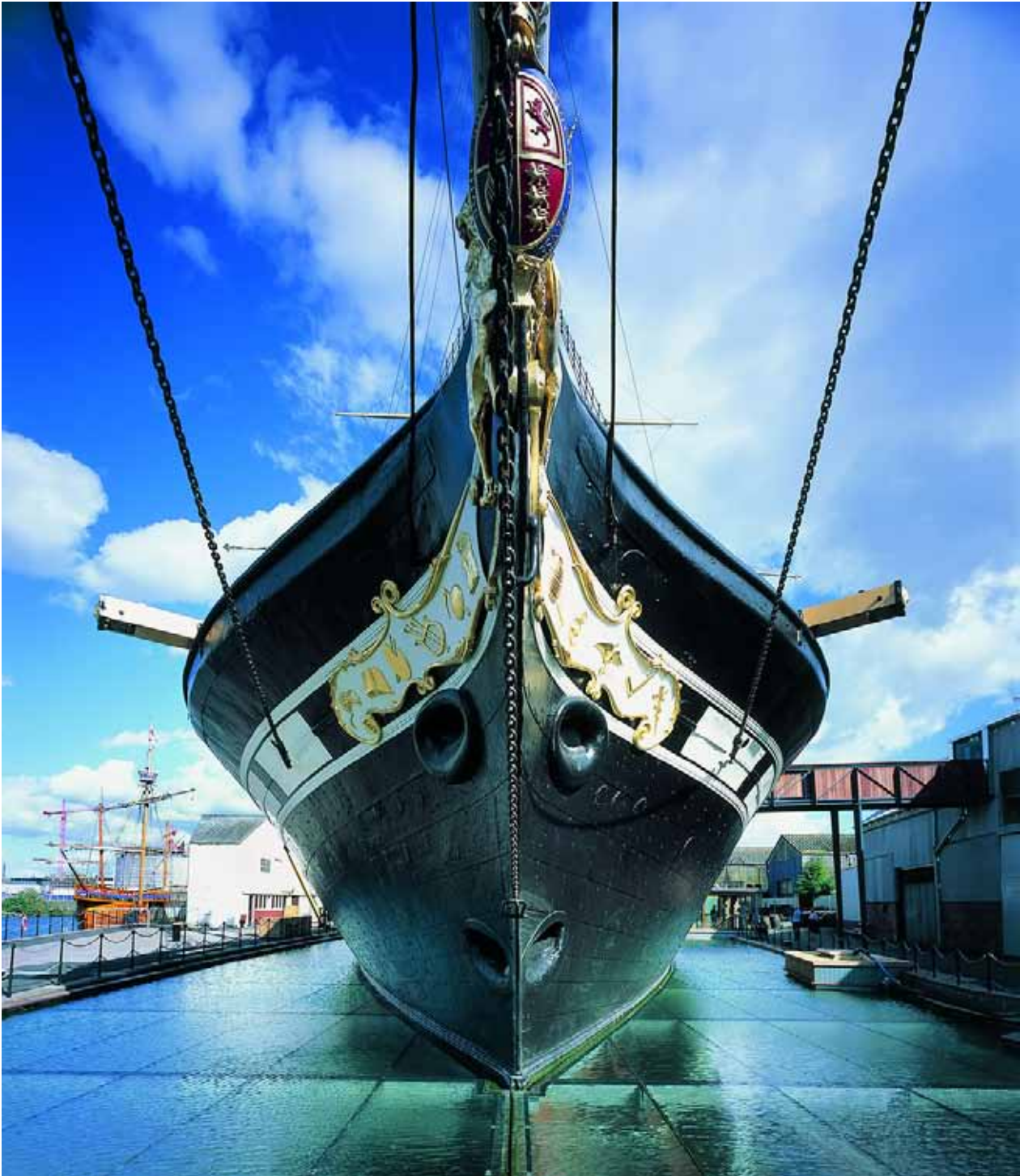
(c. 1891-1895) The Great Western Dockyard (Bristol Museums, BIM.York 5106)



(1903) The north side of the Great Western Dockyard with historic timber clad buildings of c.1840



An artist impression of the Being Brunel from inside the Great Western Dockyard the impact and style of the historic c.1840



Brunel's ss Great Britain (Picture: Mandy Reynolds)



Museum buildings, strongly reflecting 40 buildings



The starboard side of Brunel's ss Great Britain - the proposed site for 'Being Brunel'



Tableware presented to Brunel by the directors of the Great Western Railway in 1845

# GREEN SHOTS

*Bristol is to be European Green Capital in 2015, meaning the world will be looking to us for inspiration and best practice in looking after the environment, and building and sustaining sustainably sustainable sustainability.*

*Naturally the Mayor wants to enhance and showcase Bristol's reputation for creativity and innovation, and we at Better Bristol are keen to jump on the bandwagon..., er, contribute some innovations of our own.*

*We suggest the following creative and innovative eco-initiatives.*

1.

The cat problem



They eat meat, and on the rare occasions they're not sleeping they kill garden birds. Besides, they secretly despise all humans. They need to be removed from the environment and kept in a special compound where they are made to pose for photos and videos of them doing cute or amusing things which we can then sell on the internet.

Rats and mice meanwhile can be trapped humanely and taken to counselling sessions run by hippies and released once they have repented of their verminous ways.

2.

Roof gardens



Rooftops form a major part of the surface area of any city. You can put wind turbines and solar panels on them, but you can also cover them with grasses, plants and shrubs. These can improve a building's insulation and absorb rainwater, reducing the load on the drainage system. Roof planting also filters and absorbs air pollutants.

A true Green Capital will go further. We should have roof planting on the tops of all cars, too. Not obviously a thick enough layer of soil to grow King Edwards; that would be silly. How about a thin layer growing watercress on each car? We could become the watercress capital of the world.

We should maybe also look into each citizen having their own personal roof garden on their heads. Much of the embarrassment of male pattern baldness can be eliminated with watercress.

3.

Public Treadmills



Bicycles are fine because they get people from one place to another, but have you noticed how many joggers are out there? And how many gyms full of people on running machines? This is a ridiculous waste; if people want to run around merely in order to keep fit, we should be harvesting that energy. We should put machines in public places where they can run and generate electricity for the city's use as well. Joggers and gym-rats could probably provide enough power to run most of our schools and hospitals.

Obviously the new machines would be technologically advanced enough to allow each citizen to identify themselves by entering a unique PIN code or swipe card as they start running, so they can be credited for the amount of power they generate. This can then be paid them in council tax reductions, Colston Hall vouchers, or in watercress (see left).

4.

Bristol Pints



We already have the Bristol Pound, and now we should extend the idea to units of measurement. The Bristol Pint would in fact be precisely half a litre, and thus a little smaller than the old Imperial Pint imposed on us by our colonial masters in London. This way, people would consume less alcohol, while simultaneously boosting the profits of local microbrewers. If there are any flaws in this idea I can't think of them.

5.

Close Park Street to traffic



Park Street doesn't have to take cars. They can go round the Anchor Road/Jacob's Wells route, or up Colston Street and along Park Row.

You can pedestrianise the lot and install a ski lift-type device which can take both cyclists and pedestrians to the top.

6.

A Fat Tax



Health professionals have long advocated a tax on junk food in order to tackle the western world's obesity problems. That's much too bureaucratic and anti-business. We should just tax fat people.

7.

Congestion charging



They have it in other places; the only vehicles you see in central London anymore are buses, taxis and the limousines of super-rich foreign crooks and the relatives of overseas despots.

The technology is now so far advanced, though, that a new Bristolian system could be calibrated to charge according to how much we want the vehicle and/or its occupant to come into town.

People working in essential services would attract very low charges to commute in; those in useful manufacturing and knowledge economy sectors would similarly attract low charges. People in marketing, public relations, financial services and other useless enterprises would get clobbered, while those vans and trucks carrying those advertising billboards which get parked in the same place for weeks on end, polluting the visual environment, can pay about £2 million a time. Yes, "cash4cars", that means you.

## Photo credits:

1. Cat (Cat on a cold tin roof - geograph.org.uk - 434975/ Wikipedia)
2. Watercress (Watercress (2) / Wikipedia)
3. Treadmills at gym (Treadmills at gym / Wikipedia)
4. Real Ale (Real Ale 2004-05-09 cropped / Wikipedia)
5. Ski lift (Pictograms-nps-winter-chair lift-ski lift / Wikipedia)
6. Fat Tax (Mmmmmmmmm (106725047) / Wikipedia)
7. Congestion Charging: (Ukraine Dictatorship Laws - Prohibition of 6 car groups(106725047) / Wikipedia)

# A new vision for Castle Park

*Heather Leeson outlines radical plans to create a beautiful link between the Old City and Old Market*

**B**ristol Civic Society's pop-up 'Visions' group hopes to start a meaningful debate on linking the Old City to Old Market by creating a beautiful, green link through Castle Park. This aims to join up several communities in the centre of the city (part of the Primary Pedestrian route 1 in the Public Realm and Movement Framework 2012).

In order to fund the vision there is a concept for a new development on the periphery of the park, primarily along Wine Street, replacing the eyesore buildings around St Mary le Port.

.....  
**The Vision aims to:**

- Recognise Bristol Bridge (circled on plan) as an important heritage destination, part of a key entrance to the park and Old City, by making a bold statement with hard landscaping and sculpture to enhance its appearance and setting;
- Make substantial improvements to Castle Park;
- Remove Old Market roundabout (circled on plan) creating a primary pedestrian route, reinstating the ancient route into the city;
- Give prominence to, and enhance, the historic crossroads (High Street/Wine Street/Corn Street/Broad Street) at the centre of the Old City;
- Produce a considerable income for the city after financing the proposed changes.

.....  
**The improvements to Castle Park would:**

- Increase green areas and squares within the park to about 4.65 hectares, compared to the existing 4.1 hectares, paths excluded;
- Retain most of the existing park trees; where trees need to be removed they will be replaced and substantially more trees added;
- Provide sustainable mixed-use buildings, such as homes, community facilities and commercial units;
- A reconstruction of the 'Dutch House' could be included. All the existing buildings at the west end of the park would be demolished;
- Give importance to St Mary le Port and St Peter's Church; create open vistas of the adjacent St Nicholas Market, All Saints and Christchurch;
- Create a large square to the south of St Peter's. The proposed bridge from Finzel's Reach would connect directly into this square. The existing paved area to the north of St Peter's would be landscaped;
- Open up the Castle Ditch and the medieval bridge over it.

The Vision seeks to spark reaction and debate. What do you think about it? Please do get in touch and let us have your thoughts.

Heather Leeson  
on behalf of the Bristol Civic Society Initiative 2014  
leeson.h@hotmail.co.uk



# Views around Castle Park



## CASTLE PARK IMPROVEMENT PLANS BEGIN NOW

**A** project to make improvements to the green part of Castle Park is starting now. This follows the award of council funding of £550,000 in May 2012. As reported at the time, this award followed a Bristol Civic Society Public Spaces Group (PAG) initiative in 2011.

The funding bid was led by Roger Mortimer for the Society, joining with the Castle Park Users group and Bristol Parks Forum member Fraser Bridgeford.

After some delay, a council design group has started work to produce a costed plan for public consultation and implementation in the coming months. It is expected that

the improvements proposed will involve new and probably relocated children's play facilities, improved interpretation of the castle keep remains and history generally, better 'gateways' to the park and significant repairs to grass areas damaged by major events, together with some improvements to footpath routes.

The Public Spaces Group strongly supports the current outline proposals which seem to make good use of the available budget. The 'vision' (see page 14) would provide potential for further improvements with funding coming from the new building concept.



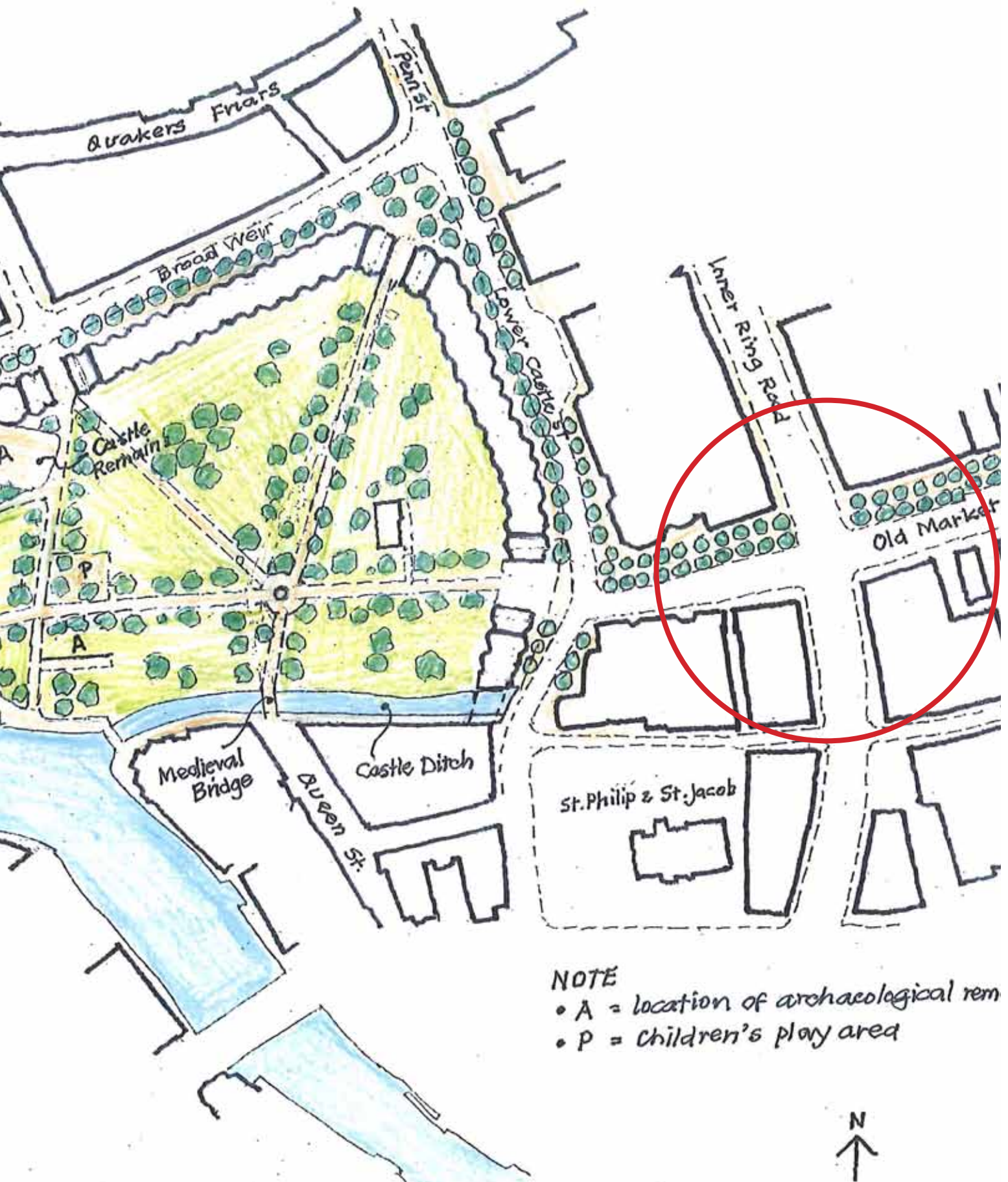


BRISTOL  
**CIVIC**  
SOCIETY

*A beautiful link between the  
Old City and Old Market*







**NOTE**

- A = location of archaeological rem
- P = children's play area



**PROPOSAL for CASTLE PARK : MASTERPLAN (DRAFT)**

100M.

1:2000 at A3

PROPOSED SITE PLAN

CIVIC SOCIETY

19.2.2014

# All change at Temple Meads

*John Frenkel, convenor of the Society's Major Sites Group, outlines three major developments coming soon to Bristol - including the city's famous station*

New business is on its way to Bristol Temple Meads. Network Rail (NR) expects the Government to fund the London line electrification. Meanwhile, the station is full to capacity and NR expects passenger numbers to grow 45% in the next 10 years.

NR wants to clean, repair and modernise the station including the glass roof span. The London service could reopen the Brunel shed as its terminus. The redevelopment could include a new street-level corridor under the tracks from Cattle Market Road to the car park.

Under the station, a new booking hall would lead to the platform access subway. If other owners agree, the expansion could include part of the old goods yard, the Friary and the former Post Office site.

At the same time, Bristol City Council (BCC) is undertaking a road and traffic study to replace the Temple Gate gyratory with a simple signal controlled crossroad. BCC's traffic team is working with First Group to replan the city's bus routes.

All good news as, for years, the Society has campaigned for a proper public transport interchange at Temple Meads.



**The old Gas Works**  
The Purifier House East is a Grade II-listed building. The Linden Homes redevelopment converted the ruined buildings into flats and waterside commercial units.

The Society criticised the continuous flat roofed dormers. Linden offered a choice of designs for the new upper floor. The new plans led to an acceptable solution more sympathetic to the original design. Linden restored the surviving fabric of the former industrial buildings to a high standard. Meanwhile, the Soil Association (SA) bought the other half of the Gas Works site. The Association wishes to develop the unroofed industrial building as its new headquarters and to build a residential block on vacant land. Subject to details of the design, the Society welcomes the change of plan and the proposal. The SA is in discussion with a development partner.



**McArthur's warehouse**  
This impressive building has become a dangerous structure. Linden Homes will make a planning application to build a residential development.

The Society supports redevelopment but shares BCC's wish to preserve employment space for water-related businesses. When planning their residential development, Linden must take into account the noise and smell of the work that the dry dock will create.

## Christine Davis introduces highlights from the Centre's spring and summer programme

**T**he built environment has a major impact on our health and happiness. But how can we create buildings and spaces that promote both physical and mental health and well-being? This question is central to the Architecture Centre's new 'Building Health' programme, to be launched in May with the exhibition Living City.

Exploring the anatomy of a healthy city by using a 'city as body' analogy, the exhibition will build on evidence that there is a direct and reciprocal relationship between healthy buildings, healthy places and healthy people. A keynote debate in July at Arnolfini will address a number of issues raised in the exhibition.

A related season of events and activities will expand on some of the themes explored in the exhibition, including a series of 'urban wanderings'. As part of the Bristol Walking Festival, Alastair Brook will lead a guided walk exploring historic and present issues that affect health.

### BIG Green Week

Celebrating Bristol's BIG Green Week in June, we have teamed up with RIBA South West to organise talks by Sunand Prasad and Michael Pawlyn, as well as a guided walk with guest speakers talking about health and happiness in Bristol.

### Architects' Journal Small Project Prize

In the summer, we welcome back the Architects' Journal Small Project Prize, which will include 25 shortlisted and winning projects from the competition. Expect to see some inspiring projects and a number of fascinating models.

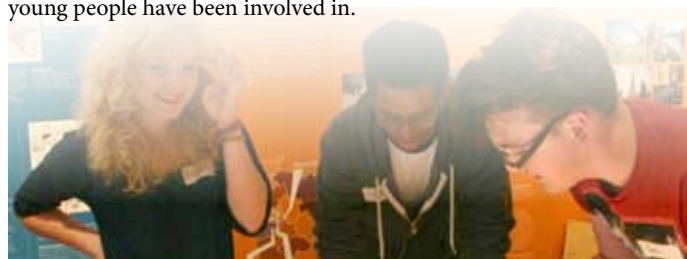
### 150 years of Clifton Suspension Bridge

Later we'll be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Clifton Suspension Bridge with an exhibition focusing on the art and science of bridge design. Check our website for updates on related events including ferry boat tours.

### Inspiring young people

The Architecture Centre is for everyone, and we've been pleased to welcome increasing numbers of family visitors over the past year. If you have small ones to entertain, join us on May 31 for a free creative afternoon, when we will be drawing and making visions for a healthy city.

Outside of the gallery, we've just launched our 'Shape My City' project, giving 14- to 19-year-olds from across the city the opportunity to get involved with city developments. Keep in touch via our website - [www.architecturecentre.co.uk](http://www.architecturecentre.co.uk) - and e-newsletter to find out what the young people have been involved in.



## Programme highlights

### Exhibitions

#### Living City: Anatomy of a Green Capital

7 May – 10 August

Exploring the idea of the 'city as body' and its relation to health and well-being.

#### AJ Small Projects 2014

20 August - 21 September

Contemporary small-scale architecture built on a budget of less than £250,000.

#### Bridges: Art and Science

1 October - 16 November

Celebrating contemporary bridge design and the 150th anniversary of the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

### Events

#### Ask An Architect: Monthly Saturday Surgeries

Bookable 30 min slots for impartial advice from a registered architect. See website for dates.

#### Urban Wandering: Bristol Healthy City

21 May - 6pm, £6/£4

Bristol Walking Festival guided walk exploring connections between health and the built environment

#### Family activity: My Happy, Healthy City

31 May

A free creative afternoon of drawing and making visions for a healthy city.

#### Urban Wandering: A Green Living City

17 June - 6pm, £6/£4

BIG Green Week walk with special guests

#### Sunand Prasad: 'Ready for Retrofit'

St Stephens Church, 18 June - 6pm, £6/£4

Conversational talk with former RIBA President and architect of Merchant's Academy in Hartcliffe. BIG Green Week event in partnership with RIBA.

#### Michael Pawlyn: 'Biomimicry in Architecture'

The Folk House, 20 June - 6pm, £6/£4

Director of Exploration Architecture, Pawlyn was central to the team responsible for the Eden Project. BIG Green Week event in partnership with RIBA.

#### Living City debate

Arnolfini, 9 July - 6pm, price tbc

Panel discussion linked to our Living City exhibition – check website for details.

#### Bristol Doors Open Day

13 September

Annual event revealing some of Bristol's hidden architectural wonders.

Check our website for more events and booking information:  
[www.architecturecentre.co.uk](http://www.architecturecentre.co.uk)

# BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY ANNUAL REVIEW 2013

## CHAIR'S STATEMENT

### Communications

For many years, John Gillett has worked quietly and patiently behind the scenes of the Society as webmaster. John established our website, has kept us up to date with articles and reports of events, started the process of developing the new website and has always been there at meetings, always reliable and good company.

Sadly, last October, due to serious illness, John had to step down from these commitments. Many thanks to John and Sasha for all that you have done for the Society over many years.

The Society has been very fortunate to find two new webmasters: Chris Trelawny-Ross and David Demery, who together with Alice Neill and Alan Morris are working on our new website which should be functioning in the spring.

Last year saw the publication of two Better Bristol magazines; 1,500 copies are delivered to members, local councillors and MPs, all the city's libraries, cafes and other public places and they are available at events.

### Membership Secretary

After many years as Membership Secretary, Maureen Pitman is now standing down and will be replaced by Alex Dunn. Warmest thanks Maureen for all your hard work and support for the Society, we look forward to seeing you as usual at the many events that you attend.

### Honorary Auditor

The society would like to record its thanks to Richard Pendlebury for his many years as Honorary Auditor. As Richard is now standing down, the Society needs to find a new Honorary Auditor. If you know of someone who would like to take on this role, please get in touch with John Payne. [johnpayne997@btinternet.com](mailto:johnpayne997@btinternet.com)

### Events

Another interesting and varied programme of talks, walks and bike rides was delivered.

Melvin Wood from the Environment Agency got the year off to a good start with his talk 'Bristol's Lost Rivers'; this was followed up in November with our Big Event at the Colston Hall - 'High Water in Bristol?'. See our current calendar of events for more on this topical theme.

Thanks to Jeff, Alexandra, Alan, Peter and all who help with events.

### Planning applications

Monitoring and commenting on planning applications is probably the Society's most important role. During 2013, the Planning Applications Group, the Major Sites Group and its transport subgroup have considered all the applications that Bristol City Council receives.

The Society has attended many consultations and pre-application meetings. The groups also monitor trends, for example the conversion of empty offices into student accommodation. Thank you to those members who devote so much time to this work.

My two-year tenure as Chair will finish at the AGM in May when Simon Birch will take on the role. I will become Vice-Chair for 12 months and look forward to supporting Simon. During my time as Chair I have learned so much and hopefully I've had a positive influence; the best part has been meeting many interesting people who care so much about the city that we all share.

Heather Leeson  
Chair, Bristol Civic Society

## INVITATION

Members & friends are cordially invited to:

### BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY 2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday May 9, at 7.30pm  
Redland Parish Church New Hall,  
Redland Green Road, Bristol BS6 7HE

# Nominations wanted for Society's Environmental Awards



## 2013 AT A GLANCE

### January 2013

- Mayor George Ferguson scraps BRT2 through Harbourside and over Prince Street Bridge; he requests officers produce an alternative route.
- "Bristol's Lost Rivers" talk by Melvin Wood, Environment Agency.

### April

- Bristol Civic Society, in collaboration with UWE, runs three planning workshops.

### June

- The Society attends Civic Day launch at the House of Commons.
- Civic Day celebrated with walks and a bike ride.

### July

- Bristol Civic Society Student Award 2013 given to Tom Eddington.

### August

- The Society attends consultations for revised route proposals for BRT2 along Cumberland Road/Redcliffe Hill.

### September

- The Society visits MV Balmoral, donating £100 to their fundraising campaign.

### October

- Bristol Civic Society Environmental Awards held at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.
- The Society attends Civic Voice AGM in Liverpool.

### November

- Secretary of State gives go ahead to original BRT2 proposal.
- 'High Water in Bristol' - our Big Event, Colston Hall.
- The Society participates in 'Relics or Legacies' event at the New Room, Broadmead.

Each year, Bristol Civic Society gives awards for high-quality projects completed during the previous year. We are therefore seeking nominations for projects completed during the calendar year 2013. The closing date is May 31, 2014.

Our Environmental Awards are sponsored by Bristol Water and we are very grateful for their continued support.

The awards are given for interesting new buildings, improvements to old ones and for landscape projects. The specific criteria for selection are:

- A building of architectural quality, with good choice of materials, which tries to reduce its environmental impact, responds to its context, and which creates its own distinctive character and benefits the local community;
- An old building will have improvements, alterations or extensions which benefit the public or local community;
- Landscaping work must respond to context, use good materials, create a distinctive sense of place with benefit to local community or the general public.

In 2013 we received 18 nominations and five were thought deserving winners of an award. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, one of last year's winners, generously hosted the awards ceremony.

Please send nominations to Charles Fox: [cfox868@btinternet.com](mailto:cfox868@btinternet.com)  
Please include site name and address, owner/developer and architect.





Dorothy Brown, above, and in action removing graffiti on Park Row

## *Eva Dorothy Brown*

*January 14, 1927 - October 8, 2013*

**D**orothy Brown, a saviour of historic Bristol, died suddenly in Redland Public Library while on her last campaign at the age of 86. Her indomitable work to save old buildings and improve planning in Bristol and the region was recognised with an MBE in 1988 and an honorary degree from Bristol University in 1991.

She was born on January 14, 1927 and grew up on the family farm on the Scottish-English border, going to school in Berwick-upon-Tweed before breaking the mould - not for the first time - by going to Edinburgh University.

Her daughter Jenny explained that the decision did not go down well with Dorothy's father.

"When mum determined to go to university, her father was not well pleased. After all, what need had a girl of any further education? The woman's role was to marry a farmer, manage the home, the dairy, the poultry and the children," she said.

Dorothy studied Maths, Physics, European History, Fine Art, Philosophy, Moral Philosophy and French, and gained an MA in 1949, as well as a husband, Tom, whom she married in 1950.

"They purchased a collapsible canoe, which they daubed 'Ethelred the Unready', and on their honeymoon, paddled down the Rhine.

"However the force of the wash from the large barges forced them to abandon life on the river, and they hitchhiked on through Austria and camped along the Italian Riviera."

The growing family came to Bristol in 1954 and they bought for £1,500 a large Regency house in Buckingham Vale, Clifton.

Dorothy loved her adopted city, but through the 1960s she became increasingly alarmed at how planning policy for the city was being dictated by Highway Engineers.

"She felt in the late 1960s that it was a world that we were sleep-walking into. Thus began more than 40 years of campaigning by an

impassioned amateur and activist," said Jenny

Dorothy was delighted to find kindred spirits in the Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society, founded in 1968. In 1970, she became involved in the campaign to protect the Avon Gorge from the Grand Spa Hotel development. And a year later, Dorothy founded the Bristol Visual and Environmental Group primarily to combat the 1966 Development Plan.

"She campaigned for developers and planners to appreciate the particular beauty and riches of the city, and 'consult the genius of the place'."

Her preservation trust directly saved and restored key historic houses in Bristol and Frome. Two houses in St Michael's Hill, several in and around Old Market, the Chesnuts in Brislington, a merchant's house and coach house in Frome. And in 1984, she bought for her trust Acton Court in Iron Acton, now regarded as one of the most important Tudor buildings in Britain.

"Over the past months, Warren Marsh has been kind enough to help sort out mum's prodigious correspondence and agitprop of the last 40 years, before it goes to the City Archivist. It is quite a 'tour de force'.

"She would typically dash off several letters before breakfast, sitting in her campaign headquarters at the kitchen table. In the early days, she tapped away on an old Corona typewriter, surrounded by a sea of papers, some smeared in her favourite marmalade!"

Poignantly, Dorothy collapsed while photocopying an historic map of the city she loved in the library.

"If she is looking down on us now, it will be with a deep interest, amusement and sympathy."

Mariateressa Bucciante  
[heritage@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:heritage@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk)



Frank Kelf planting a tree (Picture: Peter Floyd)

## BARKING UP THE RIGHT TREE

*Peter Floyd remembers the work of Frank Kelf, who helped to get 2,000 trees planted along the city's streets*

In 1972 all our great elms began to die. Bristol Civic Society had been looking at ways in which it might contribute more to improving Bristol's environment. Following the national campaign to "Plant a tree in '73", it decided to promote a tree planting scheme focussed on street trees, since few had been planted in the middle of the city since before World War II.

At that time, I was an urban designer with Bristol City Council (BCC) Planning Department and New Zealander Frank Kelf was a planner working with me in the department. On behalf of the Society we were able to sell a tree package to BCC.

The trees would be planted in the city centre and main radial routes for maximum impact; they would be as large as possible to avoid easy vandalism, making them quite expensive. If the public could be persuaded to buy them, BCC would agree to obtain, plant and maintain the trees. This was useful to the council because the acceptance of funds from the public helped to protect them from the cuts they regularly suffered as a "non essential" service.

Suitable sites for planting alongside the public highway are never easy to find, needing to avoid underground services, traffic lights, access to nearby buildings and a range of other potential objections.

This is where Frank came in. He set about persuading the planning department and his sceptical colleagues in Highways to accept street trees. He was astonishingly successful, so much so that I have always wondered how he did it. But he was a charming and persuasive colleague with a soft Antipodean accent, so maybe that was the answer. He was certainly the man to have on our side!

At the same time, the Society launched its campaign called "Trees for Bristol's Streets" to obtain the money to buy the trees. Volunteers

from the Society collected from the public, while flower bulbs were provided by BCC and sold to the public who were encouraged to plant them on suitable verges. It was a great success.

Where businesses were near planting sites, we approached them to sponsor individual trees with some spectacular results. As a result of a BCC idea publicised through a "20 Ideas for Bristol" exhibition, it was decided to ask businesses on Narrow Quay if they would sponsor a new avenue of plane trees along its entire length. The trees were planted and the quay was transformed from a derelict industrial site into a popular waterside walk.



Trees on Narrow Quay 2014

**As a result of the BCS campaign about 2,000 semi mature trees between 4 and 5m tall were eventually planted. It was perhaps the most successful and attractive project with which I have ever been associated.**

Today our street trees are again under attack from diseases, causing some of them to be removed, while few are being planted. So I sincerely hope that those behind the initiatives now being taken to replace and extend street tree planting will keep up the pressure and be successful.

*This article is dedicated to the memory of Frank Kelf:  
February 5, 1925 – August 28, 2013*

Peter Floyd  
pj.floyd@btinternet.com



# Jerry (Gerald Anthony William) Hicks

June 12, 1927 – February 1, 2014



*Bristol Civic Society offers its tribute to a true hero for the betterment of Bristol in the form of a letter to the Hicks family*

## Dear Jerry and Anne

It is Bristol's great good fortune to have had the two of you take centre stage in our city, as we have known it, for more than 40 years.

You came to our notice when many of us were young and impressionable and you, half a generation older, preached messages of defiance against the powers which seemed intent on despoiling the city. Others have come to know and admire you in more recent years.

Your message thrilled us then. You confirmed our naive youthful zeal that, together, we really could change things for the better, given determination.

We took our shoes off at the threshold of your house, Goldrush, sat cross-legged on your floor, cast admiring eyes at your teenage daughter Kim, ate Anne's delicious sandwiches and were inspired as acolytes by your vision.

A vision of the potential of the docks, the inspirational place Bristol might be if the dominance of the car were reined in, how the city's wonderfully varied architecture should be prized not demolished, to treasure the mighty Avon Gorge when under threat of Philistine development, to stand firm against invasion of the city by high-rise development and so on.

Much of the city of Bristol which we know and love now owes a debt to you. The years passed and your powerful voice

of reason was often the first to be heard at every public meeting convened to discuss council planning, highways and docks policy, swimming, sports, parks and recreation. There was little that happened without your wise intervention. When nought came of your effort, the opposition forces could be sure that this would not be the end of the matter.

You wrote copiously, in fine handwriting, on each issue that disturbed you. You represented what many of us felt but perhaps didn't have the words or the forcefulness to articulate as clearly as you.

You convened, chaired and followed through on so many issues, always for the betterment of Bristol, never self-seeking, fine of thought and purpose, and never clumsy.

To know and be known by you is to be the member of a most illustrious club whose wealth is measured in love for Bristol. Our city has never had a better ally. If Mayor George Ferguson comes anywhere near, we'll be delighted – as you would be for sure.

Jerry, you were your own man, centre stage in many of our minds yet, where wider city policy-making was at stake, more often in the wings prompting than taking the lead roles. Nudging with your sense of reason, years ahead of your time, someone whose views will be referred to as "that's just what Jerry used to say" when, perhaps, something is eventually proposed which had its origins in

your promotion.

You may not have buildings or streets named after you, however deserved. You would shy from such pomp and aggrandisement.

Your funeral service at The Lord Mayor's Chapel was masterminded by your daughter Kim and the Hicks tribe most memorably. Kim and your grandchildren told of your life's background in fascinating detail with Anne admirably composed and gracious all the while.

Jerry, at your passing, some will be extolling your 30 years as a teacher of fine art, your excellence as a painter, your skill and advocacy as judo expert, and so many other attributes.

For Bristol Civic Society, you will remain in our minds as a hero for the betterment of Bristol, undeterred and strong against the most powerful of wrecking forces. A rare man indeed. We wonder who can possibly fill the gap you have left.

Anne, we send you our tender thoughts and admiration. Your man will be hugely missed; we look forward to many years of seeing you and your Hicks tribe continuing to grace the Bristol stage.

Love from Bristol Civic Society.  
(Kindly expressed by Keith Hallett)

Anyone who would like a record of daughter Kim's eulogy, also that of Jerry's grandsons, please visit the new BCS website: [www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk)

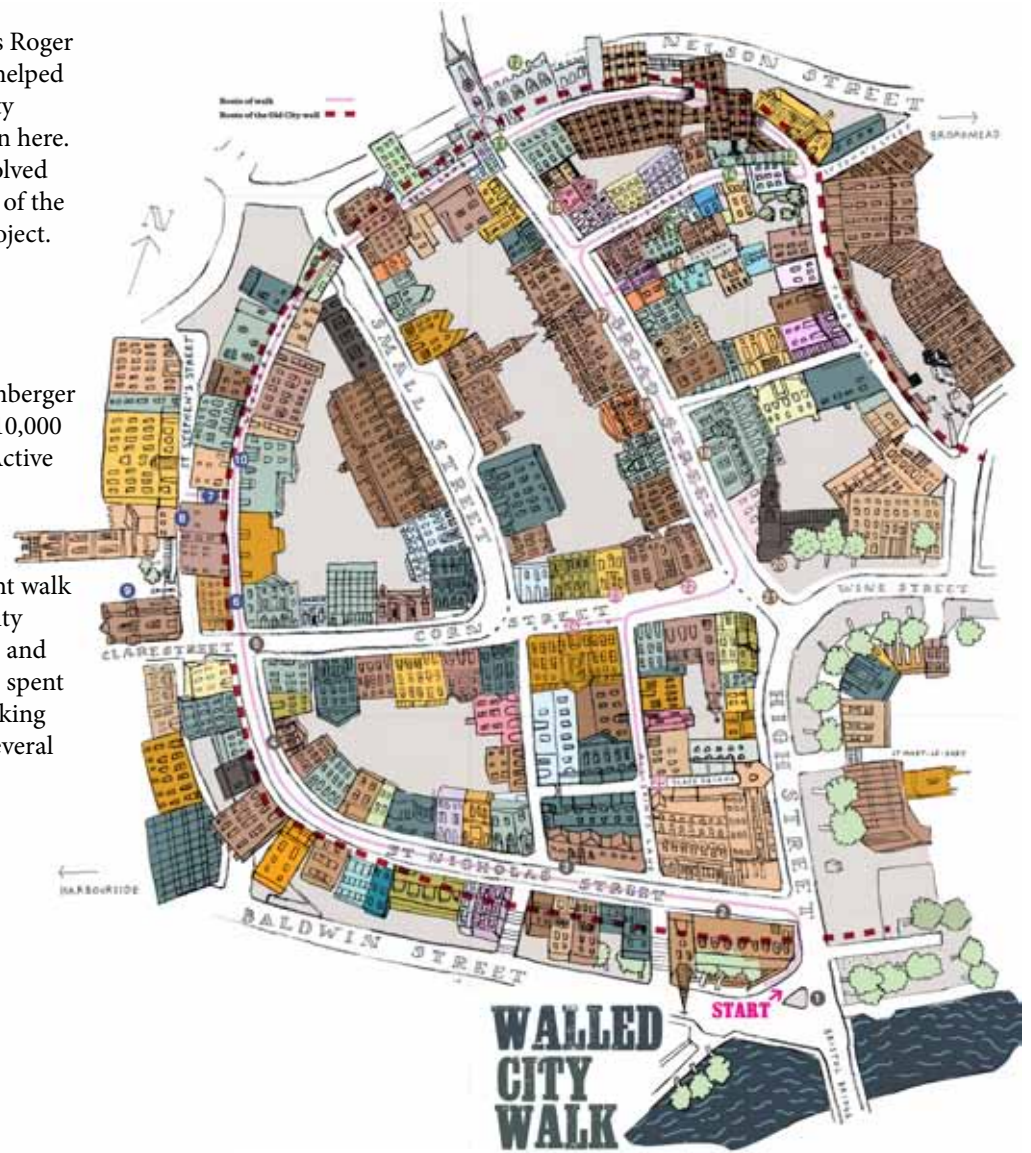


# PUBLIC SPACES AND HERITAGE GROUP

**B**ristol Civic Society members Roger Mortimer and Alan Morris helped in producing the Walled City Walk leaflet, a detail is shown here. Roger drafted the words and was involved at each stage of design. Alan was part of the steering group that advised on the project.

BCS, together with Centrespace and St Stephen's Church were part of the steering group, chaired by Eva Stutzenberger of Destination Bristol, that secured £10,000 funding from Bristol City Council's Active Travel Fund, to produce the leaflet.

**The Heritage Group** organised a night walk on January 16, following the walled city route. The group of a dozen members and friends, led by Mariateresa Bucciante, spent two enjoyable hours (in the rain!) making observations. Please note, there are several very good pubs along the route!



## NEW ARRIVALS AT THE BEARPIT



**O**ne of the initiatives of the Bearpit Improvement Group, on which BCS is represented, is a heritage project. The project ran during the autumn of 2013, led by Peter Insole and Ruth Myers, working with local schoolchildren and college students and other members of the community. They gathered information and designs which will form the material for the panels which will appear on one of the ramps leading into the Bearpit.

The theme of the panels will be new arrivals, which is appropriate to the St James Barton roundabout where the Bearpit is found. It is both the confluence of arrivals to Bristol by road and bus, and near to newly-arrived communities of

people, such as the Windrush community and more recent arrivals from Eastern Europe and Somalia.

Contributors and members of the project team met at the end of January in St James's Priory to view some early drafts of the panel design. Peter and Ruth will introduce later drafts of the panels at the Society's AGM in May, and the final panels will be put up in the summer of 2014, ahead of a launch event in September.

Alan Morris  
Chair of Bearpit Improvement Group



# PLANNING APPLICATIONS GROUP REVIEW 2013/14

*A review of the group and its campaign against objectionable signage and adverts*

**P**AG meets every three weeks and considers more than 200 planning applications each year. Rather than summarising the year's work, six brief case studies are described below.

**99 Queens Road, Clifton BS8** Even though this building is not listed, its Art Deco façade, its decorative internal features and the attractiveness of its inlaid forecourt have long been recognised by Bristol Civic Society, local amenity groups and the Conservation Advisory Panel. In 1972, the Society described it as a handsome and perfect example of its period. There have been successive applications to demolish differing amounts of the building and intensify the use of the site with a mixture of residential and commercial premises. The Society has successfully joined with other groups to resist these applications in order to protect and maintain the quality of the existing building and its forecourt, to protect the setting of the neighbouring Listed Building and to ensure that the character of the Conservation Area in which it is located is not harmed. At the time of writing, a decision was pending on the most recent application.

**4 – 6 Zetland Road, BS6** The Society considers numerous applications to increase residential density. Many of these are for conversions to existing residential premises and some, like this application, relate to the space above shops and other commercial uses. The Society supports increased residential density where it can be successfully accommodated in terms of the impact on neighbours of bikes, bins, parking and other disturbance and also if the proposed accommodation would offer a good quality of life to its residents. Our support recognises the positive contribution increased density can make to city development by reducing the need to travel while boosting public transport availability when you do need to go somewhere, increasing the demand for and viability of local services and securing the more efficient use of land. We oppose more intensive living conditions where the site is not big enough to take it and the result would be harmful to neighbours and future residents. PAG considered that this application in Zetland Road in the upper floors of the recently closed Cameron Lee's furniture store merited support. It would contribute to the character and liveliness of this part of Zetland Road, offer a good quality of accommodation and could be absorbed without significant harm to neighbouring properties. We are awaiting the council's decision.

**St. Luke's Hall, Bedminster, BS3** This is an interesting proposal to change the use of St Luke's Hall from employment activities to residential. It involves retaining important external features of this unlisted Victorian building of merit, originally built as a soup kitchen and ragged school, in the Bedminster Conservation Area, and constructing a contemporary extension. PAG's initial response was that the residential element was too intensive for the site. We also had some concerns about the loss of employment space. However, we met the applicant after he had made a number of alterations to the proposal. While the loss of the employment space was regrettable, PAG recognised that there was little prospect of achieving a commercial letting. The applicant also reduced the residential content by one unit and increased parking provision. In view of the amendments to the proposal and the contribution that

the retention of the important two facades of this historic building would make to the character of the Bedminster Conservation Area, PAG withdrew its objections. The revised application was also supported by the local BS3 Group. Planning permission for the application has subsequently been granted.

**SIGNAGE** We have objected to several proposed signs, usually because they would be too large or too bright.

**Lloyds Bank** proposed some crassly bright, jarring signage for their branches in sensitive parts of the city. These were often in rather handsome buildings. Around half the applications were refused, which is better than nothing.



Illuminated signage, Lloyds Bank, Milsom Street, Bath

**Bristol Hotel (formerly Jury's)** in Prince Street wanted to put up a large internally-illuminated sign on their roof. This would be pure advertising in a sensitive area overlooking the Floating Harbour. We objected, and were supported by the planners, and it was refused.

PAG mounted campaigns against two **Digital LED advertising screens** – one at the corner of the Galleries, and another by Bath Road Bridge, Temple Meads. These screens can have a grossly harmful effect, especially at night. We had good support from a local residents group, and a useful piece on BBC Radio Bristol. The applications were refused.

Peter Brown  
peterbrown2001@gmail.com

Our meetings are informal and relaxed, and normally followed by a chat in a nearby hostelry. If you would like to come along to a meeting, please contact  
John Payne  
johnpayne997@btinternet.com  
0117 924 0634

# MAJOR SITES GROUP

## Convenor John Frenkel reports on the highlights from 2013

The Major Sites Group (MSG) takes part in the public consultation stage before planning applications for major schemes (the 'pre-app'). This is one of Bristol Civic Society's principal roles.

The pre-app ensures that interested parties discuss major developments before the planning application, by which time the developer will have spent too much time and money to change anything. These are last year's edited highlights.



### Former St Mary's Hospital – Triangle South

The developer was Student Castle who restored and converted the Pro-Cathedral superbly. The Society supported the use as student accommodation but wanted to retain the former hospital's Italianate elevation, which the Conservation Area Character Appraisal described as an 'unlisted building of merit'.

Bristol City Council (BCC) refused planning permission because the scheme overdeveloped the site. The developer has appealed and has said that it will make another planning application for a different scheme.



### West Gate House, Colston Avenue

West Gate House will soon be Electricity House once again when it reopens as a block of flats. The Society was pleased when the developer agreed to change the design for the upper floors to reproduce the building's streamlined, ocean liner aesthetic.

### 3-8 Redcliffe Parade West

It was good to support the restoration and return to residential use of these grand houses, together with the demolition of a nondescript office block behind them in Barossa Place to build a row of houses.



### Sylvia Crowe landscape

The Society supported an application to English Heritage to register the Sylvia Crowe landscape around the Brunel Way elevated roads as a national park. Unfortunately, the inspector did not support the application.

### Westmoreland House

We have been here before but the prospects of redevelopment of this chronic Stokes Croft eyesore look brighter. BCC has appointed Knightstone Housing Association to be its development partner and has resolved (again) to proceed with a compulsory purchase order. The future of Godwin's Carriageworks remains unclear until Knightstone publish their plans.



### Theatre Royal

The theatre trustees have a planning permission to make huge changes to the theatre. All the 1970s buildings will go to make way for a new studio theatre, rehearsal space, offices, and a commercially viable bar and restaurant in the Cooper's Hall and the space in front of the theatre. The new entrance from King Street will be through a new foyer. The Society supported the planning application.



### New Bridewell - former juvenile and domestic courts

The Society supported the demolition of these unattractive buildings to construct student accommodation but opposed the massive replacement building. It will be three floors taller than BCC's own planning advice. The new building will overbear its Grade II-listed neighbours. The decision will perpetuate the horrible Rupert Street concrete canyon. A once in a lifetime opportunity to begin to undo a planning disaster is lost.

### St Catherine's Place, Bedminster

Although the Society supports redevelopment of this former industrial land for mixed uses, it objects to a scheme to build a 16-floor landmark tower. Bristol's planning policy discourages tall buildings outside the city centre unless they are of 'exceptional quality', which this tower is not. Local councillors object to the accommodation mix, which would load the market with another large housing project of small flats. Regeneration implies more than economic regeneration, it also implies social regeneration.

For more information about the Major Sites Group, contact  
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You can sign up to the society's e-bulletin at  
www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Past copies of the e-bulletin and the  
magazine are also available to download.

**Bristol Civic Society, Registered Charity No: 244414.**

BETTER BRISTOL magazine  
mageditor@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

The opinions expressed in this magazine do not  
necessarily represent those of Bristol Civic Society

## Sunday, April 27, 10am WALK

Part of Bristol Walking Festival.  
An entertaining walk led by curator  
Tessa Fitzjohn, exploring Bristol's  
history as revealed by contemporary  
art across the city.

Meet: Arnolfini, Harbourside at 10am.  
Finish in St Paul's. 3 hours, 3 miles.

To book a place, phone  
07535 074296 or email  
walks@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

## Thursday, May 1, 10.30am and Thursday, May 15, 10.30am - Old City of Bristol WALK

Circular walk, led by Ed Hall.  
Part of Bristol Walking Festival.

Meet: Merchant Navy War Memorial,  
Welsh Back, near 'The Glassboat'.

To book a place, phone  
Ed Hall: 07805 007304  
Members £2  
non-members £5

## Thursday, May 1, 7.30pm St James Priory: The Restoration of a Norman Monastery

*with Corinne Fitzpatrick  
and Rob Harding*

The Priory Church of St James is a  
Grade I-listed building, the oldest  
church in Bristol, founded in 1129 as  
a Benedictine Priory by Robert Earl  
of Gloucester. A two-year, £4million  
restoration was completed in 2011.

sustainable use for the building,  
assembling the funding and the  
delivery of the final project.

Corinne Fitzpatrick was the project  
architect for St James Priory  
Restoration Project. She will show  
how a rigorous philosophical  
approach should inform the  
decision-making process in  
conservation architecture. Corinne  
is an Associate at Ferguson Mann  
Architects.

Rob Harding, a retired Chartered  
Building Surveyor, formerly worked  
for English Heritage. He project  
managed the work to St James Priory  
on a voluntary basis. Rob will outline  
the history of St James Priory up to  
its post-World War II decline.  
He will speak about finding a new

St James Priory, Whitson Street,  
Bristol, BS1 3NZ. There is some  
parking space in the Priory Yard,  
then nearest car park is Rupert Street  
multi-storey.  
Near to bus stops.  
Members £2 (voluntary);  
non-members £6.  
No booking required

## Friday, May 9, 7.30pm Annual General Meeting followed by Wine and Light Buffet

After the main business of the AGM,  
Peter Insole, Bristol City Council  
Archaeological Officer, will speak

about the Bearpit heritage project  
and show the designs for the  
proposed murals for the  
Bearpit ramps.

Redland Parish Church New Hall,  
Redland Green Road, Bristol  
BS6 7HE.

## Sunday, May 18, 10am BIKE RIDE

A guided ride with Peter Weeks and  
Bristol Cycling Campaign  
looking at some of Bristol's

buildings and places that have won a  
BCS Environmental Award. Easy pace,  
cafe stop.

Meet: Arnolfini, Harbourside, 10am.  
Free, no booking required.

Wednesday, June 18, 7.30pm

## BCS BIG GREEN WEEK EVENT The Trees of Bristol



*A Beautiful Solution to Some Ugly Problems,  
with Tony D'Arpino, Frank Drake and Clive Stevens*

Bristol is full of trees, some planted by former benefactors, some are remnants of fine gardens now vanished, others naturally seeded. Bristolians live cheek-by-bark with their daily forest, so familiarly that it can easily pass unnoticed.

Our speakers will raise your consciousness of the poetic and aesthetic aspects of Bristol's trees and then show how improving our urban tree canopy could also make a significant contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change and improve public health. Finally, they will show how you can make a difference in an arboreal vision for the future.

Tony D'Arpino is a San Francisco poet and writer now living in Bristol. He was a forest explorer from early youth.

His first book of poetry was entitled *The Tree Worshipper*; other books include *Seven Dials* and *Floating Harbour*; his poem 'Pero's Bridge' appears in the current anthology *The Echoing Gallery: Bristol Poets and Art In The City* (Redcliffe Press).

Clive Stevens is chair of Bristol's Tree Forum, a volunteer organisation, dedicated to improving our urban tree canopy to mitigate the effects of climate change and to improve public health. Clive, a businessman, angel investor and a part-time lecturer at Bath University's Engineering Department also reviews every planning application in Bristol and comments if it affects trees.

Frank Drake started Bristol's cinema club, 'The Filmpit'; he is official photographer for WOMAD in 'Sounds of Music' (Tangent Books); he collaborated on 'Advanced Portrait Photography' (Blandford Press); the first graffiti exhibition, Arnolfini Gallery and 'The Pyramid' sculpture to be erected in Belfast in 2015.

Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE.  
Non-members £5; members £2. No booking required

Saturday, June 21, 2pm

## CIVIC DAY EVENT:

*Introduction to the HighWaterLine Project - Using art, storytelling and history to ignite local solutions to flooding, with Isobel Tarr*

Isobel Tarr, a Bristol resident, is working with international artists and community organisers in order to involve residents of Bristol's flood-risk zones in a community-led public art project. This will take place in July. In this Civic Day introduction to the July event, Isobel will tell us of the solutions to flooding and resilience which the HighWaterLine project has uncovered through listening to a range of communities and examining oral histories.



A 30-minute interactive walk around some of the central Bristol flood risk zones will follow. If you are interested in being involved in this project between now and July, Isobel would love to hear from you. You can contact her at [isobel@invisible dust.com](mailto:isobel@invisible dust.com)

Meet: YHA Conference Room, YHA, 14 Narrow Quay, Bristol BS1. Free, open to all, no booking required.

Saturday, June 28, 6pm

## PUB WALK

Architecturally themed walk led by Peter Weeks looking at city centre planning and history of buildings, assessing pubs along the way! 3 hours, 2 miles.

To book a place, phone 07535 074296 or email [walks@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:walks@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk)  
Members £2, non members £5.

Wednesday, July 9, 7.30pm

## The Need for Housing

*with Paul Smith*

Paul Smith has worked in the social housing sector for 25 years; he is currently Head of Enterprise and Intelligence at Aster Group. He will set out the case for increased housing development including social and affordable housing. Potential provocative issues will include development on the

green belt, urban cramming, new towns, mixed developments and the decline of the high street. Paul likes a debate and there will be plenty of time for discussion and challenge.

Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE.  
Non-members £5; members £2 (voluntary).  
No booking required.

**Thursday, August 7, 7pm**

### VISIT to Knowle West Media Centre

KWMC is an arts organisation and charity that enables individuals and communities in Bristol to get involved in community activism, education, employment and local decision making by using digital technologies and the arts. Activities range from after-school groups, energy-saving projects, to music workshops and art exhibitions. Find out about KWMC's beginnings and how the organisation has developed into a creative hub with a local

focus and international significance. Tour the beautiful building and explore its media facilities and environmental features. Knowle West Media Centre, Leinster Avenue, Bristol BS4 1NL. Members and non-members £5 (donated to the centre). To book email : [wvents@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:wvents@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk) or phone 0117 962 1801

**Sunday, August 17, 9.30am**

### BIKE RIDE

A ride to three churches of the Churches Conservation Trust in Somerset led by Alan Morris and Bristol Cycling Campaign. All day ride, medium pace.

Meet: 9.15am for 9.30am start at Create Centre car park. Free, no booking required.

**Tuesday, September 2, 7pm**

### Being Brunel

**- New Project from the ss Great Britain Trust**

*with Matthew Tanner MBE, Jenny O'Grady and Eugene Byrne*

The ss Great Britain Trust is embarking on an exciting new project exploring the man, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, and his remarkable story. Matthew Tanner MBE, Director & Chief Executive, and Jenny O'Grady, Project Manager, will introduce the new project, 'Being Brunel', and provide detail on the proposals.

Before this though, Eugene Byrne, author, journalist and blogger, will get us underway with a few yarns, some true, some not, that got told about IKB in his lifetime and afterwards. Eugene has just completed a short biography of Brunel in the Pocket Giants series published by The History Press.

The Architecture Centre, 16 Narrow Quay, BS1 4QA. Non-members £5; members £2 (voluntary). Booking not required, but please note capacity is limited, so please arrive early to ensure admission.



**Sunday, September 12, 11am**

**Kingsdown's Vertical Suburb**

### WALK

Mary Wright will guide the walk, tracing the history of this Georgian suburb through its buildings, including garden houses, artisan cottages and the late 18th-century formal terraces.

Also a visit to the site of Prior's Hill Fort, a romantic tale of Mother Pugsley and the story of a fatal duel are included.

To book a place, phone 07535 074296 or email [walks@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:walks@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk) Members £2; non-members £5.

**Wednesday October 8, 7.30pm**

### Air Quality in Bristol - Time to Stop Breathing?

*with Andrew Edwards and Dr Angela Raffle*

Andrew Edwards will tell us about the current air quality monitoring network that Bristol City Council operates and its results. He will outline the main issues faced in meeting EU air quality standards along with the reasons why we continue to breach these limits. Angela Raffle will talk about the health and policy implications of the current air quality levels in the city and offer some views about what should be done.

Andrew Edwards worked for six years as an Independent Air Quality Consultant and for the past four years for Bristol City Council.

Dr Angela Raffle is a consultant in Public Health who has worked in Bristol since 1985. Angela is also involved in Sustainable Redland and Transition Bristol.

Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE. Members £2, non-members £5. No booking required.