

## **Minutes of Bear Flat Association AGM Friday 23rd October 2020**

**Introduction:** Nick Francis welcomed all attendees to the Zoom meeting. Apologies were received from Bron & Mike Douglas, Catherine Williams, Mark Shelford and Sally Pollitzer.

### **Item 1. Minutes of AGM held on Friday 25th October 2019**

The minutes were accepted and there were no matters arising

### **Item 2. Chair's report (Nick Francis)**

Not only are we basking in the knowledge that in the opinion of the Sunday Times (and who would argue with that?) we live in the second-best place in the UK, but we have achieved an astonishing amount during period since the last AGM, in spite of the serious constraints placed upon us all by the pandemic. People generally, and your Committee in particular, have reacted in an extraordinary way and become even more of a community as a result. Who can say how much the Thursday evening "clap for the NHS" also contributed to a greater feeling of togetherness? Membership of the BFA has increased from 260 last year to 378 this. Helen Cooke has been a great Membership Secretary, but wishes to stand down at this AGM. Our thanks to her for this service.

As you will see from the agenda, there are a number of specific items to which members of the Committee will speak, but I shall want to deal with a number of other issues with which we have been associated or initiated, and might call upon those members particularly concerned to speak in more detail about them, too.

Probably the most obvious contribution the BFA has made to local life has been the setting-up of our Covid-19 Helpline – the first in Bath. The 130 people who volunteered to be called to do non-medical assistance for shopping, other errands and telephone company, have not been often called upon so far. We have been lucky. Their offer of help, though, is hugely appreciated. The line remains open.

News and information has continued to be circulated via the Bear Flat Flyer, in a slightly enlarged form. It is not supposed to be an advertising medium for commercial businesses, but nevertheless we have been active in supporting local retail outlets, and offering encouragement for local people to use them more.

Gareth Somerset, who edits the Flyer, encouraged all audience and BFA members to make contributions to the Flyer through [newsletter@bearflat.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bearflat.org.uk)

You will probably have noted that we now have a defibrillator installed at the Gym handily round the corner from the chemist. This is the second one in our area, as there is already a defibrillator at Tesco's up the hill. Volunteers are sought to learn how to operate it.

Bruno Bubra-Kastelitz asked whether the BFA had sufficient funds to re-stock the defibrillator as equipment was used, to which the answer from Gareth Somerset was yes.

These three projects have mainly been undertaken by Gareth Somerset, who has put a substantial amount of time and energy behind them. Huge thanks to him – these have taken up the slack left by his having to put on hold the Gore Project announced at our last AGM!

Gareth Somerset updated the AGM on progress with the project which included

- \* the establishment of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, to run alongside the BFA as a vehicle to manage the project
- \* the active engagement of Wessex Water to remove material from the Gore
- \* liaison with local residents, BANES and pro-bono support from an architect to agree a design for the area
- \* forthcoming bids for funds to improve the fountain and surrounding green space

Mark O'Sullivan suggested that the BFA might approach Bathscape for funds, they being responsible for the allocation of some lottery monies in support of 'green projects'. Gareth Somerset thanked him for the information.

We will hear from Judith Eversley, Mark Richardson and Timothy Cantell about work they have been doing on our behalf on the pop-up shop, the Saturday Market, our finances and local traffic and planning issues, including our work with Beechen Cliff School, and from Clyde Hunter about Bloomfield Green. Jane Allan has retired from the lead role on behalf of Bloomfield Green, and we warmly thank her for that work, and also Thelma Grimes, who continues with Clyde. Whilst thanking these committee members for their contributions to the well-being of our neighbourhood we should also remember that Clyde and Judith have been seriously ill for large periods of the year, and we are glad they are both recovering well.

Work by the Friends of Alexandra Park to keep it an attractive and tidy space is greatly appreciated, as is the provision by the Council of the revamped look-out point, the children's play area and better litter bin provision and management. Local residents at the top of Poets Corner adjoining the Park have been disturbed by bad behaviour of large groups of people in the evenings and at night, including serious damage to residents' cars. We have supported volunteers who, with the Council's blessing, have organised a rota to close at night and re-open in the morning the Park to vehicular traffic. This, together with the change in season, has alleviated the problem. The support of our local councillor, Winston Duguid, has been invaluable, in these and other matters.

Esperanza Isaac, one of the volunteers involved in this, outlined how the residents and Winston had taken a petition to 150 houses near the park and had received support from 80% to urge the council to take back responsibility for the daily opening and closure of the park to traffic.

Another example of the community taking over responsibility from the Council has been the granting of a licence to the Widcombe Association, strongly supported by the BFA and other local residents' groups, of the management of Lyncombe Fields. Friends of Lyncombe Hill Fields (FLHF) in which we have a share had its public launch on October 19<sup>th</sup> when we learnt more of what the management of the space is planned. Notes of the launch and an invitation to volunteer to support the FLHF are published on the BFA website on [www.bearflat.org.uk](http://www.bearflat.org.uk)

Talking of the Widcombe Association, we have also associated with them and will be contributing to the better decoration of the subway under the main road at the bottom of Wellsway.

If you have ideas on any projects or initiatives you think we should be undertaking please let us know. We welcome any suggestions!

More detail on all this and more will be provided during the course of our AGM. I think I have mentioned thanks and warm appreciation to all our committee members, apart from Bob Hughes. Bob, who theoretically finishes his term as secretary, holds everything together, plans our meeting agendas and takes the minutes of our meetings in a relaxed and efficient way. A warm appreciation of that great work.

We also thank our street reps, who look after distribution of notices, etc. We had hoped to have a gathering of them all in the spring this year, but that was another victim of Covid. Letters of thanks have been sent to local shops which remained open through the lockdown, and to our refuse and recycling collectors.

### **Item 3. Treasurer's report (Mark Richardson)**

The report had been circulated to all attendees prior to the meeting and is attached to the minutes. It was accepted by the meeting and there were no questions.

The sum of £500 was donated to the BFA by Councillor Shaun McGall for improvements to Bloomfield Green, which lies in his ward. These monies arrived after the end of the 2019/20 financial year, so will be presented in the 2020/21 accounts.

Judith Eversley reported briefly on the setting up of a pop-up shop in 'Rolfeys' which enabled local artists to sell over £2000 of their work. Its early closure led to the BFA underwriting the project as indicated in the accounts but it was highlighted as a good example of community groups working together to achieve a positive outcome.

### **Item 4. Reports from Committee members**

#### **4(a) Planning and Transport Group (Timothy Cantell)**

Timothy outlined the main activities with which the Planning and Transport Group had been engaged in the last 12 months, which he covered under 4 headings:

##### **4(a)1. Planning**

Commenting on planning applications, the re-modelling of Entry Hill Golf course and Beechen Cliff School's travel plan, on which the BFA is now actively engaged with the school's new transport lead.

##### **4(a) 2. Issues**

These have included the Clean Air Zone, which will commence on 15th March 2021, and the Residents Parking Zone, which has been generally well received apart from concerns expressed on behalf of local employees.

##### **4(a) 3. Speeding**

This has focussed largely on supporting local groups to reduce traffic speeds in their area, with particular emphasis on the bottom of Bloomfield Rd.

##### **4(a) 4 Consultations**

The Group has been involved in 3 areas of consultation with the council, these being:

- \* Liveable neighbourhoods focussing on low traffic neighbourhoods (LTN) and clean air zones. The BFA's key concern has been the displacement of traffic from other areas of the city to Bear Flat under some of the proposals.
- \* Traffic Movement Plan produced by the Federation of Bath Resident's Associations (FoBRA) for the council. Again the BFA voiced its concern about the increased flow of traffic from the north to the south of the city, which the plan was recommending.
- \* Conservation Area Appraisal. This was carried out by the BFA for BANES and considers the contribution that our area makes to the city. The full report is available on the Bear Flat Association website ([www.bearflat.org](http://www.bearflat.org)) within the Planning and Transport section.

#### **4(b) Food and Social report (Judith Eversley)**

**FOOD GROUP**, officially Hayes Place Ltd, a society for community benefit

Like all the other reports, this is an account of two halves: before and after (or rather, during) Covid.

Up to mid-March 2020 we ran the monthly Community Market in Beechen Cliff Methodist Church hall, plus the Christmas Market run jointly with Bear Flat Artists, selling local food, arts and crafts. We welcomed Genesis Trust, who ran a regular stall with information materials and crafts made by volunteers and clients; and the local green energy company, Bath & West Community Energy, has taken a table to open up discussion about energy issues and encourage us all to reduce our energy usage. Local police community officers have attended on a couple of occasions, and we are glad to offer space to Councillor Duguid to meet local residents and answer questions. The Bear Flat Wombles litter-picking group meets at the market to pick up their cleaning equipment, returning for free refreshments at the end of their session.

We catered for the Gathering on Bloomfield Green in June (donating £100 to the Friends of the Green from the surplus we made after covering our costs), for Mikron Theatre's by now traditional performance on the Allotments in August, and for the Carols by Torchlight in Alexandra Park in mid-December. The small surplus generated at events continues to support Company, Conversation & Cake, a monthly free tea party for older and isolated residents.

At the food group's AGM we watched two films on best practice in allergen awareness and food hygiene, working to keep our catering on the right side of the law. We feared that new parking regulations might deter market stallholders but we found a creative solution whereby, market volunteers who have the residents' parking app buy permits and are re-imbursed out of market funds. We are not sure that this is what the regulations were meant for but it works for us.

The all-day Christmas Market on 30th November 2019 was highly successful, with even more applications from craftspeople than in past years and we opened up a Food Hall off the main hall to accommodate everyone.

The monthly Community Tea Parties have continued on Thursday afternoons and have seen an increase in numbers of guests. We brought music to the party on a couple of occasions: carols at

Christmas and the local Bear Flat Barbershop quartet. Donations offered through the year go to a charity chosen by the Methodist Church, and last year we sent £600 to The Leprosy Mission.

And then ... the doors shut. February's market was the last one, meaning that the planned launch of a Repair Café on 21<sup>st</sup> March was abandoned. along with the Community Tea Party. But while it lasted, we had a good (half) year for our community. Thanks to all the volunteer helpers and especially the management committee of Hayes Place Ltd, the official name of this BFA Food Group.

## **SOCIAL EVENTS**

We held a BFA Quiz in November with a full house of quiz teams and raised £500 for Children in Need. In December Carols by Torchlight in Alexandra Park raised £100 for Médecins sans Frontières. At the very end of February, the 29<sup>th</sup> (Leap Year!) local choir Cappella Nova sang "Music of the Poets" (works by Kipling, Shakespeare, Byron, Shelley, Milton, Chaucer and Longfellow set to music) to a full house in St Luke's Church. That raised well over £1,000 for Julian House. The planned Secret Garden event in July had to be cancelled of course. Roll on 2021.

### **4(c) Friends of Bloomfield Green (Clyde Hunter)**

Clyde started by offering thanks to departing members of the FoBG including Jane Allan, Diane Lockwood and Angus and Brenda Buchanan. He underlined how important it was to replace such stalwarts with new local residents who would be welcomed for their skills and interests as much as for being regular members of the Friends committee.

The date of Sunday 6th June has been set for the 'Gathering on the Green', which is the major event for the Friends but Clyde took care to point out that this might yet be overtaken by Covid and that smaller activities were being planned to maintain and enhance the Green.

The Friends have funds at their disposal to purchase and install play equipment (basketball & football) thanks to generous donations from the ward councillors from Lyncombe & Widcombe (Winston & Alison) and Oldfield Park (Shaun), together with the Don Grimes legacy funding. Clyde is keen to engage more young people in identifying items which will add to the popularity of the area and will ensure the Green Flag Award is maintained.

He finished by thanking the BFA for funding in the initial establishment of the FoBG and for ongoing support.

### **Item 5 . Vision for Bear Flat (Timothy Cantell)**

Nick introduced this topic which is an attempt to answer the question 'How can we improve Bear Flat local Centre? ' The BFA and others have recognised the fact that the shopping area of Bear Flat from the bottom of Bloomfield Rd to Hayes Place is a traffic thoroughfare, which looks rather drab and which has little visibility as a destination for visitors and local shoppers.

Currently the BFA is consulting with residents and businesses to identify what they see as the major issues which need tackling and what solutions can be put in place to make the area more pedestrian friendly, more lively and attractive and with a higher profile amongst residents and visitors to Bath. Suggestions to date include:

- \* re-designing sections of BF to make it more comfortable to walk, sit and talk, together
- \*slowing traffic & improving parking

- \*putting on events (eg Christmas lights)
- \* more greenery,
- \* better signage and a presence on Bath maps & trails

More suggestions from you are greatly welcome and you are encouraged to contribute to the consultation through [planning@bearflat.org.uk](mailto:planning@bearflat.org.uk)

Timothy Cantell pointed out that a number of the local businesses were here to stay, underlined by the significant investment in premises by both the Coop and Menu Gordon Jones.

Bruno Bubra-Kastelitz welcomed the project and looked forward to an improved welcome for his many grandchildren!

## **Item 6. Election of Officers**

There being no new candidates, the following were re-elected as officers by a show of hands.

Nick Francis (Chair)  
Helen Cooke (Membership Secretary)  
Bob Hughes (Secretary) for 1 year only

BH 24/10/20