

## Bear Flat Centre Vision meeting 10<sup>th</sup> February

The Bear Flat Association hosted a public meeting by Zoom on 10<sup>th</sup> February to share their vision for the Bear Flat Centre with local residents, businesses and local councillors. Over 40 people attended and offered comments, proposals and questions to the team presenting the Vision in its current form.

**Nick Francis**, the BFA Chair, opened the meeting and explained that the Association has set up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), subject to approval from the Charity Commission, which would enable it to bid for funds to achieve the BFA's objectives.

**Timothy Cantell**, the convenor of the Planning and Transport Group of the BFA, then introduced the team who have helped to develop the vision to date. He explained that the initiative had come from the desire to save the local centre from any further losses, to encourage residents to use the businesses on Bear Flat and to do so by improving the centre. While acknowledging that some outlets had been lost in recent years, Timothy reminded us that other businesses (e.g. Menu Gordon Jones, Co-op, Good Bear, Space Gym) had all invested in updating their premises, demonstrating a confidence in being based on Bear Flat. He outlined a centre which was leafy, lively, traffic-free and community-focused and which could be achieved through the BFA working with the considerable expertise in the local community and supported by B&NES. He noted that three local councillors (Winston Duguid, Alison Born & Shaun Stephenson-McGall) were in the audience and thanked them for attending.

Four members of the BFA then introduced aspects of the Vision, using a slide presentation which can be found [here](#).

**Gareth Somerset** outlined plans for the south end of Wellsway, including the Gore (the triangle of land at the south end of the centre) between Wellsway and Bloomfield Road. These include enhancing the area and allowing safe access across both major roads.

**Jill Kingaby** discussed changes to the A367 to reduce noise, pollution and danger to pedestrians and cyclists. These could include reducing the number of lanes through Bear Flat from 4 to 3 (or even 2), the introduction of wider pavements and cycle lanes, linking with the Two Tunnels, and the planting of trees alongside the Wellsway.

**David Fenton** underlined the importance of linking with Bear Flat's artistic community to develop murals, sculptures and plants, together with enhanced seating arrangements to allow residents and visitors to enjoy being here. He also encouraged working with local traders to present Christmas / special occasion displays.

**Christopher Isaac** presented two options for a re-modelling of Hayes Place to make it more of an attractive area for visitors and pedestrians with plants, seating and room to sit and chat rather than a through road for cars. He noted that there would still be parking available for customers and traders in both options.

After the presentations, the audience was encouraged to offer comments and ask questions, of which the following is a sample:

- Why not close off the bottom end of Beechen Cliff Rd to extend the enhanced Hayes Place area?
- Car parking for retail staff needs to be considered.
- Improve signage to and from Two Tunnels and Bear Flat. Cyclists are good for business!
- Wish to discuss aspects of the vision in detail with members of the team and offer my services
- Cycle paths very important. Cyclists on pavements are not safe
- What are the next steps and timescales?
- Continue working closely with other residents' groups
- In general, much support creating more space for people at Bear Flat Centre
- Re the sketches of Hayes Place: two lanes are needed at the southern end and traffic including larger vehicles will continue to access Holloway and Beechen Cliff Road.

Timothy Cantell agreed to take these views on board and said that the next step was for the BFA to discuss the feedback and further comments, to hone the Vision and to produce a revised proposal.

Councillor Winston Duguid concluded the input by reinforcing the support from B&NES to develop areas within which it was safe for people to work, live and play and that this would be achieved through walking and cycling rather than driving. He felt that the BFA was fortunate to have such a wealth of experience and expertise to tap into and that this was reflected in some of the exciting schemes being outlined. He explained that there were opportunities to bid for funds from national, regional and local sources and recommended that the BFA sought to prepare a proposal for the next round of bids to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). This would require a firm submission by the end of April!

Nick Francis wrapped up the meeting by thanking the organising team and all those who attended and confirming that a report on the meeting would be available through the Bear Flat Flyer and on the BFA website shortly.

**Bob Hughes, BFA Secretary**