

Friends of Pittville Trustee Meeting 21 April – 28 April 2020 (by email)

Contributors Trustees: Judie Hodsdon (JH), Paul Benfield (PB), Chris Archibald (CA), Andy Hopkins (AH), Philippa Howell (PH), Janina Kay (JK), Sandy Marshall (SM), David Richards (DR), Henry Williams (HW)

Non-voting representative: Dennis Parsons (DP)

Observer: Sally Thomas (ST)

Minutes: Jocelyn Potter

1 Welcome and Introduction

JH welcomed everyone to the meeting and described how it would work.

2 Apologies

None were received.

3 Minutes of last meeting, 14 January 2020

Since no comments were received, they are accepted as a true record.

4 Matters arising

None were raised that were not on the agenda.

5 Finance Report

PB circulated information about the state of FoP finances, showing an excess of income over expenditure for this financial year of over £7,500. The healthy state of funds has been helped by the success of race week car parking and the Quiz Night, but income from membership, the Cheltenham Lottery and fund-raising has also been good. ST kindly donated her lottery winnings of £250 to FoP (to go towards the planting of Bed 38). PB put in a Gift Aid return in February but so far has not heard back from HMRC.

6 Website and Email progress

JH apologised for the delay. The person she asked to help FoP has been briefed on the current problems and has been asked to put forward a proposal for a new host or hosts for the FoP website and emails, with an idea of the costs involved. No request for payment has been made yet. JH hoped to have news soon and will then circulate it.

Action: JH

7 June Newsletter

7.1 Distribution There was general agreement with AH that there should be a June newsletter but that it should be circulated via email since hand deliveries would be inappropriate. Copies will be printed out and posted to the fifteen or so members who don't appear to use email. JK will check with as many of these as possible by phone to see if any can now supply an email address.

Action: JK

7.2 Content AH and JH suggested that FoP should mark the moment with a series of interviews with different types of park users about how the park has figured in their lockdown lives, and how the ways that they use the park have changed. AH invited ideas from trustees for interviewees and for volunteers who could conduct fifteen-minute phone interviews and write them up. He will contact trustees individually about their ideas. CA will provide content about the Green Space Volunteers (GSVs) and getting back to normal as soon as feasible. ST suggested interviews with dog-walkers and others taking exercise or doing activities that are amusing or different, and with people working in the park (Ubico, patrolling police etc). Possible photographs might log the emptiness of the Park in lockdown, and nature continuing and rewilding. JK suggested a focus on community and an interview with a medical professional.

AH asked for interesting photos to be sent to him. He agreed with ST's suggestion for a more comprehensive archive of the time, including pictures, interviews and written tales, and suggested that this should be on the website, separate from the newsletter.

JH also suggested that the work of Pittville History Works could be featured in some depth. The newsletter will be produced, as usual, as a four-page pdf.

JK suggested that in future the newsletter should be distributed to homes and other establishments further afield than Pittville, and that there should be a supply at the Pump Room. Non-resident park users and businesses like BMF could also be offered individual or corporate membership.

Action: AH and All

8 Projects

8.1 Masterplan, including rockery CA reported that the drawings and costings for the steps and gates adjacent to the Pump Room have been completed by Illman Young. JH and CA were due to meet Adam Reynolds (AR, Cheltenham Borough Council, CBC) on 19 March to discuss the way forward, but the meeting was cancelled. They suggested to AR that he could ask Illman Young to prepare paperwork for the necessary planning permission and listed building consent for the changes to the gates and the reinstatement of the steps. As with Pittville Gates, permissions should be formally submitted by FoP rather than CBC as CBC can then make the decisions. JH doesn't know whether AR has taken this forward yet.

CA also reported that the clearing of the south-east side of the lake had been started by contractors; GSVs were due to work in this area, but the work had to stop.

Phase 1 planting was carried out on the rockery, perennials and shrubs on the north side, and three acer trees were planted on the south side. CA is monitoring their progress, but the weeds appearing on the south side can't be tackled at present.

8.2 Bed 38 CA reported that good progress was made on clearing and reshaping the bed, including removal of the holm oak. A design for replanting the bed, with a list of shrubs, was agreed with Malcolm Walls (MW, CBC), but MW hasn't been able to order these shrubs for FoP. Discussions were held by email with Chris Chavasse (CC, the CBC Tree Officer), about pruning the yew tree. It was agreed that his contractor would carry out the work and FoP would pay for it. CC wants to retain the existing cherry tree, which is leaning badly but flowering; this will be revisited later in the year. CC will order the three new cherry trees, on behalf of FoP, for winter planting. CA thanked ST for her donation towards the cost of the cherry trees. PB commended the volunteers for their work on the bed.

8.3 Prestbury Road streetlights SM circulated a paper from Andrea Creedon (AC) about the poor state of the Prestbury Road street lamps, which asks for reactions from trustees and whether FoP would be happy for a project to be undertaken in its name. She will contact a member of St Philips and St James Residents Association, who have completed a project to refurbish some Victorian lamp posts, to see how they approached it. The issue of finance has not yet been addressed. It was thought that Gloucestershire Highways must be responsible for maintenance and that the lights might be on Cheltenham's locally 'listed' list as they were originally supports for tram lines. SM confirmed that AC would take on further

research but would prefer it if she could do it in FoP's name. There was some debate as to whether the lights fall within FoP's remit – they are part of Pittville's heritage and Joseph Pitt did own the land along that side of Prestbury Road, but that was not considered part of the Estate itself. CA suggested that AC discuss responsibility for the lights with Gloucestershire County Council lighting engineers. It was decided that AC could do further research using FoP's name, but that there could be no commitment by FoP to undertake a refurbishment project before more information is available.

9 Regular Activities

9.1 Green Space Volunteers (GSVs) CA reported that the GSVs met regularly this year until 5 March. There was an average of twenty volunteers at each working party, a similar number to last year, with a few new volunteers. While the park is still looking good, problems are developing for the future: for example, weeds are thriving again on the south side of the rockery, wild honeysuckle is choking the beech hedge that volunteers have been looking after for the last two years, and shrubs can't be pruned at the right time of year. CA will email volunteers to keep in contact with them. Green Flag and Green Heritage Site Accreditation judges were due to visit, but CA assumes that their visit was cancelled.

Action: CA

9.2 Pittville History Works (PHW) SM reported that John Simpson has uploaded more photos on to the website, with entertaining captions, adding two new Galleries (under the 'About' tab). The photos are of events in Pittville Park from 1901 to 1938, including the defeat by the British Olympic water-polo team of a team called 'The Rest of the World'. The direct link is <http://pittvillehistory.org.uk/Galleries/images.html>.

9.3 Duck Food PH reported that St Vincents locked down early without telling her, cutting off access to duck food, but that she received a delivery before running out since few people are currently using the dispenser.

9.4 Drop-ins JH reported that the drop-ins have been cancelled until further notice. They might be able to resume as an outdoor event at the Central Cross Café if that is able to open safely before Havanas.

10 Past Events

10.1 Quiz Night, 24 Feb 2020 PH reported that it was a successful event with a profit of £276 from entry money and the raffle. She thanked all who helped, and who contributed prizes.

10.2 March Races Parking, 10-13 March 2020 HW reported that £5,220 was raised from parking in the car park and – via the new approach ramp – on the grass. He thanked the many willing helpers who supported him and CA. Volunteers kept their distance from drivers, and only one handled money. Gloves and hand wipes were supplied as additional anti-virus measures and were used by volunteers and customers. It is hoped that FoP will be able to run the car park in November and in 2021, if the council agrees once it is pay and display.

10.3 Cheltenham Horticultural Society Spring Show, 5 April 2020 The event was cancelled. JH thanked volunteers who offered to man the FoP table. DR will tell the committee if the August Show goes ahead.

11 Future Events

11.1 Plant Sale, 9 May 2020 The Plant Sale has been cancelled. JH and ST thought it might be possible to hold the event in the autumn (preferably in September, although HW will be away) as it is a good planting time for perennials and shrubs and the nurseries could supply winter bedding plants. A decision needs to be made by the beginning of August as to a September sale or postponement until next year, which CA and PB suggested would be better. SM will then resubmit the Trading Licence form (although the format appears to prevent actually signing it).

Action: SM (eventually)

11.2 Wildlife Festival CA reported that this had already been postponed until 2021 – to allow for more preparation – before the lockdown occurred

11.3 Strategy Meeting, 2 June 2020 It was decided that this meeting will go ahead, using Zoom if a virtual meeting turns out to be necessary. JH will ask for ideas for the agenda. AH pointed out that trustees need only use the invitation sent to them in an email, without downloading software. He has a subscription version, without a time limit or limit on people attending.

Action: All

11.4 Talk to Swindon Village Society, 17 June 2020 JH has been asked to do her Pittville history talk, but has not yet heard whether the talks programme has been cancelled.

11.5 Garden Party, 25 July 2020 JH suggested that a decision on whether this can be held should be made by 1 July.

11.6 Pittville after Pitt, Steven Blake talk, 30 October 2020. Joint event with Holst Birthplace Museum (HBM) On the assumption that this will go ahead, it should be mentioned again in the next newsletter and a mailchimp advertising it should be sent out in September. JH asked for a volunteer to take the lead in working with the HBM on the arrangements.

Action: tbc

11.7 AGM 28 or 29 October 2020 Again, on the assumption that this will go ahead, the school needs to be consulted on their preference between the two dates. JH reported that John Simpson has kindly agreed to give a talk based on his forthcoming book on Cheltenham paupers.

12 AOB

12.1 Application for Prince of Wales Award Following a suggestion by the new High Sheriff, Helen Lovatt (HL), JH sent a submission to her for the addition of a covering note. The 3 April deadline was missed as HL was ill (with Covid-19) for some weeks. HL did send in the application, hoping that it could still be considered, but the Award has been cancelled for this year. HL will ask the next High Sheriff to support an application in 2021. JH thanked her and sent best wishes for a complete recovery. HL has also asked if she can meet FoP volunteers. JH will contact her again when meetings are possible.

Action (eventually): JH

12.2 Pittville Pump Room Revival CA reported that a fact-finding trip to Bath was carried out by the group, but that the meeting in March with Laurie Bell of The Cheltenham Trust was cancelled on the closure of the Pump Room.

12.3 Heritage Open Days JH reported that the theme this year is ‘Hidden Nature’, and that further information is due out soon. Desmond Marshall has agreed to research the possibility of a Pittville-related talk on the subject.

12.4 Funding for charities SM mentioned that she receives messages announcing funding for charities affected by the lockdown. She hasn’t responded to them, but FoP isn’t able to fundraise in other ways at the moment. DP suggested that applications could justifiably be made. PB and JH felt that they wouldn’t be appropriate.

13 Next meeting Strategy meeting, 2 June 2020