

Friends of Pittville Trustee Meeting 1 July 2025 at 17.30pm at the Scout Hut, Central Cross Drive

Present:

Trustees John Holloway (JH, acting Chair), Chris Archibald (CA), Sarah de Buriatte (SdeB), Andy Hopkins (AH), Janina Kay (JK)

Observer Barbara Leigh (BL)

Minutes Joc Potter

1 Apologies

David Kay (DK), Louise Allerton (LA), Sacha K (SK). JH welcomed BL, who has taken over from CA as coordinator of the Green Space Volunteers (GSVs).

2 Minutes of the last meeting

These were passed as a true record.

3 Finance and Budget Update

These were circulated by SdeB before the meeting. She highlighted the following: the receipt of Gift Aid from HMRC; the CLIL grant from CBC for the sensory garden; the sale of 18 tickets so far for the summer party. The final steps project payment has been made to CBC, after the 12-month snagging inspection and the rectification of defects. The project is now complete. JK asked how long the work is guaranteed for. DK will be asked to let her know, although the meeting's best guess is six years. JH has found a replacement auditor: Mal Gray, a qualified accountant, is happy to help. It was agreed that Joe Marr should be thanked for his years of volunteering with a life-time membership of FoP (JK will draw up a 'certificate') and a pair of tickets for the summer party.

Action: DK, JK

4 Regular activities

4.1 GSV update So far this year, an average of 19 volunteers have attended each working party, contributing a total of 429 hours. BL has been the coordinator for the last month and attended, with CA, a meeting with the CBC GSV development team. CA reported that because of the pressure on community rangers to attend working parties in the various parks, the team has asked in-house lawyers to draw up a partnership agreement; this was, however, without consulting GSVs and is completely unsatisfactory. CA will be submitting his written comments on the draft agreement this weekend. The goal seems to be to move responsibilities more from the CBC professionals to the volunteer amateurs. However, since Pittville GSVs now have their own hut, tools and insurance, they can operate without a ranger – but a phone call a week before each working party is essential to agree the planned work, and this communication is CBC's responsibility. JH expressed the committee's gratitude that CA and BL are on the case.

AH asked what will happen to large projects under the new agreement. CA replied that everyone is working to the 10-year plan, but that this isn't mentioned in the proposed agreement. He added that Lucy Wise (a CBC park ranger) is writing a manual for coordinators, which will be very useful. BL has offered to note down her experiences as a new coordinator to help Lucy, and JH suggested that CA and BL offer to review the manual before it is finalised.

Action: CA, BL

4.2 Plant Sale results As stated in the newsletter, the sale was a great success and made

£732.90. Members – especially David Richards – donated a lot of plants, and their time. Also, Gotherington Nursery gave 50% rather than 25% of their takings to FoP. AH pointed out that the raffle at the Sandford Park fete made more money for fewer prizes by making only one in ten tickets a winner, which could be considered for next year. JK pointed out that more marketing of FoP was needed at this type of event. AH agreed to design new banners, to replace the dated ones in storage, since he has the files for logos etc: two upright banners (one promoting GSVs and one for FoP) and two table banners (1m 20 long), all to include the FoP logo and charity number. He will ask the newsletter printer for prices and report back. JK will source a tombola for next year.

Action: AH, JK

4.3 CHS Show (10 August) It was agreed that FoP would not be participating. Individual volunteers can of course help to man the car park.

DK will be asked (with JH) to send FoP's condolences to Susan Pickles on the death of her husband, John, a long-term volunteer. JH will also enquire about the well-being of Jeremy, who has helped Philippa with the duck feeder.

Action: DK, JH

4.4 Summer party (30 August) Tickets are selling well. The musical duo, the Mansfield Smiths, from last year will be returning, and further entertainment will be provided by Ian Gray, a close-up magician. Steve Blake's talk will be entitled 'The Sorry Tale of Pittville Parade'. Sally Thomas is coordinating makers of canapes; trustees were invited to volunteer to provide a plate after consulting her.

Action: All, and Sally

4.5 Drop-ins JH reported that eight to ten people attend each time. The new location has reduced the numbers, but no indoor venue is available in the park, although The Cheltenham Trust has applied for planning permission for an American diner.

5 Projects

5.1 Sensory beds CA reported that Mark, who works for Ubico and looks after the aviaries, has been hosing the plants in the hot weather. The bug hotels have been delivered and modified on site. Josh from the Green Spaces team will bolt them into position, and they will then be filled and covered with netting. The new benches will come at some point, and if Ubico agree the black waste bin will be replaced by a green frog.

5.2 Sensory art installation AH reported that Natasha Houseago has worked on the sculpture (after initial dramas relating to the placement) for eight days so far. She hopes to complete the work (with final coats of varnish) at the end of September. JK suggested that she might like to be working in the park on 6 August, the day of the No Child Left Behind Party in the Park. AH, CA and BL will meet to organise a launch event, possibly for the end of September, and will find out whether the mayor or the Lord Lieutenant would be able to attend. As far as media are concerned, Natasha prefers on-site interviews (but has been discouraged from promoting the sculpture at this early stage); it was noted that Mark is good on Facebook, and JH has a contact for the Morning Show (BBC Radio Gloucester).

Action: AH, CA, BL

5.3 Tool shed CA reported that Henry has persuaded a locksmith to sell them a bolt-cutter-proof padlock from his display. Mark has painted the shed in mid-brown preservative. BL suggested that Mark be thanked somehow. It was agreed, though, that Mark shouldn't have a key to the volunteers' shed, to keep the sheds separate because of possible insurance complications.

5.4 2025 Bicentenary board – and future projects CA will circulate a first draft of the layout of the board, although the background will be blue, not green, the number of words needs cutting and two or three more pictures need adding. By 18 July Sally and CA will have reviewed the wording. BL will also participate. The aim is to have the board up in 2025, but it will be late in the year. In answer to a question from AH, since a CLIL grant wasn't successful, CA said that most grant-givers won't contribute to a project that has already started – and

they will note that FoP has a lot of funds in the bank that could be used. He reminded the meeting that planning permission was granted for new gates on the approaches to the Pump Room, and that grants could be applied for for this very expensive project. AH pointed out that experience in applying for grants (especially past Chairs) has left or, in the case of CA, is about to leave the committee, leaving the committee feeling rudderless as regards future projects. All agreed, and CA pointed out that this has also been the first year without a strategy meeting to discuss new projects. BL noted that a list of planned new projects would add more interest to the website. JH will ask the Chair to set a date for a specific strategy discussion meeting to produce a plan for future projects and other ideas. An initial date is also pressing for a meeting for a membership/marketing plan sub-committee (which was discussed in the April meeting and hasn't yet been taken forward). JK will be passing on the membership role in October 2025, but through her time in the role has useful experience and many ideas for ways forward. She would be happy to join the planning group. SdeB suggested that bolstering the committee first should be a priority. All agreed that a recruitment drive for new trustees, who attend meetings when they say they will, is essential.

Action: DK, JH and others

6 Website and newsletter

6.1 Website developments

An update was received from LA by email. There wasn't time to share it at the meeting, since Scouts were waiting to come in, but:

LA has made some further layout updates to the website events page (with Ben's help), so these display more clearly; a link to the full newsletter has been added at the top of the News and insights page; she will now be working on the volunteers page.

LA will work on a flyer to go out in September to non-members (instead of newsletter), as discussed in the last meeting. (Her offer to work on banners has been superseded – see above.) She is keen to join the membership sub-committee.

She has made changes to the latest newsletter to include a link again to the full newsletter, and has included links to some of the individual stories. The purpose of this format was to appeal to different demographics and, based on the stats, that is working. The software report shows that 60% of clicks are on the link to view the full newsletter; the other 40% are to the links for individual news articles.

LA asked how the list of subscribed users is usually imported, and whether any new members need to be imported before the September newsletter.

Action: LA – and JH to respond to LA's question

6.2 Newsletter The committee was pleased with AH's new design and flipbook, and – given LA's work commitments – AH agreed that the website links should stay as they are for the moment.

6.3 September newsletter After discussion, it was agreed that 500 copies would be printed, with new distribution areas considered, and it would also be distributed electronically. Instead of an expensive insert, the membership form will be a half-page in the newsletter itself. JK said that very few new members joined as the result of a wider distribution (2,500 copies in the past year), although CA pointed out that the newsletter raises the profile of FoP even if people don't join. The marketing sub-committee will devise a new plan for marketing for the following September.

7 Membership and fund-raising

[see discussions above under other headings]

8 HODS September 2025

No one was able to attend the meeting about this. The theme this year is to be Cheltenham's secret places. FoP's access to the underground space near the gates was flooded when this theme was last used, and repairs to allow safe future have not been carried out by CBC to our

knowledge. Additionally, we have missed the deadline for inclusion in any printed material, so FoP won't be involved this year.

9 Dates of next meeting and AGM

In the interests of achieving a quorate attendance, it was agreed that this should be early in the week at the end of October, so CA will ask Henry about the availability of the venue, St Paul's Church, on Monday 27 October or Tuesday 28 October, and will let people know. A speaker will be needed; JH will ask Sally Thomas about inviting Steve Blake. The next trustees' meeting will be on Tuesday 7 October, to prepare for the AGM. All trustees were urged to put forward ideas for an alternative speaker in case Steve is unavailable.

Action: CA, JH, All

10 Dates of meetings in 2026

These will be: 6 January, 7 April, 14 July, 6 October.

11 AOB

11.1 Sycamore on the south bank of the upper lake CA reported that this self-seeded sycamore has been taken down to allow for more attractive planting, which FoP will pay for, although Judi Hodsdon will make a contribution. The adjacent dead weeping ash is still standing, the idea being that it should rot and fall. CA has tried to persuade the trees officer that it would be better if it were felled and allowed to rot. Judi would like to plant a new, attractive tree in this area.

11.2 New coordinator Barbara Leigh was unanimously confirmed as the GSV coordinator, and will attend trustee meetings.

The meeting closed at 19.00.