

**Minutes of the 54th Annual General Meeting  
Of the Sneyd Park Residents' Association  
Held at St Mary's, Stoke Bishop on 21st May 2025 at 7.30pm**

Steve Small welcomed everyone. The meeting was attended by 45 people.

**Apologies:** Mike Holyhead and Chhaya Hawkins and several members.

Mike is taking a well-earned holiday after the difficult year he has had.

Also apologies from Henry Michallat, one of our councilors, who is now Lord Mayor - the youngest recorded in Bristol. He has been called away on mayoral business.

**Minutes of the 53rd AGM held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024:** These Minutes have been available on the SPRA website and have been circulated via email prior to this meeting.

**Proposed:** Jo Jenkinson

**Seconded:** Wendy Goulandris

**Agreed unanimously.**

**Matters Arising:** None.

**Chairman's Report:**

I would like to start by thanking a number of people:

- The SPRA committee and their partners who have made enormous efforts, to keep SPRA moving forward.
- Our Road Captains who do a wonderful job delivering the newsletters and welcoming newcomers to the area
- Our councilors, John and Henry. They are always keen to assist and guide and I thank both for all their support. We equally assist them on matters in Stoke Bishop and Sea Mills.
- Stephanie French and Bristol Tree Forum who have given us so much support on tree preservation and planning matters.
- Finally, thank you to you, the members, who have taken action when asked concerning the van dwellers.

I have been Chair now for seven years with the support of Alan Jenkinson, my Vice-Chair. This year has been particularly challenging with the sad loss of Barbara Hollyhead who did so much for the Committee.

If I am re-elected, this will be my last year as Chairman.

Sneyd Park is a large region and views and needs vary depending where you live.

However, all agree the preservation of the region is of the utmost importance.

Research students at the University of the West of England (UWE) have been carrying out a project on the Sneyd Park Conservation Area and we will be receiving their report in due course. One of the students involved has been amazed at the region and how much wildlife there is here. We as a committee are striving to maintain this region. We don't always get things right but at least we try.

There have been many achievements in the last 56 years:

- The setting up of the Sneyd Park Conservation Area.
- The setting up of the Old Sneyd Park Nature Reserve.
- Linking with the Avon Wildlife Trust.

- Getting the Woodland Trust Land set up.
- We are the only Residents' Association on the Downs Advisory Panel (DAP), which reports to the Downs' Committee.
- The planting of the Queen's Tree, an English Oak, which took over 2 years to get planted.
- 50<sup>th</sup> Party - it won't be long before we will be celebrating our 60th birthday.
- Adjusting to modern communication and the use of email, social media etc.
- The formation of Protect The Downs. Over the last six years we have seen a general decline of the Downs with the camper-vans, driving on the grass and litter. The increase in the number of camper-vans and caravans has brought things to a head so, with the end of the mayoral system, we took on the Council. Lots of members wrote in with complaints and it was agreed that the issue would become an agenda item on the Housing Committee. 120 statements were submitted, so many that they broke the council's system, and more than 50 people attended the meeting in the public gallery. As a result of this the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Housing Committee agreed to attend a public meeting. This meeting was paid for by SPRA, the only residents' association with any money, and was held at St Alban's Church in Westbury Park. 450 people attended inside the church and a further 150 (minimum) had to be turned away. I took Barry Parsons, the Chair of the Housing Committee outside to see the crowd who had wanted to get in - he was staggered by the depth of public feeling. From this public meeting the new group, Protect the Downs, was formed but this has taken a lot of time over the last 6 months. Only a week ago, there was a special tour of the Downs given to councillors to show them the problem. We need evidence of the abuses so, if you are on the Downs and see something that is wrong and, assuming it is safe to do so, take a picture and email it into us.

Along with the above there are the normal ongoing matters

- Planning applications, which we check, ensuring that trees are saved where appropriate.
- The Concert on the Downs is a big item. We work hard with Team Love on security for the region and ensuring that our roads do not become a car park for concert goers.
- As mentioned, we are the only residents' association on DAP and Alan and I take it in turns to attend the meetings (Alan will speak more about this).
- Since 2020 we have noticed the 'COVID effect' i.e. less people are offering to help. I have noticed this with the watering of the Queen's tree. I have now got 2 volunteers to help me but this has taken several appeals.
- We also need more Road Captains and more members on the Committee.
- There are several other areas of concern, which I am sure will be discussed in the Open Forum.

What of the future?

- The Treasurer's Report will show a healthy bank balance.
- Our subs are to remain at £5.00 this year but may well have to increase next year, due to inflation.
- The newsletter is now sent out twice a year.
- We also send out regular email updates so please ensure that your email address is on the system. You can do this by registering it via the website or by filling in a form so that we can add it to the system.
- We need you to encourage neighbours to join SPRA. Forward the QR code to join.

- We would like to run more social events but need more members and volunteers to do this.

In conclusion Sneyd Park is a very special region of Bristol. However, it is the responsibility of all of us to help protect the region not just for ourselves but also for future generations, and I trust all of us, together with the SPRA Committee, will work to maintain and uphold the Sneyd Park Conservation Area.

**Proposed: Wendy Goulandris**  
**Seconded: Richard Outhwaite**  
**Agreed unanimously**

### **Vice Chairman's Report**

I have been Vice-Chairman for as long as Steve has been Chairman and a member of SPRA for 20 years. When I joined, membership stood at 800, it is now 400, although this is double the number that it was during COVID. There are approximately 1,200 households in the region so we do need more representation. One problem we have is that there are a lot of tenants in the area and these have traditionally been reluctant to join. Please do encourage them to join. If one or two do so then others may follow.

Membership subs are now generally paid by standing order. This means less work for the Road Captains and is also better for their security as they do not have to go door to door collecting cash.

As Steve has said we need more Road Captains, they are a major source of information about the area. Also, we used to do 4 newsletters a year but have cut this to 2. We would love to do more but need more staff.

With regard to Protect the Downs, since the public meeting two months ago, there have been huge amounts of publicity on this issue, with items on both the BBC and ITV. There will be a feature on the Jeremy Vine show next week. The group is trying not to be political and to see both sides of the argument but, basically, Bristol City Council need to provide more homes for people. Since the original meeting a focus group has been set up and this is chaired by Tony Nelson and many thanks go to him.

There will be a mass event to highlight the problems on the Downs, organized by Protect the Downs on 12th June at 7.15-7.30pm, meeting at the Downs cafe. This will involve a 2 mile walk around the Downs. The police have been informed and it is being properly organized. Please support this. Emails will be sent out advertising the event in due course.

As to the Downs Advisory Panel (DAP), Steve and I take turns in attending the meetings, representing SPRA and other residents around the Downs. Prior to this being set up, the Downs Committee was a secret forum but DAP is acting as a go-between the Downs Committee and the public.

Bennett's Patch was set up in 2015 with the help of SPRA and is a real asset to the area. SPRA has recently donated £3,499 (£3,000 of which was given by Team Love) to Avon Wildlife Trust for the development of the pond region. This money has provided new, smart railings and an entrance for the pond.

**Proposed: Sylvia Butterfield**

**Seconded: Wendy Goulandris**  
**Agreed unanimously**

## **Treasurers Report**

Due to the loss of this wife, which has meant that Mike Hollyhead, the Treasurer, has been unable to complete the accounts on time, these have not yet been independently verified. However, Iain McGregor has kindly agreed to independently review them. Subject to this I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

### **Income**

Members Subscriptions:	£1,612.00
Interest:	£87.45
Total Expenditure:	£1,188.61
Surplus:	£510.84

There have been a few donations to local projects:

- Stoke Bishop notice board glass so that people could actually see the notices
- New pads for the Deliberator at the garage, which had been used to save a life.
- Paid for the Public Meeting at Saint Alban's Church in March 2025 (£176).

**Restricted funds** of £3,000 from Team Love, who run the concert on the Downs. This money has now been donated to Avon Wildlife Trust for the benefit of Bennett's Patch as mentioned in Alan's report.

The total in the bank account as at 21.05.25, after restricted funds, stands at £5,022.27, which would cover 2-3 years' worth of running expenses, so a healthy position to be in.

As mentioned above, Iain McGregor has kindly agreed his independent review of the accounts and this will be done as soon as possible.

**Proposed: Chris Byrne**  
**Seconded: Wendy Goulandris**  
**Agreed unanimously**

### **Election of Officers**

The following was proposed:

Steve Small to remain as Chairman (for one more year only)

Alan Jenkinson to remain as Vice-Chairman

Mike Hollyhead to remain as Treasurer

The roles of Secretary, Membership Secretary and Facebook/website coordinator will be decided on from the remaining Committee members.

Chris Byrne is to remain on the Committee while David Wedge and Jerry Woods are to join it.

The officers were elected on block

**Proposed: Jo Jenkinson**  
**Seconded: John Goulandris**  
**Agreed unanimously**

### **Cllr John Goulandris**

There is good and bad news about Tagart's Memorial, the Victorian Grade II listed memorial in Stoke Bishop village. The good news is that the Council have agreed to pay for the restoration, the bad news is that, although they have put out to tender twice now, they have had nothing back. However, I believe that this now means we can approach others to see if they can do the work, rather than having to go through the regular procurement system.

With regard to We Love Stoke Lodge, the High Court case lasted 6 days and I was present throughout. The judgement is expected by early-mid June when we will see if the Village Green status is being upheld.

As has been mentioned previously, Henry Michallat is the youngest ever Lord Mayor of Bristol. As one of our councillors, this will bring some soft power and he will also be Chair of the Downs Committee, which may help with the van-dweller situation.

At last year's AGM there were many complaints about Bristol Waste the litter left in the wake of the refuse vans and the fact that a huge number of roads were not having their refuse collected each week. The old Managing Director has now 'left' and the new team are doing a much better job. Whereas last year there would be 50-60 roads missed in any one week, it is now down to 1 so things are definitely on the up.

As to the Downs, we battled with the previous mayor to get him to do something about the situation for many years and he would not do anything. The number of vans in the city rose from 150-800 and the camper-vans gave way to caravans which were often tatty or even abandoned. If you see one that has been abandoned do let us know so that we can get it taken away and crushed (35 have been crushed so far). However, no sooner have we taken one away than another appears. But there is a glimmer of hope. The public meeting has changed things. Barry Parsons and Richard Eddy, the Councillors attending that meeting, who are Chair and Vice-Chair of the Housing Committee respectively, had expected 10-30 people to attend on what was a cold, dark evening in March but, as the church filled up, they became very nervous. This was because, at a previous public meeting, Barry had been jostled and manhandled. However, I reassured him that nothing like that would happen here, as proved to be the case. But the strength of public feeling was obvious and for the first time the Council have realised that people are VERY cross because the Downs, which was left to the people of Bristol for all to enjoy, is being ruined by a very small minority.

When the councillors went on their tour of the Downs with the ecologist, as was referred to earlier, they saw first-hand how the biodiversity is at risk and they now understand the fact that people living on the Downs is affecting the insect life and the flora and fauna.

The group Protect the Downs, chaired by Tony Nelson, who is ex-military, is rattling a lot of cages. Bristol City Council realise that we are serious and that we are not going to go away but it is going to take time to change the situation. The Council are trying to find sites and social housing for a number of the van-dwellers but they still need to set up a

Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), otherwise those they remove will just be replaced by others. These PSPOs are jointly enforced by the police and the council so are far more effective. Getting one of these takes time (on average six months) and the process has not even been started yet. The PSPO would need to cover Sneyd Park, Stoke Bishop, Westbury-on-Trym, Westbury Park, Redland and Henleaze as a minimum to stop the vans just moving into residential areas.

At the end of John's talk, Steve Small added that the ecologist who took the councillors on a tour of the Downs used to run children's tours with school-age children from all over the city. All these educational tours have had to stop because of the health and safety concerns, resulting from the influx of van-dwellers. Steve has written to the council pointing out that there are over 30,000 residents in BS9 and if you include those in BS6 and BS8 who are around the Downs, there are over 45,000 residents whose enjoyment of this valuable space is suffering because of the van-dwellers. According to council officials, there are 60 vans on the Downs but he has counted 120, assuming, conservatively, there are 2 dwellers to each van this means that 120-240 people are ruining the enjoyment of this precious facility for 45,000 people!

## Open Forum

**Question from Nick Collins:** Will the PSPO cover the gypsies who drive onto the grass?

**Reply from John Goulandris:** A blanket injunction is now being sought. There had been one previously but it had been allowed to lapse for some reason. The new one should be granted soon and this will mean that travellers on the grass will be able to be moved within days rather than the weeks it can take now.

**Question from Bernard Lane:** You are not supposed to park on the Downs for more than 5 hours but, on the rare occasion there are traffic wardens around to enforce this, they ticket the cars but not the vans - why?

**Reply from John Goulandris:** We are hoping that with the new regime at the council this situation will now change.

**Statement and Question from Christine Wright:** In answer to Bernard's question above, I wrote to the council 5-6 years ago asking the same question and was told that the camper-vans used to just move their vehicles a few feet and so could park for longer! My question relates to a man who is camping on the Downs. He is part of a charity and has effectively set up a business on the Downs. He has a poster outside his tent with a QR code linked to a just giving page (from which he has collected over £3,000 apparently). Camping is not allowed on the Downs so why is it taking the Council so long to deal with him.

**Reply by John Goulandris:** That is a good question. Part of the problem is that this man falls within two camps: he is not a traditional Romany Gypsy and he is not is a vehicle on the kerbside. This will probably end up with the bailiffs but he will be evicted very soon.

**Response from Steve Small:** There is a publication called Van Life which is advertising places in Bristol where you can camp for free, including the Downs and Horfield Common. (The latter is mentioned as good because there is the leisure centre there where people can get a free shower!) We have to get the Council to realise that this is not acceptable and to stop people thinking this is the norm. They see one person doing it and think 'I'll do that too'.

**Question from Jason Smith:** How can we make sure people don't use BBQ's?

**Reply from Steve Small:** Steve asked how many people remembered the Downs Park Rangers who used to patrol the Downs 24/7, putting out BBQs with and stopping the general abuse of the area. Calls are being made to bring back 24/7 security. Basically the officers at the Council (not the Councillors) have allowed this to happen but the Councillors are now pushing back.

After the public meeting a man came forward with a seven acre site for the van-dwellers. The Councillors insisted that the officers inspected the site as a matter of urgency, which they did. However, the site was rejected because, as it was behind The Lamplighters and subject to flooding, it was unlikely to get planning permission. However, as Steve Small has written to the Council, where is the planning permission for the encampments on the Downs? To date he has had no response.

**Response by Alan Jenkinson:** DAP has appointed a commercial manager and has enhanced income streams from the Downs. The Boot Camps now have to pay a fee, whereas before they didn't. Basically anyone who is hoping to use the Downs for commercial purposes should apply to register their requirement in the 'Book of Interest'. This hasn't happened up till now but hopefully will do so from now on. All the money gained from these licences is used for the benefit of the Downs and it is hoped that eventually this may run to providing security.

**Question from Charlotte Galpin:** There was a rumour that those living around the Downs would be paying extra on their Council Tax for the upkeep of the Downs.

**Reply by Steve Small:** This was just a rumour.

### **Closing statement**

Please remember that when SPRA sends an email saying please write or attend a meeting, it does work and we need you to keep doing this and to encourage your neighbours to do so too.

Thank you for all attending and I hope you all will join us for a glass of wine and continue our conversations.

The meeting closed at 9pm