

Minutes of the 53rd Annual General Meeting of the

Sneyd Park Residents' Association

held at St Mary's, Stoke Bishop on 15th May 2024 at 7.30pm

Steve Small (SS) welcomed everyone. The meeting was attended by 45 members.

Apologies: Barbara Holyhead and Chhaya Hawkins and several members. Barbara is very poorly but our thanks go to her for all the hard work she has done for SPRA in setting up the website and Facebook. Her husband, Mike, has taken over the position of Treasurer but felt his place was with her, rather than here tonight, which we totally understand.

Minutes of the 52nd AGM held on 17th May 2023: These Minutes had been circulated via the Newsletter and were on the website.

Proposed: Martin Farrell. Seconded: Linda Small. Agreed unanimously.

Matters Arising: None.

Chairman's Report: SS started by thanking the Committee for their continued efforts in helping keep SPRA moving forward, their partners and in particular his wife, Linda, who acts as his personal secretary and provides many cakes for Committee meetings! He also thanked the Road Captains who do a wonderful job by delivering the Newsletters and collecting subscriptions. Also our Councillors for their support and guidance and we try to help them with matters. He thanked Stephanie French and the Bristol Tree Forum for their support and advice on tree preservation and planning matters, together with other Associations we have worked with.

Condolences were expressed to the families of Bill Redmond and Aubrey Matthews, both past Chairmen of SPRA. Both had given valuable help and advice when I took over the role.

I cannot believe I have been Chairman of SPRA now for six years and still enjoying it! It continues to be interesting, challenging and rewarding helped by an able Committee. Our cash flow is now more respectable, and we would hope to have more social events to help increase our membership, which at present stands at 460 households. Sneyd Park is a large and varied area, but all agree that its preservation is of utmost importance. We continue to monitor planning applications, and we try to encourage people to talk to their neighbours about their plans. It really helps! Some properties have been lived in for over 40 years and the next generation want to bring them up to date. Trees have been saved, keeping this lovely area very green, while helping to modernise and move forward.

We have achieved a lot over the last year. The Café on the Downs was rejected, though this could still raise itself in the future, and we will be diligent monitoring this. Scooters were becoming a nuisance, especially in Downleaze and Rockleaze, but this was resolved. We planted a tree close to the War Memorial in memory of our late Queen, and a plaque will be placed by it soon. We now have over 300 email addresses to enable us to circulate important information which our members are able to act on, such as a planning application. The more emails we have, the more information we can get out to our members.

Should you see anything taking place, such as driving on the Downs, if you can take a photograph of the number plate, please send it to me or the Councillors who will take action. The problem of the van dwellers was raised 5 years ago, and it has continued to get worse. Our Councillors will report on this.

As you may be aware, the Concert on the Downs this year is being held on 2 weekends at the end of August. Team Love have sent out letters inviting residents to a meeting in the church on the 25th July. Please attend if you want to voice your objections. As members of the Downs Advisory Panel, we have asked the Downs Committee how much they receive financially from these concerts for the Downs, but we have had no response to date.

The COVID effect continues to be evident in that people are less keen to help or get involved. We need more Road Captains, although I have had one volunteer come forward already tonight. One example of lack of empathy was given in that SS had "WhatsApp" his local road group for help with watering the Queen's tree but had received NO replies.

SS now read the Membership Secretary's report from Chhaya Hawkins:-

"My husband and I returned to live in the UK in December 2021 having lived and worked abroad for many years. A SPRA newsletter was delivered to us, I called Steve in response to his call for volunteers, and here I am the latest Membership Secretary!

First, I would like to thank Chris Byrne who has done this job over many years. She has given much dedicated effort to this, and the Committee thanks her and I am sure you the community of Sneyd Park will join in sending thanks to her.

The newsletter is a valuable tool to keep the interest of SPRA and its members uppermost in the community. Our group of Road Captains do an amazing job delivering these and maintaining face to face contact within Sneyd Park. Without their volunteer service we would miss a vital connection with the people of this area. We thank them for the time and effort they have given to SPRA. We need more volunteers to do the job so please think about it – we would love to have you on board.

We would also welcome suggestions on how to improve contact within the community. We need to grow our membership as strength in numbers makes it easier to maintain the special feeling of this beautiful part of Bristol we call home."

SS continued. So where do we go in the future? Our secretary, Gay Huggins, has decided to retire after 12 years and we thank her. We do need a replacement and more committee members.

We have decided to keep subscriptions at £5 per annum, but reduced newsletters to two a year. We would like to hold social events, but we need volunteers to help with these.

People ask "what is SPRA doing for us?" and we ask "what are YOU doing for SPRA?"

Please encourage your neighbours to join. We have a QR code available now to take you straight to our website.

To conclude, when you walk around Sneyd Park and hear the bird song, see all the beautiful trees and even a deer walking through, you appreciate where you are, and we all need to protect the area. Thank you.

Proposed: Chris Byrne. Seconded: Sylvia Butterfield. Agreed unanimously.

Vice Chairman's Report: Alan Jenkinson spoke of the protected wildlife corridor which runs through Leigh Woods, Avon Gorge, the Downs, the Nature reserve, Bennetts Patch & White's Paddock, now managed by Avon Wildlife Trust, and the Woodland Trust.

As representative of SPRA on the Downs Advisory Panel (DAP), which is made up of City Councillors, Merchant Venturers, FODAG, etc., I can advise that a Commercial Manager has been appointed who will manage the Downs and improve the income needed to maintain the Downs through groups who presently use it for free, and generally manage the events and usage.

I have also led on the whale project within the Avon Wildlife Trust land, but funding has not been found to repair it, so the money held by SPRA will go directly into the land itself. The whale will be moved to somewhere in Gloucestershire where it will be looked after.

I give SS my support.

It is important to remember that we live in a Conservation Area which is admired and enjoyed by all, and we have a big responsibility to upkeep that legacy.

Proposed: Linda Small. Seconded: Gay Huggins.

Treasurer's Report: Mike Holyhead had sent through the following:-

"I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report for the year to 31st March 2024. Again our thanks to Iain McGregor for his independent review of the accounts.

The first thing to highlight is that the number of members paying subscriptions increased from 402 last year to 460 – an increase of 14%. Thank you and welcome to our new members and a particular thank you to our Road Captains whose hard work facilitated this impressive increase.

Subscriptions are of course our main source of income and accounts show £1,797.00 and additional subscriptions paid in after year end. Our main expenditures were the newsletters at £780, Professional Indemnity Insurance for SPRA officers at £307 and AGM costs at £211. Restricted funds of £3,000 from Team Love- who run the concert on the Downs – to go towards the refurbishment of the whale. This donation is being held in the SPRA bank account pending confirmation of the plans by Avon Wildlife Trust.

The net result of all these figures is that our reserves, after Restricted Funds, stand at £4,934.30 leaving us in a strong financial position going into the current year and ensure cash flow is covered for a two year plus period.

Bank account as at 15.05.24 totals (excluding Restricted Funds) at £5,290.10."

Proposed: Linda Small. Seconded: Gay Huggins

Election of Officers: Chairman – SS was willing to stand again, Vice Chairman Alan Jenkinson, Treasurer Mike Holyhead, Secretary – vacant, Membership Secretary Chhaya Hawkins, Barbara Holyhead and Chris Byrne were prepared to continue, and all were elected en bloc.

Proposed by Martin Farrell. Seconded by Sylvia Butterfield. Agreed unanimously.

Cllr John Goulandris: JG thanked SS and the Committee for all their hard work. Sneyd Park is a beautiful area and it is like living in the countryside in the City. Thank you for re-electing Henry and me for another 4-year stint on the Council.

Cllr Henry Michallat: HM talked about the van dwellers but now the Council has gone “green” it will be even more difficult to remove them. We all know we need a byelaw stating ‘No Sleeping on the Highway’, and this has been brought in by other adjacent authorities, but Bristol is reluctant to do this. However, we have managed to have 20 abandoned vehicles removed. It is going to get worse before it gets better.

Regarding the scooters, we have been in touch with Tia who operate them. Please take pictures of anything illegal or dangerously left, and forward either direct to Tia or us.

Potholes – If you see a white square mark around a pothole, this means it has been noted and will be attended to eventually. Please report unmarked potholes to “Fix My Street”.

Helen Powell – We Love Stoke Lodge: Helen gave an update of the situation. Having achieved Town & Village Green status for Stoke Lodge, Cotham are now instigating Section 14 where the High Court must look at all the evidence. Cotham did not get cost protection so this could cost them thousands. It is imperative that WLSL protect this last green space in Stoke Bishop because it will not remain so if we lose TVG and will be built on.

WLSL will be putting out a request for funding soon, and will be very grateful for continued support so that we can defend Stoke Lodge TVG.

Open Forum:

- 1) Peter Weeks – Could Helen explain the litigation between Cotham and BCC and Katherine Welham. She has become the applicant on behalf of WLSL and represents the community.

Sylvia Butterfield had submitted several questions as follows:-

- 2) Could stones be installed around the Downs’ perimeters to stop people driving onto the grass. DAP will consider this.
- 3) Barbeques on the Downs damage the grass and it takes years to recover. After the Bank Holiday, over 400 disposable barbeques were removed from the Downs. DAP will be installing more signs showing where they can be held.
- 4) The toilets near the Ice cream Van have been vandalised. DAP is investigating.
- 5) Exercise classes on the Downs – lots of groups are charging money but not paying for the use of the Downs. Again DAP’s new employee will be dealing with this
- 6) There are lots of people litter-picking on the Downs. We are very grateful to them, and they should be thanked, not stopped.
- 7) Van dwellers – SS wrote to the Mayor Marvin Rees several times with no response. He also wrote to the MP Darren Jones, but nothing came of it. The Mayor said the dwellers on the Downs were ‘low priority’ because they were not near a school. Gay Huggins asked why vans parking on the 5 hour restricted parking were not fined but cars were. JG advised that it is because they are used as a home. JG also told us that Pembrokeshire have NO overnight parking and removed all their vans. Bristol now has the highest number of van dwellers living in this City in the country. The Council has provided ‘meanwhile’ sites around the City.

There being no more questions, SS thanked all the speakers and all attendees for coming. The meeting closed at 8.50pm .