

## BCR NP Gloucester Road Street Scene Final Report - June 2013

### The NP is asked to:-

- note that this is the last report about the two year NP Gloucester Road Project from March 2011 to March 2013.
- To write a letter to the Mayor and the Director of Neighbourhoods outlining the volunteer problem, which can hardly be unique to our NP, and to request that the matter is looked at again as a matter of urgency.

### Overview

- The purpose behind the actions of GR Street Scene Group was to change the antisocial behaviour and lack of civic responsibility that led to the acceptance of the Gloucester Road looking in such a poor condition. It has taken two years to make these changes and they are still fragile.
- The learning from this project has been fed into the BCR Street Scene Group

### Problems encountered

- The success of the project has been dependent on a massive input of volunteer hours and the willingness of the council officers from various departments, the Police and Councillors to work informally with volunteers.
- The inability to fully harness volunteers in the second year has been the biggest failure. This was due to the lack of public liability insurance of the type enjoyed by Parks volunteers. Much time and effort has been spent by members of the group trying to find a resolution to this to no avail.
- This meant that the leader of the anti-graffiti group felt unable to continue training and supplying anti-graffiti spray or paint to new volunteers and eventually to the disbanding of the group, a decision vindicated by several subsequent claims for damages which were, fortunately, the responsibility of May Gurney
- This led to the volunteer group feeling very undervalued by the Council, during a period in which ironically Liz Kew, the leader, was a finalist in the National NHW awards to be given by the Secretary of State for the Home Office in recognition of the environmental work she has done over the last 5 years.
- Change from SITA to May Gurney and the continuing problems with May Gurney
- Very high Council staff and Police turnover has meant that the input and engagement of new members has been poor, which has increased the work load of existing group member.
- Although a few high profile prosecutions against fly posting have succeeded and

dramatically reduced the problem of the very large A1 & A2 glued fly posters there is no mechanism for managing smaller blue tacked flyposting without leaving them in place or catching people flyposting in the act.

- The change from the co-operation of BCC /Clean and Green , Sita, and the Police Graffiti Unit on criminal damage persecutions for graffiti. The Police Graffiti Unit has changed from two full time staff to part-time members of staff.

### Challenges ahead

- The disbanding of the Clean and Green project and consequent reduction in available work force and funding.
- Since groups of volunteers no longer paint whole walls and MG only paint squares, all this type of work , which in the past five years has been done by volunteer sometimes working with Clean and Green team or with Community pay back , is now done by separate contracts with CPB or Nordic Pioneer
- Naturally there will be on- going issues regarding highways improvements, planning consent, enforcement, waste, graffiti, and flyposting but all are BCR / city wide issues and it is hoped that in future better quality systems and more sensible multidisciplinary working practices will be introduced particularly by the newly employed Neighbourhood Working Co-ordinator.

### Next steps

- A draft of "Graffiti and flyposting removal – guidance notes for volunteers" which is to designed to promote good practice is to be considered by the BCR street scene group or the new Neighbourhood Working Group
- Some volunteer work will continue as Liz Kew requested the NP to fund an accredited training course for the hand removal of graffiti. Seven BCR residents have already trained. It is made clear to the volunteers that they are personally liable and responsible for their own work. This means that she is no longer responsible for any perceived lack of training of volunteers in the hand removal of graffiti. It does not address the issue of volunteer painting.
- In future any further work along the Gloucester road will be managed as part of the newly formed BCR Street Scene Group along with all the other areas.
- The continuation of the project would be immeasurably easier were the issue of public liability insurance to be resolved. **The Group would therefore like to ask the NP to consider writing a letter to the Mayor and the Director of Neighbourhoods outlining the problem, which can hardly be unique to our NP, and to request that the matter is looked at as a matter of urgency.**

### Summary of the work done by the Gloucester road Street scene group

In January 2011, during the NP consultation on local priorities, the following BCR street scene themes were identified

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean &amp; Tidy . . . . .</li> <li>• Drinking fountain . . . . .</li> <li>• Graffiti, Fly-posting . . . . .</li> <li>• Improvements to Glos Rd . . . . .</li> <li>• Lighting . . . . .</li> <li>• Reduce after midnight .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street closures (Gloucester Road)</li> <li>• Trees . . . . .</li> <li>• <b>Other</b> . . , benches . . , toilets . . , bins . . . , Obstructions on pavements . . , Drains cleared . . , Planters . ,</li> <li>• Cut hedges . . . ,</li> </ul>
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**In March 2011** The NP agreed that the setting up of the **Gloucester Road Task Group**. (Later the group was renamed **Gloucester Rd Street Scene Group** due to Alice Darley / Fi Hance / David Willingham/Andrew McGrath setting up a new more strategic NP group – **The Gloucester Rd Town team Group** ).

Although called the Gloucester Road Street Scene Group it included parts of Cheltenham, Zetland and Cromwell road trading areas. The remit was to clearly demonstrate sustainable improvement in the GR environment. **It was agreed that the scope of the GR TG was to include the following :-**

**1. Street scene – waste, litter, flyposting, graffiti tagging etc**

- Progress, methods of working and outcomes have been well documented in the regular NP reports and do not need repeating.
- The use of anti- graffiti coatings has made a significant contribution to the reduction in flyposting.
- Collaboration with enforcement officer and the successful prosecution of people persistently fly posting has encouraged people to continue with removal of fly posters.
- The newest volunteer from Sustainable Bishopston, who is working with the BCC Enforcement officer seems to offer an opportunity in getting real change in the working practises of the GRTA traders in reducing, managing and storing food and other trade waste better.

**2. Natural environment – trees, planters, hanging baskets, landscaping.**

**Trees –**

- The basal epicormic tree growth in the first year had become excessive. Creating problems with litter collecting. BCC was requested to cut back.
- Two new trees were un-expectedly planted at bottom of Elton Road and outside of Sainsbury's .
- New trees will be planted Oct 2013 along the Promenade as part of the £30,000 sustainable transport grant

**Planters.**

- Prior this project £2,00 well being grant had been allocated for planters to be maintained by volunteers. Unfortunately the combination of highways not able to agree suitable positions, the concern about antisocial behaviour and the long term sustainability of the project mean the money was not spent.

**Hanging baskets**

- This summer, NP agreed for the £2,000 wellbeing planter grant to be used for hanging baskets.
- The ambitious target was for 34 baskets to cost £6120. Eventually 24 baskets were funded.
- Funding analysis :

BCR (Wellbeing)	£2,000.00	
Traders	£1,324.00	Contributions from 21 Traders
Bishopston open gardens	£829.50	
Collecting tins (shops and public meetings)	<u>£226.46</u>	
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>£4,380.00</u></b>	

**3. Empty shops / planned developments/ imposed planning conditions**

- The empty shops were the major eyesore, with flyposting and graffiti having accumulated over the years.
- The owners of empty shops, with the exception of the old toilets, have been contacted and agreed to have all flyposting and graffiti removed. This has been sustained by the cost effective use a single paint

colour (blue) and the use of an AGC application where suitable.

- Volunteers have played a major part in removing posters and one volunteer has assisted with painting hoardings etc.
- When new developments, eg BCHF Pigsty hill and the Old North Baths have started the developers/ owners were contacted to get their co-operation in painting hoardings and assisting volunteers keeping them clean and tidy.
- New planning applications were reviewed with particular reference to where flat or trade waste was to be stored.

#### **4. Traffic and Highways**

- Following trader surveys in 2011 BCC transport it was clear that traders felt the loss of four hours trading each day due the introduction of the first Show Case bus route.
- It was established that the original intention was to review the bus route at some stage but at a NP meeting it was confirmed that was two years away and could not be brought forward.
- At the end of two years it was confirmed there was to be no review.
- Changed to bus stops have been programmed in for 2013 but no consultation except as the changes impinge on the £30,000 sustainable transport bid.
- Following informal consultation with traders and GRTA, the NP accepted a proposal from the GR group to look the parking from Hatherley Rd to Longmead Ave,. It was agreed that a feasibility study would be done and work to be scheduled in 2012/13. No feasibility study has been seen by the group.

#### **5. Facilities for the disabled and elderly**

- Street surveys and a meeting at the Oaks residential home showed that elderly people were concerned with the lack of seats within shops and along the road and obstructions on pavements.
- During the survey at the Oaks the opportunity was taken to form a Neighbourhood Watch with the oaks. Members have become invaluable Street Champions and know their local PCSO.
- The A board guidelines were distributed to each business from the Arches to Pitt / Rudthorpe Roads
- As there was no discernible improvement and continuing complaints at Forums the Area co-ordinator was requested to take the matter to the NDT. No action to date.
- GR street scene group joined forces with Sustainable Bishopston and successfully requested three benches/ seats along the Glos Road from the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the sustainable transport bids.
- Further work with the disabled and or elderly will need to be done by an NP Elderly / Disable persons working group if it is ever formed.