



## **Agenda item 7**

### **St George Neighbourhood Partnership (SGNP) Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2014**

**Report of: Rob Acton-Campbell – Environment Sub-Group.**

**Title:** Environment Subgroup

#### **Recommendation:**

- 1- Note general progress update
- 2- NC to Approve spending proposals for St George NP Environment Fund
- 3- NP to agree preferred option for management of fishing at St George Park

#### **Part 1: General progress update**

- 1- The Environment Sub-Group met on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November. Present were representatives from Friends of St George Park, Friends of Dundridge Park, Friends of Troopers Hill and Meadow Vale Community Association. Abdulrazak Dahir (AD) attended to lead discussion on the Environment section of the Neighbourhood Environment Plan. Apologies were received from St George in Bloom and from John Atkinson (JA).
- 2- The main issues discussed were the spending of the Environment Fund (see part 2 below) and the Environment section of the Neighbourhood Partnership Plan. As reported elsewhere the sub-group was unable to come to any consensus on the setting of priorities for the Plan. There were differing views on the main priorities with maintenance, children's play and wildlife issues all being suggested as top priority. At the 'project/activity detail' level many members did not feel they had sufficient knowledge of the issues at other green spaces.

- 3- There was a general discussion over the standard of maintenance at the various green spaces with specific issues being noted to be reported to Bristol Parks through JA. It was noted that Bristol Parks were having ongoing discussions with the Parks Forum and others about the way the Grounds Maintenance service would be provided from February onwards and the way in which the sub-groups would be able to influence this. There would be further information available at the February sub-group meeting and so further discussion was postponed until then.
- 4- Questions were raised over the source of funding for the new handrails on the steps to the bandstand in St George Park. There was concern that these had been installed without consultation with the Parks Group and a feeling that if the work was necessary then lower cost options could have been considered with some of the money then being used on other priorities.
- 5- We were pleased to hear the two outstanding items of S106 spending at Dundridge and St George Park were due for completion in the next few weeks. Following the meeting it was also confirmed that the replacement swings for Dundridge had been ordered by Bristol Parks following discussions with the Park Group.
- 6- There was little time for discussion about street-cleaning and waste collection but it was noted that several of those present had had shoes or textiles left uncollected in their black boxes.

## **Part 2: Proposal – St George NP Environment Fund Spending**

- 7- At the September NP meeting the NC agreed that **£2,595** should be allocated from the Wellbeing element of the unified budget to an Environment fund for 2014/15. It was agreed that final decisions on spending this money would then be made by the NC on recommendations based on the Neighbourhood Partnership Plan from the Environment sub-group. Decisions on this spending need to be taken at this meeting since the March meeting will be too late to place orders for Spring & summer 2015 planting.
- 8- Planting schemes previously funded by the NP include wildflower meadows in various green spaces; planters in Kingsway shopping precinct; hanging baskets and various smaller schemes funded from the Clean & Green budget such as plants for the St George Fountain. In the past the C&G fund has also contributed to the planting of street trees to replace stumps left where trees have had to be felled.

- 9- The sub-group strongly supports the wildflower meadow project. RAC and Marie Burke (Chair of FoSGP) had discussed this project in detail with Teija Ahjokoski prior to the meeting. Teija explained that in the long term perennial planting (such as used in 2014 at Plummers Hill) was preferable as it only needed to be renewed every five years or so. However, some sites would benefit from some years of annual planting prior to moving to perennial planting to reduce the nutrient levels in the soil. Primrose Lane has been identified as a new site for 2015 and we are investigating the possibilities for Meadow Vale. St George Park is funded separately.
- 10- It was noted that St George in Bloom have applied for Green Capital funding that if successful would fund wildflower meadows in St George in 2015 as well as other initiatives. We hope this will be successful but the outcome will not be known until after the deadline for this report and our discussions with Teija have highlighted that if this bid is successful then it would not be possible to plant additional meadows. There are therefore two spending recommendations below option B would implemented if the St George in Bloom bid is successful.
- 11- The planters in the Kingsway precinct have also been very successful and the sub-group would like to install these in other locations. In particular we would like to position them in front of the shops on Maldowers Lane (subject to consultation with the shop keepers) and at the entrance to St George Park. Hanging baskets at the park entrance appears to encourage shop keepers on Church Road to follow suit, so we support funding these again.
- 12- We are also discussing with Teija the possibility of further bulb planting to build on the work done by FoSGP and extend this to other green spaces. The price for manual planting of bulbs is around £7.50/m<sup>2</sup>
- 13- Other projects, such as planting the fountain and replacing street trees would be funded from C&G. We are also looking at the possibility of constructing planters for Meadow Vale from this pot, possibly using Community Payback.
- 14- The NC is therefore asked to agree the following spending of the Environment Fund which also meet priorities in the Draft Neighbourhood Partnership Plan:

#### Option A

Wildflower Meadows at Furber Rd, Dundrige Park, Netham House,  
Primrose Lane and Meadow Vale (tbc) 650m<sup>2</sup> @ £2.20 = £1,430  
Planters / hanging baskets Maldowers & St George Park =£1,250  
Total = £2,680 (overspend of £85 from C&G fund)

#### Option B

Bulb planting (crocuses, winter aconites, anemones and native daffs)  
locations to be confirmed 180m<sup>2</sup> @ £7.50 = £1,350  
Planters / hanging baskets Maldowers & St George Park =£1,250  
Total = £2,600 (overspend of £5 from C&G fund)

### **Part 3: Management of Fishing St George Park**

- 15- The current permit scheme for fishing at St George Park and Eastville Park Lakes runs until the end of February 2015. A decision needs to be taken before then as to whether the scheme should continue for another 12 months. The Neighbourhood Partnership is asked to give its view. The final decision will be taken by Tracey Morgan, Director for Environment & Leisure.
- 16- The NP is asked to consider the reports in the appendices from John Atkinson and Friends of St George Park. It should be noted that BCC is considering the use of new Public Space Protection Orders as an alternative to bye-laws and these could be used to make it easier to enforce any restrictions.
- 17- The following appear to be the options available:
  - A) Total ban on fishing
  - B1) Continue current permit scheme (including close season).
  - B2) Continue permit scheme with higher charge to cover enforcement costs (eg using security patrols)
  - C) Return to unregulated fishing.

## **Appendix 1**

### **St George and Eastville Park Fishing Permit Scheme**

John Atkinson 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014

#### **BACKGROUND**

Over the last five-ten years there have been increasing complaints from local residents and the Friends of St George Park and Friends of Eastville Park, about fishing at the two lakes. The main issue reported has been that of discarded fishing line and tackle and irresponsible fishing practices leading to injuries to wildlife, particularly swans and ducks. Other complaints have been around anti-social behaviour of a minority of anglers including rowdy drinking and public urination.

The issue has been widely discussed at Environmental sub groups, Neighbourhood Forums and Neighbourhood Partnerships and was selected, in early 2013, as a Neighbourhood Partnership Neighbourhood Working Priority in early 2013 and a Problem Solving Plan was developed to implement a multi-agency approach to tackling the issue.

#### **ACTION SO FAR**

- Increased Police Patrols – at least 75 targeted visits
- Increased Bristol City Council Patrols – at least 66 targeted and combined visits
- Research and Evidence Collection for Citywide Parks Bye-laws
- Permit Scheme
- Informal Warnings and Dispersal of Fishermen not Adhering to Permit Scheme
- ASBO application against particularly abusive fisherman

#### **PERMIT SCHEME**

The permit scheme was introduced on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2014. The scheme included a code of conduct to restrain anglers using irresponsible fishing practices such as floating bait and leaving line. Uptake was initially slow but over the last six months numbers of permits have grown and stand at 72 at the time of writing. The permits cost £3 to cover administration fees and cover the applicant to fish at either lake up to the end of the trial period on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. Applicants are required to provide evidence of address and Environment Agency Rod Licence. The Permit Scheme also included a restriction on fishing during 'closed season' of 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014 to 15<sup>th</sup> June 2014 to reflect the same period on inland moving waterways, (unless for non-migratory trout).

#### **EVALUATION**

A number of measurements have been used to assess the effectiveness of the permit scheme including: Swan Rescue Call-outs, RSPCA reports, ASB, (Anti-social Behaviour), logs from Police and reports from BCC staff on any line / tackle found and un-authorised fishermen on visits.

#### SWAN RESCUE CALL-OUTS

Swan rescue call-outs do appear to have reduced this year with 2 fishing related call-outs to St George Park and 0 fishing related call-outs to Eastville Park. The staff at Swan Rescue were, however, keen to emphasise the caveat to this report that 2014 has been atypical in as much as there have been so few cygnets on both of the lakes. They went on to state that they would have no reason to believe it would necessarily been a better year, especially at St George as both visits they made here were due to angling related problems

#### Rescues in Bristol Parks 2008 – 2014.

Park		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total	%
<b>Eastville</b>	No. of calls	2	5	10	10	6	15	3	51	
	Angling related	0	3	9	5	4	7	0	28	55
<b>St. George</b>	No. of calls				4	9	6	2	21	
	Angling related				2	6	3	2	12	62

Details of the rescues at both lakes from 2011 – 2014 are at Appendix 1

#### RSPCA REPORTS

No RSPCA reports or call-outs were received for 2014. The RSPCA were unable to provide statistics for previous years due to the nature of their recording systems.

#### POLICE ASB LOGS

Police have reported that crime and ASB logs have reduced at both parks over the last year. The request for detailed figures is with the Safer Bristol Crime and Community Safety Analyst based at Kenneth Steele House and will be released to both Friends of... Parks Groups and the wider Environmental sub-group as soon as it is received.

#### BCC OFFICER LOGS

BCC Parks and Neighbourhoods Officers were asked to log their visits, fishermen encountered, fishermen without permits and evidence of fishing litter:

Month	Visits	Fishermen	Issues	Litter	Action
March	16	14	4 (2SGP, 2EV)	2	4 fishing without permit advised of scheme and left. Both incidents of litter at EV.
April	10	3	3	0	All fishing in closed season all without permits. Asked to leave
May	8	0	0	0	
June	7	8	2 (SGP)	0	Both without permits – left and applied the following day
July	7	12	2 (1EV, 1SGP)	0	Both without permits. Moved on. 1 applied following week)
August	7	5	0	1	About 5m line and hook removed at island end of SGP
September	5	3	1 (SGP)	0	Fishing in no fishing zone – moved and warned
October	3	1	0	0	
November	3	0	0	0	

As there were no previous years' figures kept for similar visits it is impossible to compare and contrast figures to establish any trends here. BCC Parks and Neighbourhoods staff did expect more general fishing figures and more breaches of permit however. Neither BCC nor Police had any 'repeat offenders' that needed formal action. This encouraging info should, however, be taken into account that, anecdotally, the Friends of Groups and local residents were passing through complaints that many of the problems and issues at both parks this year were late at night and at the weekends when many council staff weren't working. Indeed, over the course of the implementation scheme only 6 visits to the park by BCC staff have been on Saturdays or Sundays.

#### OTHER EVIDENCE

The permit scheme has been very well received by the fishermen themselves. In numerous informal interviews they have stated that the trial has kept away more irresponsible and anti-social anglers and that the litter problems have been better this year. Some of the regular fishermen at both lakes have been 'self-policing' the scheme checking permits, giving advice and helping clear away both fishing related and non-fishing related litter.

Numerous reports from the Friends of... members have said that they feel that the permit scheme has had little or no-effect and that irresponsible fishing practices and damage to wildlife is still as prevalent as ever. They have been keen to emphasise the fact that St George Park in particular, has less Pars presence this year so a comparison of incidents logged by 'Parks Keepers' would be very misleading and, subsequently, haven't been included in this report.

#### IN CONCLUSION

I would ask the Neighbourhood Partnership to examine the evidence and consider the 4 options to move forward laid out by Rob Acton-Campbell in the Environmental sub-group report.

## APPENDIX 1

Rescue Summary for Bristol Parks 2012 *et seq.*

St. George Park

ST. GEORGE PARK.									
Date	Alarm Raised by:		Species	Problem	Action Taken	Journey		Miles	Toll (£)
						From	To		
2011	22 <sup>nd</sup> . Feb	Gina 07899 715216	Juvenile M. Swan (2)	Injury to right leg Beak malformation	Both collected following day and transferred to Swan Sanctuary at Shepperton 3 <sup>rd</sup> . March	S. Wales	St George	80	5.70
	18 <sup>th</sup> . Jun	Clare 07769 185655	Cygnets	Trailing fishing line.	Attended, but had freed itself by the time we arrived.	S. Wales	Shepperton	293	5.70
	3 <sup>rd</sup> . July	Gill Swales 07914 529755	Cygnets	Poorly.	Rescued. To Shepperton following day.	S. Wales	St George	80	5.70
	18 <sup>th</sup> . Aug	Gina 07899 715216	Cygnets	Hook in side of beak.	Caught; de-limbed in situ.	S. Wales	St George	80	5.70
2012	26 <sup>th</sup> . Jan.	Vicky 07876 172728	Juvenile Mute Swan	Fishing tackle - 'chin strap'	Caught and removed; Taken into care.	South Wales	St. George	80	6.00
	27 <sup>th</sup> . Jan		Juvenile Mute Swan	Last cygnet from 2011 brood.	Removed for safety.	South Wales	St. George	80	6.00
	29 <sup>th</sup> . Jan		Both the above cygnets	released at The Knap, Vale of Glamorgan.		Newport	Barry	60	
	10 <sup>th</sup> . Mar	Marie 07584 370413	Moorhen	Fishing line around both legs.	Attended; unable to catch.	S. Wales	St. George	80	6.00
	2 <sup>nd</sup> . Jul		Cygnets	Fishing line.	Unable to catch.	S. Wales	St. George	80	6.00
	3 <sup>rd</sup> . Jul				Caught; de-limbed	S. Wales	St. George	80	6.00
	12 <sup>th</sup> . Jul	Marie 07584 370413	Cygnets	Fishing tackle - 'chin strap'	Caught; to Shepperton.	S. Wales	St. George	293	6.00
	13 <sup>th</sup> . Jul		As 12 <sup>th</sup> .			S. Wales	Shepperton		
	6 <sup>th</sup> . Aug		Cygnets x 2	Fishing tackle - 'chin strap'	Caught; to Shepperton.	S. Wales	St. George	293	6.00
	17 <sup>th</sup> . Aug		Cygnets	Fishing tackle	Caught; to Shepperton.	S. Wales	St. George	293	6.00
	5 <sup>th</sup> . Oct	Marie 07584 370413	Pair of domestic white ducks.	Dumped. (Caught by Maggie & Marie).	To Shepperton.	S. Wales	St. George	293	6.00
2013	27 <sup>th</sup> . Jan	Dave 07944 887959	Juvenile Mute Swan	Territorial dispute; landed in neighbouring tennis court.	Caught, along with last remaining sibling from lake. Released at The Knap	S. Wales	St. George, The Knap, Barry.	133	6.20
	10 <sup>th</sup> . Jun	Marie 07584 370413	Cygnets	Fish hook in foot	Did not attend; locals fixed it.				
	24 <sup>th</sup> . Jun		Mallard	Most of feathers missing from back.	Into care. Transferred to Shepperton 25 <sup>th</sup> . June.	S. Wales	St. George	80	6.20
	12 <sup>th</sup> . Jul	Maggie 07855 220885	Gull chick.	In Bristol City Centre.	All collected, and transferred to Swan Rescue SW (Swindon).	S. Wales	St. George	286	6.20
	24 <sup>th</sup> . Aug	Maggie 07855 220885	Aylesbury Duck x 2	Dumped	Unable to catch, but Gina succeeded later; cut and released.	S. Wales	St. George	150	6.20
	5 <sup>th</sup> . Sept	Various	Cygnets	Fishing tackle	Actually caught by angler, and passed to Maggie. Transferred to West Hatch 7 <sup>th</sup> . Sept	S. Wales	St. George	80	6.20
2014	9 <sup>th</sup> . Jan.	Marie 07584 370413	Cygnets - last one.	Not eating; appears to have chin strap.	Caught; de-limbed in situ. Into care at RSPCA West Hatch.	S. Wales	West Hatch	157	6.20
	8 <sup>th</sup> . July	07981 572217	Duckling	Fishing tackle	Attended, but unable to catch.	S. Wales	West Hatch	184	6.40
						S. Wales	St George	80	6.40



Rescue Summary for Bristol Parks - 2012 - May 2014.

Eastville Park.

Eastville Park.									
Date	Alarm Raised by:	Species	Problem	Action Taken	From	To	Miles	Toll (£)	
2011	15 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Kathleen 07908 504154 Pete Thain 07595 024899	Juvenile Mute Swan	Fishing behind fence.	Attended but failed to catch. Returned 18 <sup>th</sup> by which time bird had shed line.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	5.70
	13 <sup>th</sup> Apr	07584 370413	Juvenile Mute Swan	Impaled on railings	Dead by the time we arrived.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	5.70
	16 <sup>th</sup> June	Jane 07737 033458	Adult cob	Lehargic.	Caught following day and taken to Shepperton.	S.Wales	Shepperton	290	5.70
	17 <sup>th</sup> June				Returned from Shepperton.	S.Wales	Shepperton	290	5.70
	14 <sup>th</sup> July	Marie Burk 07584 370413	Black headed Gull	Injured - Stunned.	Attended, able to release in situ.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	5.70
	9 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Jessica 7607411 334524	Mallard	Hook in line.	Attended but no chance of catching	S.Wales	Eastville	74	5.70
	21 <sup>st</sup> Aug	Paul Dicks 0117 9354696	Cygnets	Hook in line + 200g of line	Attended, but freed itself.	S.Wales	Eastville	423	11.40
	21 <sup>st</sup> Aug	Clive Jenks 07581 477825	Cygnets	Blue-green algae present; Fire & Rescue Service called; bird rescued; to Swan Sanctuary, Shepperton	Caught; Shepperton 209.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	5.70
	17 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Sean 07557 143697	Canada Goose	Poorly.	Caught; Shepperton 209.	S.Wales	Eastville	290	5.70
	29 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Marie Burk 07584 370413	Adult cob	Not feeding; fishing line ingested.	Failed to catch, despite help from Avon Fire & Rescue Service.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	5.70
	11 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Mr. Singh 07989 275225	Cygnets	Dead	Body collected, post mortem suggests duck viral enteritis is cause of death.	S.Wales	Eastville	309	5.70
	29 <sup>th</sup> Dec	+ a number of others.	Black headed Gull	Strangled from branch of tree on island by fault in tongue and strength of line	Launched inflatable, caught and de-tangled bird in situ; released.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	5.70
	8 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Sarah 07971 245256 Charlie 0117 952 0197	Juvenile Mute Swan	Attended to under water position.	Attended; freed itself	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.00
	7 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Steven	Cygnets	Fishing under cob door.	Attended; freed, but taken into care.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.00
	29 <sup>th</sup> Aug		Adult male swan.	Fishing under cob door.	Attended, but had freed itself by the time we arrived.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.00
2012	19 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Rebecca 07910 947656	Moorhen	Trapped in support structure.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.00	
	22 <sup>nd</sup> Sep	Paul 07891 269954	Adult male swan.	Fishing under cob door.	Attended, but had freed itself by the time we arrived.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.00
	16 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Nigel 07539 753058	Adult male swan.	Reported to be dead.	Attended, but nothing untoward found on arrival.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.00
	16 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Arnie 07876 044288 Graham 07740 955042 Hilary 07745 135507 Florentina 07960 176740 Vicky 07876 172728 Alan 07887 367667 07749 716785	Adult male swan	Fishing under cob door; very noisy.	Attended; unable to catch.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	17 <sup>th</sup> Feb				Attended; unable to catch.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	10 <sup>th</sup> Feb				Caught with the help of a squadron of canoes.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	19 <sup>th</sup> Feb				Transferred to Shepperton.	S.Wales	Shepperton	290	6.20
	25 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Christine 07795 432095	Adult swan	Reported to be bleeding from beak.	Attended, but nothing untoward apparent on arrival; stayed for 40 mins	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	8 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Kate 07586 427892	Juvenile Mute swan	Ear pinned back.	Attended; 1-12 swans present. All checked and found to be clear.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	14 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Ann 07522 943305	Mute Swan	Reported to drooping something metallic.	Attended; all well. Concluded sound came from ice 'shriek'.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	15 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Ann 07980 937401	Juvenile Mute swan	Strangled fishing line	Did not attend. Line swallowed completely as Ann watched.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	30 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Roxanne 07769 625186	Mute swans	Major territorial dispute.	Attended, but all peaceful when we arrived.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	27 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Philip	Adult swan	Grounded in Everest Street, Eastville	Attended and collected.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	28 <sup>th</sup> Apr				Released at The Knop, Barry.	S.Wales	Barry	60	
	11 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Andy 07717 360565	Mute swans	Major territorial dispute.	Attended, but by the time we arrived, victims had retreated to river; abandoning their nest and eggs.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
2013	30 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Angela 07580 527401	Cygnets	Not feeding.	Caught, chestnut cut and released.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	12 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Alan 07887 367667	Cygnets	Suspicion of not feeding.	No evidence of chin strap.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	21 <sup>st</sup> Aug	07758 417650	Adult female swan	Territorial.	Rescued, and relocated to The Knop.	S.Wales	Eastville	120	6.20
	10 <sup>th</sup> Sep	'Woody' 07944 687959	Adult male swan	Trapped line and fence.	'MoP' had caught and cleared the problem by the time we arrived.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	30 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Alan 07887 367667	Cygnets	Suspicion of not feeding.	Caught eventually and found to have chin strap.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	13 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Gary 07793 969085 Ruth 07548 752339	Cygnets	Misadvised hook in right side of tongue (mid length)	Caught and hook removed with short length of line, transferred to Shon.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	4 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Vicky 07876 172728	Cygnets poorly - lump in neck.	Decongestants emerged to attach lumps.	Caught, Hilary to Shepperton.	S.Wales	Shepperton	290	6.20
	8 <sup>th</sup> Dec				Caught; Hilary to Shepperton.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.20
	17 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Vicky 07876 172728 Andy 07717 360565	Major territorial dispute in progress.	Attended, but one pair driven onto river by the time we arrived.	In the circumstances, no action possible.	S.Wales	Eastville	74	6.40
	8 <sup>th</sup> May	Vicky 07876 172728	Concern regarding last remaining 2013 juvenile.		Called in en route from Shepperton.	S.Wales	The Knop	60	
	21 <sup>st</sup> May	Alan 07887 367667	3 cygnets alone / abandoned		Released at The Knop, Barry.	S.Wales	Eastville	180	6.40
	25 <sup>th</sup> May		Mute swans	Random spot check, en route from RSPCA West Hatch.		S.Wales	West Hatch		

## **Report on the Fishing Permit Scheme by the Friends of St George Park Group (FOSGPG)**

There is a great deal of historical documented evidence regarding the serious problems caused by fishing activities in St George Park in the last few years. **In surveys, complaints and statements from the public, there has been 100% support for increasing and protecting wildlife in the park.** The overwhelming majority want fishing to be banned.

On 15/03/2014 the **Fishing Permit Scheme** commenced for a period of one year, to assess whether this would improve conditions sufficiently for fishing to be viable. The scheme operates in Eastville and St George parks.

**According to Bristol City Council the success of the scheme is being measured by 3 criteria:**

### **1.A REDUCTION IN WILDLIFE RESCUE AGENCIES CALLOUTS**

So far this year there have been **2 callouts to Swan Rescue**, resulting in the removal of 2 cygnets for treatment. The permanent effect of these angling related injuries meant that they could not be returned to the lake. Callouts have varied in the last 4 years, averaging 3 annually that were directly angling related. Two callouts cannot be interpreted as a reduction, especially as another case was dealt with by FOSGPG members and other park users (a cygnet died tangled in fishing line before Swan Rescue could be called). Swan Rescue state very strongly that this year cannot be seen as in any way typical because so few cygnets survived to grow up on either lake (at St George and Eastville). In St George 3 of the 7 cygnets disappeared in 2 weekends at a few weeks old. The cause has not been established, but it may be relevant that there were fishermen casting around the island, day and night, at this time. **In all, 3 cygnets disappeared (fate unknown), 1 died and 2 were removed because of angling injuries, and just one remains.** The remaining cygnet is, at the time of writing this report (November) under threat and stressed as attempts have been made to capture it. **Swan Rescue** states that they have no reason to believe that 2014 has been a better year, especially at St George, and that incidents are “well in excess of the overall averages that we compute annually as convenors of the National Swan Convention. By any yardstick, these two lakes are well established on our list of **BLACK SPOTS**”. This is shameful at the start of Bristol Green Capital year.

**An important aspect of the Fishing Permit Scheme was to have been the continuing monitoring and log kept by the park keeper.** However she left at the end of February and was not replaced. So for the duration of the permit scheme there has not been a comprehensive record of all the angling related incidents, especially the damage to birds other than swans. All the ducklings are gone, the last one died in fishing tackle in July.

### **2.A REDUCTION IN FISHING LITTER (LINE AND HOOKS), AT BOTH LAKES**

Fishing debris has continued to be evident as a problem on an unacceptable scale. FOSGPG have photographic evidence and a physical collection of fishing line, as have the Friends group at Eastville. Some more responsible fishermen say that they have been picking up some of the fishing line left by others, but it has continued to be a significant danger in and around the lake and in trees.

### **3.A REDUCTION IN IRRESPONSIBLE FISHING REPORTS – USING FLOATING BAIT, FISHING IN NO FISHING ZONES ETC.**

**The only statistics available are the separate records of the police and the council.** Both services have proved to be difficult to access by the public, erratic in their logging policies, and unreliable as a consistent source of information about what has been happening. In particular the police resist logging of incidents unless they involve a criminal offence, which excludes breaches of the rules of the Fishing Permit Scheme apart from some types of anti-social behaviour.

**Incomplete and unreliable monitoring and enforcement**, relying on reporting by the public or fishermen themselves, with no overall professional oversight and coordination, cannot meet even the limited objectives of the permit scheme. Visits made to the park by police and council officials at the introduction of the scheme cannot be sustained because of cost and pressure on resources, and was never 24/7 (which means that claims about no repeat offenders cannot be reliable. Fishermen who have been moved on have been observed returning to the park 15 minutes later!)

**FOSGPG and other members of the public have abundant evidence of the damage caused by fishing this year**, with photos of fishing in the “no fishing zones”, and distressing photos of wildlife injuries. The fishing closed season (15 March – 15 June) was ignored by many, as was the ban on fishing near the island and night fishing, and the council advice not to fish during the blue green algae bloom. Bread as bait has been cast directly at the island. Fishermen have even boated to the island at night, fishing and attacking wildlife. Initially it did seem easier to take action against fishermen during the closed season, as there was more clarity, but this was lost as fishermen realised the general ineffectiveness of enforcement powers. Anti-social behaviour, such as drunkenness, verbal abuse, and urinating/defecating around the lake area has continued unabated.

## **CONCLUSION**

Monitoring has failed to demonstrate that the Fishing Permit Scheme has brought improvements to the negative impacts of fishing on wildlife and on the enjoyment of the lake by other park users.

But perhaps of even more significance is the fact that **nothing in the permit scheme addresses the basic problems of a lake which is essentially “dead” and devoid of ecological sustainability.**

FOSGPG commissioned a report by **Slimbridge Wildlife and Wetlands Trust**, which was completed in June 2011. **The report points very clearly to the absence of wildlife in the lake:**

“The lack of vegetation within and around the lake suggests the invertebrate fauna within the lake is likely to be highly impoverished.” “No bird species was present in particularly high numbers.” “No aquatic mammal species are known to use the lake.” “One common frog was seen within the water inlet chamber. No other species of amphibian or reptile were noted”.

**The predominant reason for this situation is summed up as follows:**

“Fish species within the lake are known to include varieties of carp, roach, perch, trench and perhaps catfish. **Fish numbers and density are very high.** “High nutrient inputs [fish waste] and excess baiting lead to abnormally high fish densities, resulting in there being no aquatic vegetation within or around the lake, and probably minimal invertebrate diversity. This inevitably means **the lake’s ecological status is severely impoverished**, as wetland vegetation is typically a pre-requisite component of a bio-diverse habitat.” “**Water clarity is not likely ever to be high** at the site, due to the high densities of fish. **The frequency of incidence of algae blooms is also likely to remain high** as long as high densities of fish are maintained.” [Since this report, rats and seagulls have presented increasing threats, attracted by high nutrient inputs and food littering.] **In addition it was noted that:** “Anglers’ litter, especially discarded nylon fishing line and hooks (often resulting in bird deaths) raises animal welfare issues.” “Vandalism and apparent lack of care for animal welfare issues are prevalent at this site.” [www.tinyurl.com/SGPlakeReport](http://www.tinyurl.com/SGPlakeReport)

## **THE FUTURE OF THE LAKE**

Nothing has improved since this report, and in fact there are indications that the situation has worsened (such as the loss of other waterfowl, like moorhens). **FOSGPG would like to proceed with fund-raising to create a wildlife friendly environment, which is what the park users want.** The lake is publically owned, not created by or for anglers, with no means of effectively managing fish stocks, pollution and physical access, unlike larger privately owned lakes with a bailiff system (such as the Duchess Pond at Stoke Park, easily accessible for local fishermen).

It is time for a change of use from fishing to a lake that everyone can safely enjoy, is aesthetically pleasing and of educational value. In particular, children would benefit from improved access to a lake which is clean and full of aquatic life to satisfy their curiosity. Bringing about this change, in line with the new priorities for Bristol’s Green Capital status in 2015, would give back to St George Park Lake the original value of an attractive recreational facility for all.