

Stoke Park Conservation Management Plan

Report on Public Consultation 21 February 2017

1.0 Background

With support and funding from Historic England, Bristol City Council commissioned a draft Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Registered Historic Park, and the Scheduled Monument Anti-Aircraft Battery, at Stoke Park. Both designated areas are currently on the 'at risk' register. Previous consultation including responses from young people and local interest groups helped inform the CMP. A further on-line consultation about the CMP proposals for Stoke Park was carried out in January and February 2017. This was supported by a press release, articles in local newsletters, social media, a series of walks and talks on site, attendance at community events and information boards at M Shed, Central library and The Hub. This report is a summary of over 700 responses received. This report summarises these in a combination of statistics, and a narrative including some of the comments received. The narrative is not intended to be statistically representative, but to reflect the range of comments.

1.1 Effectiveness of the Consultation

The number of responses received is good, especially given the time of year, timescale of the consultation, the limited awareness of Stoke Park across the city, and the inevitable self-selecting limitations of on-line consultations.

By 21 February 2017:

- 33% of the respondents were from within postcode areas immediately adjoining the park (BS7 9, BS5 6, and BS16 1)
- only three of the respondents were from outside the BS postcode area
- 83% recorded themselves as White British
- 2% of respondents were answering on behalf of an organisation
- 2.8% of respondents were under 25; and only 12% were over 64
- 6.7% were disabled
- 8% were non users of Stoke Park – a target group for the consultation

2.0 Existing Users

2.1 Reasons for visits

The most popular reasons given for visiting the park (based on 678 respondents to this question) were:

walking or jogging	65%
enjoy nature	60%
relaxation/peace	51%
walk the dog	31%
to get to somewhere else	20%

However, no category was provided for visiting cultural heritage sites, and this was volunteered by ten respondents in the comments section. Horse riding was cited by three people, foraging by two, and two others enjoyed the view from the M32.

2.2 Modes of Access

Of the 616 responses to this question most visitors currently arrive by foot (55%), with 29% by car or motorbike. This is partly explained by the number of commuters walking through the park, as well as active ramblers. Two people commented that they arrived by mobility scooter, which is quite striking given the very limited options within the park.

2.3 Frequency and Seasonality

Of the 617 respondents to this question 15 to 22% visit daily, with fewer regular visits in winter (19% were 'rarely' i.e. very infrequent visitors in winter, compared with 3-7% in other seasons). Weekly visits peaked at 35% in summer, but remained 23% of respondents even in winter.

2.4 Positive Attributes

Although not statistically categorised, the two favourite things in the park typically included:

- *views are great*
- *woods*
- *it's really big*
- *feels like actual countryside.. in the country yet still being in a city*
- *open space... breathing space*
- *less children than other areas which means dogs can run free*
- *nature... diversity*
- *tranquillity*
- *unmanicured... unpampered look .. feels a bit wild*

- *on our doorstep*
- *sculpture trail*
- *selfishly I would like it if you didn't make it too popular*
- *main path is smooth and free of debris*
- *history and hidden monuments*

2.5 **Negative Attributes**

Less popular aspects, also in a rough order of frequency:

- *mud – only just fallen over*
- *sound and sight of the M32*
- *dog poo...aggressive dogs*
- *no café/parking/toilet*
- *very few waste bins*
- *cyclists going too fast*
- *small number of irresponsible dog owners...had a few too close encounters*
- *lack of information*
- *lack of events and facilities*
- *occasional anti-social behaviour – motorbike riding*
- *shabbiness.... vandalism and arson... graffiti*
- *grim underpass...tunnel should have its graffiti returned... underpass floods*
- *too many commercial dog walkers*
- *isn't anywhere that is disabled friendly*
- *neglect of Purdown Percy*
- *unsafe by the war shelters...seems to be a drugs den*
- *vehicles driven into the park*
- *lack of ecological management*
- *overgrown areas in summer inaccessible*
- *barriers at entrances restrict cycles*

2.6 **Areas of Use**

47% of the 611 respondents to this question visited all areas, with Purdown and Lockleaze Open Space the most popular individual space at 22%.

3.0 **Non-Users**

3.1 Out of 97 non-users, 15% said they didn't know it existed; a further 8% didn't know how to get there; 20% cited lack of parking. 43% of 'other' non-users included lack of awareness, lack of a café, and overgrown.

3.2 Both existing visitors and non-users answered the open question about reducing barriers to access, also arranged in an approximate order of frequency:

- *better signposting*
- *more facilities... parking...café...WCs...I'm a sucker for good coffee and homemade cakes... coffee shop with a view*
- *less dog poo*
- *more information – on boards... better promotion*
- *accessible paths.. so I can take whole family out, with prams, wheelchairs, people who don't own walking boots*
- *more benches and litter bins*
- *circular routes*
- *restoring the landscape / heritage features*
- *better wildflower display*
- *more events*
- *kids play... made to fit in with the environment*
- *measures to reduce anti-social behaviour*
- *feeling safer*
- *outdoor exercise equipment*
- *a cure for arthritic knees*
- *a cycle track from Stoke Park housing to Sir John's Lane*
- *please don't tidy it up too much and take away its heart*
- *dedicated wildlife lake*
- *mountain bike path*
- *quiet tarmac on the M32*

4.0 **Prioritisation of CMP areas of improvement**

4.1 Respondents were asked to rate the following improvements from 1-5 (1 being not Important and 5 being Very Important). The number of those rating the improvement a 4 or 5 have been amalgamated to give the following priorities. The number of respondents to each individual suggested improvement is listed alongside.

Car Park	30% of 662 respondents
Café	52% of 670 respondents
Community involvement	58% of 665 respondents
Interpretation inc. Purdown Percy	68% of 672 respondents
Repair historic park structures	79% of 670 respondents
Replant trees and remove scrub and trees	72% of 669 respondents
Woodland management	81% of 666 respondents
Restore paths	75% of 666 respondents
Events and Volunteering	55% of 663 respondents
Signage	54% of 667 respondents

Other proposals supported in the free text box included:

- *park manager and dog warden*
- *more dog / litter bins*
- *oral history project*
- *space for outdoor learning*
- *show bus stops on map... regular bus service*
- *you do not stand any chance...until you have addressed the threat posed by dogs*
- *motorbike barriers ... remove cycle barriers ... cycle paths*
- *work with artists to interpret*
- *please do not stop motorists enjoying the view of the park*
- *recreate the full obelisk*
- *not a commercial café chain*
- *remove TA garages*
- *buy Lockleaze community centre as library and café... sell temporary library to fund this*
- *a concrete skate park*

4.2 **Reintroduction of Grazing**

80% of 670 respondents to this question replied in favour of reintroducing grazing. Of the reasons cited for not doing this, the main concerns were:

- *a disaster for dog walkers...it's a huge area where my dog can run around without bothering anyone*
- *concern over security of the cattle... Council don't have knowledge or experience*
- *cows can be intimidating*

- *only in limited areas*
- *a sprung large gate would be required for people like me to gain access..*
- *hedgelaying would possibly be an acceptable conservation compromise..(vs. fencing)*
- *not on the bike path area*
- *cow poo would be left behind*
- *information about the herd would be interesting*

4.3 **Purdown Percy**

Of the two options offered for Purdown Percy, 33% of the 660 respondents to this question supported continuing degradation, as is, and 67% for stabilisation, interpretation, and burial of less important parts. There were a few individual responses that supported repair of the battery as a whole.

5.0 **Comments from Organisations**

- 5.1 Bristol Civic Society, the Bristol Cycling Campaign and the Lockleaze Voice Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan all proposed a southwest-northeast cycle route linking Sir John's Lane to Cheswick Village. A shared use path along the historic drive route may be an acceptable option, subject to planning consent and funding to build and maintain the route.
- 5.2 Bristol Civic Society recommended more than one car park; Bristol Cycling Campaign recommended none.
- 5.3 Several individual and Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust proposed reuse of an existing social enterprise facility rather than a new build café and toilets. It is proposed that these options, which are reflected in the CMP, should be assessed in detail by an architect once funding is secured, to secure a viable facility which is attractive to locals and visitors, and operated by a local social enterprise.
- 5.4 Bristol Civic Society also proposed a footpath circuit linking Stapleton Road, the Metrobus overbridge, Sims Hill and Stoke Park. The Civic Society also noted that involvement and activity in the park should be the priority; this view will be shared by at least some of the proposed project funders. It was with some surprise that general consultees rated prioritisation of repair and restoration proposals just above activity proposals.
- 5.5 The University of the West of England suggested some creative solutions for digital interpretation, involvement with education, and emphasised the importance of Stoke Park

as a modern gateway to the City. There was also a highly pragmatic plea for lighting in the M32 underpass.

- 5.6 Avon Wildlife Trust, Historic England, Learning Partnership West, the Forest of Avon Trust, the Brandon Trust, the head teacher of Glenfrome Primary School, Friends of Stoke Park, Stoke Park Delivery Group, Kerry McCarthy MP, and other councillors have all provided enthusiastic support for the park project.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The public consultation to date supports the main proposals of the CMP, but raises some interesting issues to be resolved as part of the detail designs. Retention of the park's special, slightly rough, character will require careful specification and implementation over time.
- 6.2 There is a clear conflict between some existing park users, attracted to the site's present suitability for unrestricted use by dogs, and those who are strongly discouraged by this. Consultees made a number of useful suggestions about how the potential conflict between free-running dogs and reintroduced grazing (supported by 80% of respondents) could be managed. These included:
- use of an experienced grazier
 - grazing to favour wild flowers
 - grazing one area at a time
 - explanatory signage
 - appointment of a park keeper
- These suggestions will be addressed in the design stage.
- 6.3 There is also a clear need to deepen engagement with younger people, BME groups, the elderly and people with disabilities, under-represented as park users, and in this consultation. This will have to be addressed in the park's Activity Plan, and involve Bristol Physical Access Chain in developing accessible routes.
- 6.4 The results of the consultations will be reviewed in more detail during the design development stage, should the grant applications be successful, including consideration of:
- a shared use car park along the historic drive route

- an options appraisal for a park café and toilets including re-use of existing social enterprise facilities
- deeper engagement with local under-represented groups
- an access audit of path and circuit improvements
- progressive introduction, sensitive management and interpretation of conservation grazing
- appointment of a dedicated park keeper