

Stoke Park Community Engagement Report

A)-Background:

Stoke Park Estate is a major green infrastructure asset for Bristol. Consisting of 108 hectares (274 acres) grade II registered historic parkland that lies on the north east boundary of Bristol, some two miles from the city centre. Stoke Park estate is owned by Bristol City Council, with part of the estate within the South Gloucestershire Council boundary. The estate is clearly visible from the M32 motorway, encompassing the sweeping landscape adjacent to the distinct yellow Dower house, which itself is privately owned.

Stoke Park is surrounded by urban development at Lockleaze, Stapleton and Cheswick Village to the north including the University of the West of England campus. There are a number of active citizens and groups using and involved in the park, organisations delivering projects in it as well as citizens using it for commuting, recreational, leisure and business activities. Stoke Park is not currently identified in the city as a destination park with obvious disengagement of certain groups of our local communities.

Following a public consultation a submission was made to Heritage lottery Fund to support development in the park, the bid was unsuccessful and feedback highlighted that there was insufficient community engagement in the park.

The online consultation with citizens across Bristol was conducted in 2017. The word cloud below highlights the positive things that people like about the Park (1) and the dislikes (challenges) of the respondents (2).



(1)



(2)

This is interesting to compare with all informal conversation data compiled later.

B)-Community Development and engagement:

The community development and engagement initiative has started in January 2018. The focus was to conduct face to face community building conversations with park users and potential park users especially with less engaged equality groups to encourage more engagement with park and also social actions. The work sought to understand and record users' views in the park on both opportunities and improvements people would like to see - if any. The work also aimed at encouraging more users and partners led activities in the park and to identify potential park users who might be interested in running activities in Stoke Park or to be involved in decision making process.

The overall benefit of a community engagement project was that more and wider range of people will have engaged with the Stoke Park (including its heritage) than before in terms of enjoyment and understanding its historical importance and volunteering to undertake practical tasks to help manage the park.

We should show the audience profile has changed to include people from wider range of age, ethnicities and social backgrounds; more disadvantaged people or groups of people who have never engaged with Park than before. We will work with existing groups, partners and users so they are better connected with each other and feel they have more ownership over the future of the Park.

Community development/ Engagement outputs:

To achieve the above aim the community development team agreed to have 576 community building conversations in and around the Park (from a wide ranging audience targeting equality groups) so to explore ways in which people can come together, lead activities and use/benefit from the park. We have had **608** community building conversation with the following breakdown 438, open face to face conversations and 178 themed conversations (60 BAME, 50 Stoke Park open day, 50 Cheswick village, Bat walk 20, Meet the Goats 7). We used both the topics identified through the online responses and the open face to face community conversations to engage in more focused themed and targeted conversations with park users and potential park users to record their views on key themes identified earlier.

This phase was to draw more details for any future improvements and to gauge whether there is energy to run activities in the park and to identify park users who are willing to proactively engage with the park.

In addition we also supported community engagement events in Lockleaze to talk with residents about the 106 funds to provide play and fitness opportunities in Stoke Park.

We have supported Public meetings where residents came together to talk about their issues and concerns about the Conservation Management Plan and supported Parks 'walks and talks' to listen to people's concerns.



Our Lockleaze – community conversation



Parks 'Walk and Talk'

We had 4 themed conversations on park accessibility, facilities and the dog walking activities and what else people wanted to say about the park:

1- Cheswick Village SP community conversation:

This is a targeted themed conversation where we engaged in open and themed conversations with residents and park users in Cheswick village. We spoke to 50 people both park users and non -park users who live around SP.

2- BAME Community Conversation:

We had 2 separate targeted conversations with BAME communities all of them non park users but were linked to the park in arranged visits with 50 people including children attended. Steve England also included us in his targeted BAME work with refugees and asylum seekers. We had also conversations with several BAME citizens and few park users throughout the engagement period. The overall engagement of BAME in the community building conversation and themed conversation is around 12% of the overall park and potential park users' conversations.

3- Stoke Park Open Day Community conversation:

This was an open community themed conversation on Saturday with variety of activities to engage park users in themed conversation and we had themed



Women's fire circle and crafting in the woods in 2018.



Maria getting the singers ready at the Community Picnic - August 2018

The activities in 2019 have largely focussed on working in partnership with Steve England, the Somali forum and Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust. We provided 15 guided activities with Steve England, two supported with the Somali forum. We supported the majority of the activity which enabled us to get some idea of whether people enjoyed activity, whether they would be willing to pay and numerous comments about what they think of Stoke Park and it's very much hidden multi-faceted cultural and natural offer. The activities engaged over **525** participants, with only two sessions not reaching full capacity due to insufficient advertising.



Pond-dipping – a very competitive business – this summer I divided the session into two to increase value for money – and it worked well. The dads loved competing for number of species! We found a water scorpion – big beastie ate a tadpole ☺



Asylum seekers discover a home from home



Somali children discover the freedom of the woods

Map of stoke park activities:

Event/activity	Date	People involved - actions	Number
1. Fairy Felt Making	May Half Term - wed 30 th May	April and Hayley	20
2. Women's Fire x 3	May 30 th	Make food / bracelets and felt/clay.	8
3.	July and September		6
4.			7
5. playing in the park	July 26th	hula hoops/juggling/play	15
6. activities in the woods	August 2nd	Marshmallows/pencil making /popcorn	12
7. Picnic in the park	August 4 th (Sat)	Community picnic in the Park	30
8. walk to Snuff Mills	August 9th	Walk through Stoke Park	10 (e)
9. Sculpture trail	August 16th	Virtual (Ruth)	Not available
10. Westsport	August 23rd	Sports in Stoke Park (didn't reach	10

		target age)	
11. Pond Dipping	August 30 th 2018	Looking at different species of pond life	15
12.Pond -Dipping	2019 30 th June	Great family event , discovering what creatures live in the pond – see how many different species you can find, come along prepared to get dirty and a bit wet and have lots of fun.	20 in two groups
13. Woodland activity	25 th July	Woodland activities and introduction to wild birds	15
14. Woodland activity	26 th July	Woodland activities and cooking Targeted group	20
15. walk on the wild side	27 th July	Activities including wild birds starting at old library end	30
15. Woodland craft	30 th July	Activities in woodland – targeted group	15
16.Pond -Dipping	Thursday 1st August	Pond dipping and species ID	17
17. Pond dipping	Sat 3 rd August	To support fun day	12
18.Family Walk on the Wild Side (featuring Wild Birds).	Thursday 8th August	A great opportunity for families to come and learn about the wildlife that live and visit stoke park – looking at grasslands, woodlands and the lake we will be joined by a bird of prey experience who will bring along birds for you to meet.	28
19. Walk on the wildside	Mon 12 th August	Woodland walk	27
20.Twilight History tour	Thursday 15th August	Join the historian Steve England and discover the fascinating history of the park dating back 1000 years this will be a lovely evening stroll and great way to end the day.	25
21.Family walk on the wild side (featuring Wild Birds).	Thursday 22 August	A great opportunity for families to come and learn about the wildlife that live and visit stoke park – looking at grasslands, woodlands and the lake we will be joined by a bird of prey experience who will bring along birds for you to meet.	25
22.Know your Trees and scavenging challenge.	Thursday 29th August	A great family event, learn all the secrets of the forest, find out some fun facts about plants and their uses. (not publicised properly!)	6
23.Bat Walk	Friday 6th September	A great family opportunity to walk around Stoke Park Estate with bat	22

		detectors and learn all about the secret life of bats.	
24. History/Archaeology walk in Stoke Park	Saturday 14th September	Learn about the history and archaeology of Stoke Park.	24
25. Meet the goats	July 2019	Groundwork?	10
26. Walk and talk	?	Do you have this in your diary Mohammed?	35
27. History /Archaeology walk in stoke park	14 September 2019	History/archaeology of Stoke Park	20
28. Refugee and asylum seekers' park exploration	June	Steve invited us to engage on this one with him	8
29. Bat walk for scouts	4 th and 13 August	Targeted younger age group SE and Jayne	40
30. UWE Student volunteer recruitment day	3 October 2018	Invited Groundwork to join AR to recruit on volunteer day, further session planned on 1 st October 2019 with Steve England.	52

525+ activity participants/52 student recruits/35 walk and talk (one session)

NB; 2018 also had a tree ID session with John Atkinson but numbers not available 20 estimate.

D)-Identify citizens who are already active in the park and/or who might have an interest in being active:

We have identified 36 people who would like to be involved in Stoke Park either directly as volunteers or strategically in its' future:

Direct volunteers	Interested in the strategic and future decision of stoke park	Other email or phone contacts
13	33	200

We have also identified or engaged number of community groups and networks in either the delivery, planning and future work on stoke park as follow:

Stoke Park School and new Cathedral School; St James Church; Lockleaze Community club; Old Library; Methodist Church Stapleton; Cheswick residents neighbourhood (FB); Lockleaze Neighbourhood trust; Buzz; Fitness Instructor; Couch to 5k; private Dog walking companies (registered and non- registered); Park Run; Wednesday walking group; UWE (commuters/walking groups/students); Little foxes forest school, photographers/ecologists/archaeologists/historians/naturalists; UWE (commuters/walking groups/students), friends and individuals formerly of a friends group.

E)- At least two new associations / groups forming as a direct impact from this work:

1-Stoke Park Partnership group has been established to oversee the future plans for the park.

2-Steve England, Groundwork and UWE volunteers formed a partnership and coordination working group.

3-Sub group for 106 supported to deliver their project.

4-The fishermen group are in touch with the area manager.

5-A group of residents from Stapleton/Methodist church would like to run a dog fest in Stoke Park next year.

F)- A strong approach to communications, using social media, neighbourhood networks:



We have made good use of neighbourhood networks where they are in place, these networks have been most evident in Lockleaze where there are a number of agencies and we have gone out to find some neighbourhood networks in Stapleton, Cheswick (less developed) and Inner city. The longer spent there – the more we become aware of. Social media has not been our friend – although this is at last settling a little – until the next upset; the implementation of the Conservation management plan whilst we were starting to engage with people has been difficult to manage and made social media a less than useful tool to engage people. We have found that meeting people on site is more useful than anything on-line. Face to face people are genuinely interested in what we are doing and how they can help. We did create some interest in merchandise with key fobs depicting the Dower house, a dog and WW2 gun, this could be developed further.

G)-Share learning and experiences by producing a story map: a story map using Arcgis is in production – it would be useful to have some input from parks colleagues so that it serves their needs. We can present this at the next Partnership meeting.

H)- Some of the park users' comments;

'I have lived in Bristol for 75 years and never before come to Stoke park'

'Stoke Park is a real hidden gem, a wonderful place to contemplate, get back to nature, learn about history, archaeology and parkland maintenance or just fish and dream'

'Today I spent a day in my home – in Sudan'

'would really welcome an opportunity to help at some point' (we have his details!)

'fascinating tour , learned so much, lovely to see such passion and knowledge'

'a truly important site which I hope they will keep investing in'

"I live less than 100 meters from stoke park but never been to it, this is my first time inside the park".A Somali resident of Lockleaze.

"I visit stoke park 3 times a year, it brings back old days memories as I used to live in Romney avenue estate 40 years ago". An older dog walker.

"This is my hidden secret kept from my friends in Easton and love to see more happening in the Vench" (adventure playground). An Afro-Caribbean park'user.

"It is boring, there is not much fun for me and my friends in SP, the park needs modernisation" a young man from Cheswick village.

"This is my first time here in SP and what brought me was the activities (Bat Walk) "A woman from fishponds.

I)-Community development recommendations to improve SP and for further community engagement with Stoke Park based on the park users conversations;

1-Volunteer opportunities – we have a number of people who say they are interested in getting actively involved – but no clear mechanism for this.

2-We recommend an investment in the provision of water fountain, toilet café facility and seating (to suit older users), better signage facilities for park' users .The first preferred option for toilet, café is to use the current buildings such as the Vench and Lockleaze Social Club but if not possible, the partnership is to explore other options of provision that fits with the natural life of SP.

3-Invest in longer opening times for the Vench and link up the building to the future park' activities especially for children and young people with more efforts to create partnership work with Stoke Park School, Fairfield and the new Cathedral school.

4-BT Tower – they have temporarily decided not to open this up to a visit by officers due to vandalism and antisocial behaviour, we should revisit this opportunity.

5-The Park could benefit from having some structural/ infrastructure like Ashton Court Estate – which would enable people to make use of their open space, so things like foot-golf could be organised in the same way.

6-Many walkers and runners use the space and 'Park-run' was suggested.

7-Festival of Archaeology could be a feature of Stoke Park as the history and archaeology are interesting features in this park– but again some Infrastructure would support this (it currently takes place in Blaise).

8-Some people would like to party there! And many do, whether it is suited to large events may be limited by its' boundary with the M32.

9-Following the national report that many BAME communities are not making use of our parks and open spaces there is an opportunity to engage them through targeted activities and better facilities.

10-Invest in the activities run by Steve England to attract new users and open the park to a wide range of users and promote the historical heritage and wild -life of SP. This engagement in the park should happen in conjunction with any future community development staff.

11- Explore ways to diversify the activities and engage in a programme to train and mentor other people by Steve – he is brilliant in Stoke Park – we need to encourage others to step up and learn how to engage the community to add to the capacity and cover whenever Steve is not available.

12- And of course not forgetting the Goats! Many park users said they engaged for the first time or started to visit stoke park more frequently (especially children) because of the goats and potentially the cows, so we recommend the partnership seek permanent presence of animals in the park. Consider the recommendations from Street goat of how to develop this.



[Carol has a lot of ideas to share to make the Goats a sustainable long term addition to Stoke Park.](#)