



Victoria Park update

The line of black poplars that ran parallel to St Luke's Road in Victoria Park have been chopped down because the trees had died and were dangerous. Unfortunately, the trees were too rotten to be used for tree sculptures. Victoria Park Action Group hope to replace the poplars with tulip trees because they are one of the few species that Bristol City Council can source in quantity at this time of year but also because they are in keeping with the Victorian idea of introducing new species to city parks.

The Victoria Park Action Group (VPAG) has a number of other exciting projects on the go. Work is starting on the £100,000 project to improve facilities for young people in the park. This will include a large football pitch on the top of the hill and a smaller one between Hill Avenue and the wetland.

A cricket wicket will be built at the bottom of the park near Hill Avenue, and a teen seating area will be installed near the St Luke's Road five-a-side pitch. The bulk of the funding is being

spent on rebuilding the existing skate zone near Fraser Street. We hope to create a small but challenging and imaginative skate area that will eventually be enlarged and enhanced with a second phase, once more funding has been sourced.

Together with Bristol City Council, VPAG is drawing up an Improvement Plan for Victoria Park which will lay out how we see it being developed over the coming years. The plan will be based on the consultations we have carried out over the last four years, and a draft should be ready for inspection by the end of March. We will then be holding further consultation events for members of the public to examine and comment on the plan, which will be amended and finalised in June.

VPAG is continuing to work on its plans to renovate the Park Lodge and bring it into use as a community facility, incorporating a café. We have been approached by a restaurateur who wishes to operate a temporary café on the site and we hope that this will be up and running within the next couple

of months. Please do give it your support. Our next aim is to have a structural survey carried out on the Lodge to determine its condition. We are also applying for grants for the renovation of the building.

VPAG would like to see more children's play equipment provided in the park, catering for a wider range of ages. As part of the Improvement Plan we are considering whether another play area needs to be established in the park and, if so, where. We are discussing play provision with the City Council and will be applying for grants to fund this project.

VPAG wants to organise an Art In The Park event, at which members of the public could watch artists creating artworks in the park which would then remain in situ for everyone to enjoy. If you would like to get involved with Art In The Park, or any of the events or projects VPAG is organising, please contact Andrew Campbell on 0117 3775013, or come along to one of our meetings on the first Monday of every month at 8pm at Windmill Hill City Farm.

News in brief...

Arena update

Discussions are still ongoing between the city, SWRDA and BWA, the proposed arena developers. The latest estimate of when a plan of any sort will be ready for public release is in the spring. Given the idea was first raised in February 2004, it may be some time yet before residents have anything to comment on. However, TRESA has found a website that carries a concept of what the development could look like. Head to: www.burlandtm.com/_sgg/mbm3_1.htm

Bellevue allotments

A small group of residents is trying to revive some long-abandoned allotments at the end of Bellevue Road. The council is lending its support to the idea, the next step is to identify who actually owns the land. At that point we can start to apply for funding to regenerate the plots.

Maggie Telfer OBE

Maggie Telfer from Balmain Street, the director of Bristol Drugs Project, was awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year Honours List. Maggie was one of the founders of Bristol Drugs Project in 1986 since when more than 15,000 problem drug users have used the service. BDP is based in Brunswick Square, St Paul's and can be contacted on 0117 987 6000 or info@bdp.org.uk.

Low-five council

Bristol City Council was given a one-star rating in the recent comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) published by the Audit Commission. The overall rating took into account: what progress the council has made in the last year; how the council manages its finances and provides value for money; how the council's main services perform; and how the council is run. Almost 80% of councils were given three or four stars. Bristol was amongst the bottom-five councils (3%) receiving only one star. For more information, go to: www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Front Room appeal

The 2007 Front Room Art Trail may not go ahead because it hasn't got a co-ordinator. If you think you can help out, contact Front Room via its website, www.frontroom.org.uk. The next Front Room meeting is on June 7th at the Methodist Church in Bushy Park. It is likely that a decision will be made at that meeting over whether to go ahead with this year's Art Trail.

Kate's prize

Kate Pollard was named Volunteer of the Year at the Bristol Newsletter awards. Kate, who is one of the founder members of TRESA, was presented with a Bristol Blue Glass award for all her work by the Lord Mayor of Bristol Councillor Peter Abraham and local TV personality Richard Wyatt in an event at the Bocobar.

Trolley penalties

Are you fed up with supermarket trolleys floating around the park or sinking in the Avon? At last, after years of campaigning, help is at hand. Thanks to the 2005 Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act the council now has the power to collect 'lost' trolleys and fine supermarkets £125 per trolley. So next time you see one don't ring ASDA, phone 0117 922 3838. Hopefully straying trolleys will now become a thing of the past. The amendment to the act that makes this possible was suggested by the former Windmill Hill ward Labour councillor, Christopher Orlik.

New neighbour

Deborah Gubbay from Balmain Street got more than she bargained for when she brought back a Ganesha from India. Tucked inside the ornamental effigy of the Hindu elephant god was a lizard which had survived the journey from Delhi inside the elephant head wrapped up in bubble wrap in the hold of a plane. At first Debbie only saw the lizard's tail and thought it was a snake. Eventually a four-inch lizard, thought to be a gecko, emerged. It is now recuperating at a specialist pet shop in Ashton. Debbie hopes to keep the lizard (called GG for Gecko Ganesha) if it's given a clean bill of health. Mena (aged seven) drew this picture of GG so you all know what it looks like.

Blue plaque Totterdown: Brenda Fricker

Face it. As inner city hipsters with a streak of bohemian about the cut of our distressingly purple jackets, we Totterdown folk can be a bit sniffy about *Casualty*. Yet consider this: if the medical soap had been filmed in Birmingham, one Brenda Fricker might never have moved to a home in the vicinity of Hawthorne Street.

At the time, the Dublin-born actress had a regular gig on the show as nurse Megan Roach. But she was also moonlighting in the movies, most notably *My Left Foot*. Director Jim

Sheridan's drama, recounting the story of writer Christy Brown, who was born with cerebral palsy, was an unexpected mainstream hit. Star Daniel Day-Lewis and Fricker, who played Brown's long-suffering mother, both won Oscars.

History doesn't record exactly what the mercurial Day-Lewis might have done with his golden statue, but Brenda Fricker loaned her award to a local corner store for the day. There, if Totterdown legend is to be believed, it passed a pleasant day as a temporary doorstep.

