

Cabot News

Serving Hotwells and Harbourside

Edited by Mark Wright

Winter 2016



Over forty years of service!

Prince Street closure extended

Prince Street bridge is currently closed for repairs. Unfortunately, work is over-running and it is not expected to reopen until July at the earliest - over three months late. There is talk of whether the Mayor intends to leave the bridge permanently closed to cars when it is fixed, but as yet the Council has not made any pronouncements either way.

Cllr Mark Wright says, "I do not support permanent closure of the bridge to cars. I realise that the current closure will get everyone 'used' to permanent closure, but it's my impression that traffic is noticeably worse on Cumberland Road and Redcliffe roundabout as a result of the current closure."

There is now almost no contingency on the road system, so a crash or blockage pretty much anywhere in the central area now leads to several hours of gridlock across the whole city centre. The number of recent road changes in central Bristol have anecdotally increased central congestion even when there isn't a disaster. So Mark wants to see research on traffic flow before closing fully what is one of the few routes south out of the centre.

Mark added, "The old traffic-lights were not working very well in busy traffic, because the bridge doesn't clear in time for the next phase of lights. A change to operating one-way (southbound) for cars would solve this, and would mean the traffic-lights could be removed and make everything more civil - therefore I am minded to support that idea when it opens in the summer. However, I don't know if the Council will consider this."



↑ Cllr Mark Wright at Prince St bridge: now closed at least until summer

Council draft 2016 budget released

The Mayor has produced his draft budget for 2016-2017. The consultation is lower-key this year as last year was a 3-year budget proposal, so much of it was already expected. It is available for comment online here: www.bristol.gov.uk/budget

Over the last several years, Bristol Lib Dems have consistently criticised the Mayor's budgets on two grounds:

1) Overly pessimistic forecasts of Council Tax collection, which cut the amount of money allocated for day-to-day services, but cause a convenient lump-sum of several £million to be available at the end of the year for "pet projects".

2) Refusing to take advantage of special Government grants for a Council Tax freeze that could be funded either from our healthy reserves or from the spare cash from point 1) above. Unfortunately these grants are now no longer available.

The other parties on the Council have always backed the Mayor on these budget issues, despite us being proved correct on point 1) two years running. Last year, the Lib Dems were criticised for suggesting spending £1.5m from reserves to secure a government grant; then just a few months later the Council unexpectedly decided to reach deep into reserves to blow a whopping £8.2m on a new CCTV control centre - proving the Lib Dems correct on the budget for a third consecutive year!

Spike Island RPZ starts

The Spike Island RPZ scheme has gone live. The operating hours are Mon to Fri, 9am - 5pm. Spike Island is the 12th and final RPZ area to be approved in the Mayor's programme. The 11th area, Southville, went live in November, with the same rules as the Spike Island RPZ. However, the rules in the Cliftonwood/Hotwells RPZ are different, being Mon to Sat, 9am - 7pm, which many Spike Island residents believe is a better set of rules.

To say that there is a lot of unhappiness about the outcome of the public consultation would be a massive understatement! The two main annoyances are the loss of places due to the Metrobus works, and also the discrepancy with the Cliftonwood/Hotwells scheme.

Cllr Mark Wright says, "A big frustration is that the Council has made no attempt to explain the balancing act it has to do between the interests of residents (who usually want longer RPZ operating hours) and the interests of the businesses and leisure facilities around the Harbour (who want shorter RPZ operating hours) which are obviously very important for jobs and the local economy. As a result of failing to explain this balancing act, the Council has managed to upset both residents and businesses because neither has got what they want and neither knows why. And no one has been told what the strategic vision is (if there is actually one) that is driving the parking policy from above. Given that this was the 12th scheme, the Council really ought to have learned how to avoid this kind of problem by now."



↑ Spike Island RPZ has gone live, warts and all!

Newsletters all year round, not just at election time

Working all year round, not just for elections

Spike Island Metrobus: major dates for road works

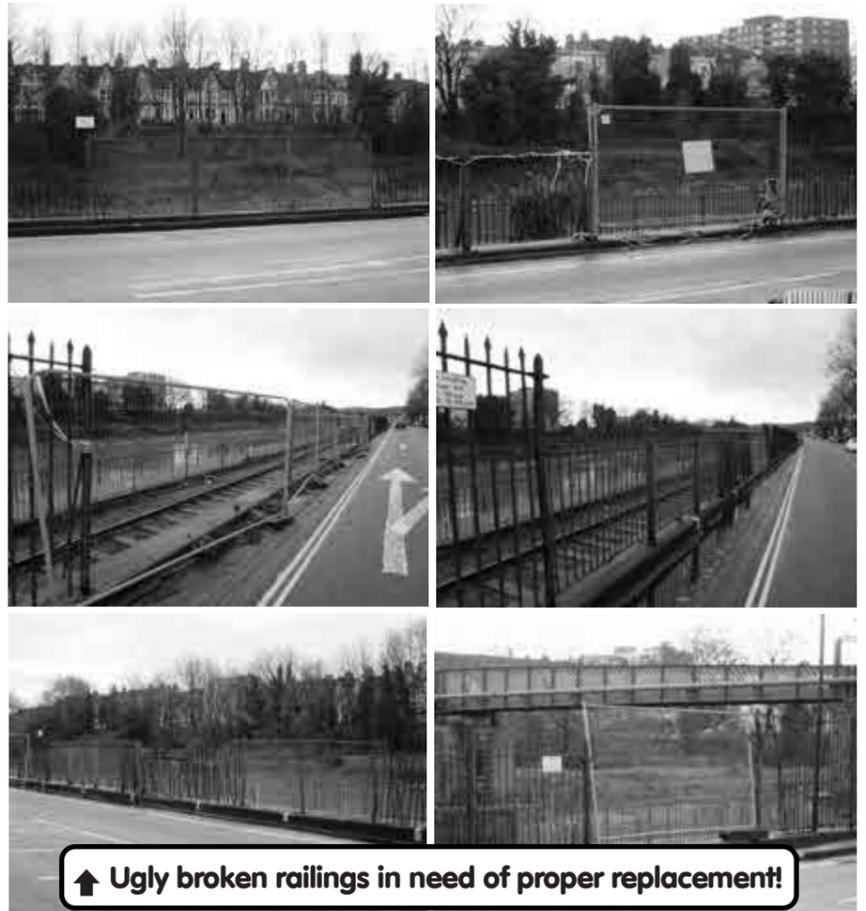
Unfortunately the Metrobus works mean that this year will be quite disruptive for residents and businesses on Spike Island. The Council's record of managing big projects like this is not brilliant, but we hope it can learn and avoid chaos this time. Here are the time-scales for the major Metrobus works in the Spike Island area:

- till Feb: Construction of Smeaton Road underpass
- till Apr: Smeaton Road works
- till May: Cumberland Road flood wall construction
- till May: Construction of the MetroBus ramp
- till Aug: Refurbishment of Ashton Avenue Swing Bridge
- Jul till Aug: Construction of bus-way and junction with Cumberland Road
- Mar till Sep: Construction of Spike Island MetroBus stops and bus gate

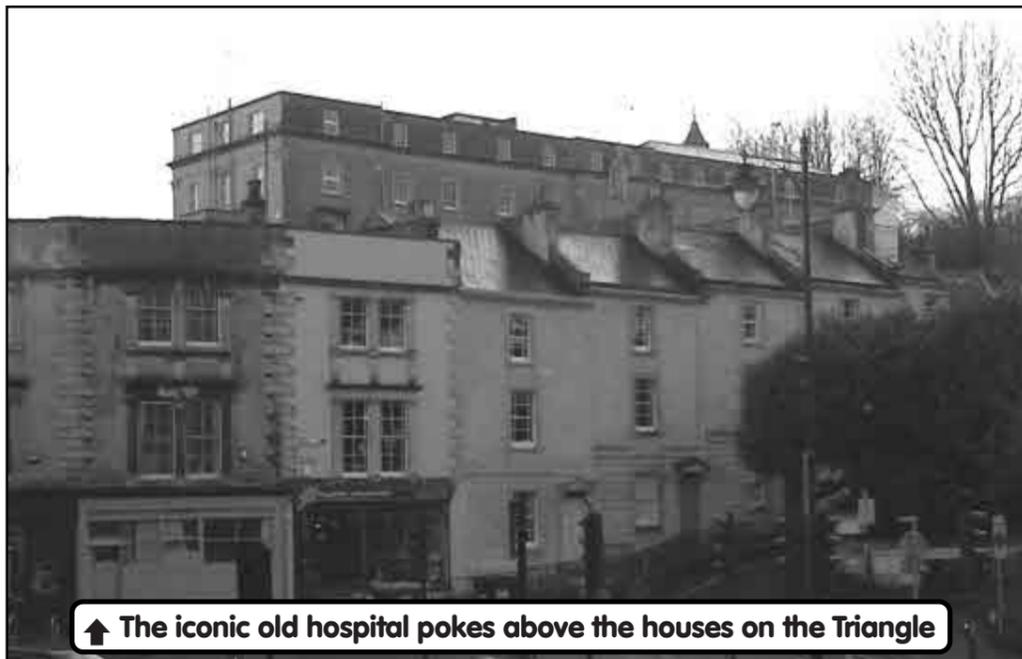
... but Cumberland Road railings won't be fixed

The state of disrepair of the railings on Cumberland Rd has been an annoyance to residents for many years. There are numerous sections of them that have been patched up badly and they look terrible. As part of the Metrobus works, a new flood-protection wall is being built from the Baltic Wharf shop to the Create Centre, and this will have new railings on top. However, there are no plans to repair the railings upstream of there, so the contrast between the new and old railings will be stark.

Cllr Mark Wright has told the Council that this is silly, and it will be a poor sight to tourists coming in on Metrobus. Unfortunately there is disagreement in the Council over which department should pay for fixing these railings. Mark is trying to get this resolved so that any railings salvaged from the new flood-wall section might be used on the other section.



↑ Ugly broken railings in need of proper replacement!



↑ The iconic old hospital pokes above the houses on the Triangle

Local historic hospital building is under threat

Readers may remember that Cllr Mark Wright has repeatedly objected to proposals from two different developers to demolish two iconic and historic old hospital buildings in the ward: the Old BRI building next to the bus station, and St Mary's Hospital on Brandon Hill. Neither building is listed, but both are historic buildings of merit.

The good news is that the developer of the Old BRI is now considering plans that would keep the building. The bad news is that the developer of St Mary's is not buckling yet. St Mary's is an iconic building visible from Triangle West and the top of Jacobs Wells Road, and Mark and many others believe it should be saved. The campaign there continues....

Other Local News in Brief...

Brandon Hill and Harbourside in Bloom!

This year Britain in Bloom South West introduced a new scheme judging parks and open spaces. Congratulations to both Friends of Brandon Hill, and Rownham Meads & Pooles Wharf for achieving "Outstanding" rating:

<http://tinyurl.com/zjah2w3>

11a Bus - Cumberland Road

For users of the 506 service looking for an alternative, Cumberland Road is also served by the 11A, which is a UWE service. However, any member of the public can use this (not just students) - the timetable can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/1qWjFL9>

Jacobs Wells Road crossing update

At the Cabot and Clifton Neighbourhood Partnership it was agreed to prioritise a new pedestrian crossing on Jacobs Wells Road near the junction of Constitution Hill. Mark has been supporting this as there is a strong need for a crossing there to Brandon Hill.

Hotwells Rd petrol station alcohol license

Mark and several residents objected to an application by Hotwells Road petrol station for an alcohol sales license late into the night. Mark objected on the grounds that this would be used by late-night revellers returning from city-centre venues, and was bound to lead to more drunken disturbance on Hotwells Road.

Unfortunately the licence was granted anyway by the committee. Mark will be keeping a watch for any problems that arise from this licence. Please contact him if you experience problems as a result of alcohol sales there.

Planned £3m New Cut bridge in doubt

Residents may remember the plans to build a new £3million pedestrian/cycle bridge over the New Cut about halfway along Cumberland Road. The projected costs have now ballooned to £7million, so the Mayor has ordered a review and is asking for different ideas on ways to spend the money on cycling in Bristol. The council's cycling aspiration is now available online via an interactive map:

<http://tinyurl.com/opn36c8>

Low Emission Zone update

Some updates on our 3-year campaign to improve air quality in the city-centre by getting a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) in place... The bad news first: air pollution is killing nearly 200 people a year in Bristol - that's according to new government data! The city's air quality is illegally low - and European politicians say tougher laws are needed. Watch an ITV report here:

<http://tinyurl.com/pdq5trc>

But the good news is that the Clifton and Cabot Neighbourhood Partnership will support an LEZ in its new Neighbourhood plan. Also, the Council has started exploratory work with traders in the Old City into how an LEZ might affect them if it was introduced. All steps in the right direction!

Contact your local Lib Dem team

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