

Cabot News

Serving Kingsdown, Cotham, Brandon Hill, Redcliffe, Spike Island and the City Centre

Edited by Alex Woodman & Mark Wright

Winter 2014/15

Forty years of service!



Bristol is European Green Capital 2015

The start of 2015 saw the Suspension Bridge bathed in green light to mark the beginning of Bristol's year as European Green Capital. We are the first UK city to hold this prestigious title, and it is the culmination of ambitious plans initiated by the Council's former Lib Dem administration to put Bristol on the map for the city's environmental credentials.

The Green Capital award is run by the European Commission, as a way of raising the profile of environmental issues and promoting sustainable, low-carbon living. Bristol's Green Capital year will see a series of events designed to engage and inspire the whole city. In addition, there are three separate grant funds available for Neighbourhood Partnerships, small projects and bigger strategic projects, and there is also a Neighbourhood Arts Programme to help get art projects happening in local communities.

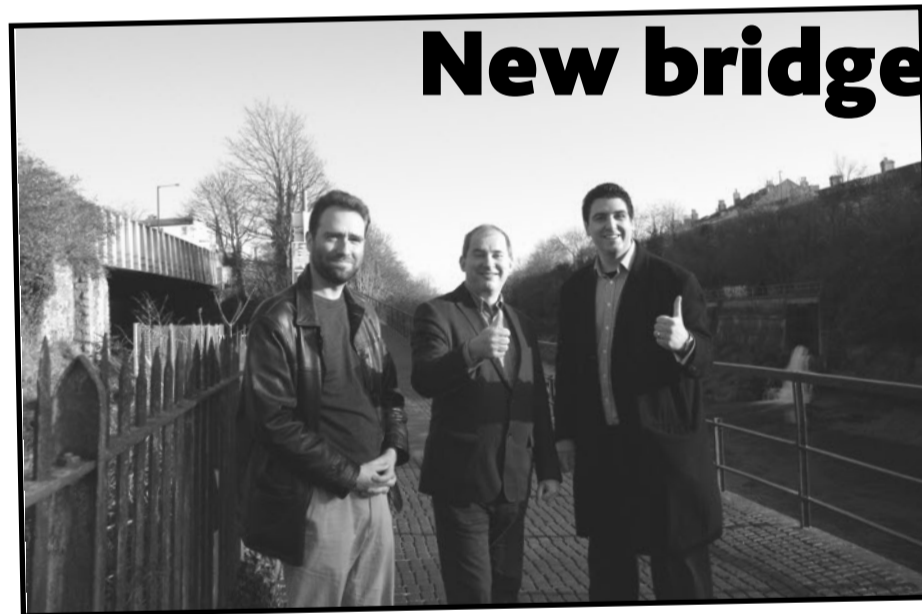
Bristol has a lot of reasons to be proud. We use less energy per household than any major UK city, we have the highest cycling rates of any major UK city, and over the past ten years, recycling rates have soared from a paltry 13% to nearly 50%. We also have bold ambitions. When the Lib Dems ran the Council in 2009, we committed to achieving a 40% cut in carbon emissions by 2020, both for the city as a whole, and for the City Council itself. Just last month, the Mayor confirmed that we are well ahead of target.

Lib Dem MP for Bristol West Stephen Williams helped to secure £7m of government funding for the Green Capital bid. He said, "Green issues are important to many Bristolians and I am delighted that the city's commitment to tackling climate change and improving quality of life has been recognised. This will be an exciting year, and I look forward to seeing many brilliant plans come to fruition."

Cabot councillor Alex Woodman added, "Although Bristol now has an independent Mayor, it is great to see him continue to build on the solid foundations laid by the previous Lib Dem administration."



↑ Cabot councillors Alex Woodman and Mark Wright, along with Bristol West MP Stephen Williams. Bristol has a lot to be proud of in terms of its record on environmental issues, including our commitment to cutting carbon emissions and local Lib Dem politicians have been proud to help drive progress in this area.



New bridge across New Cut approved

Plans to build a new pedestrian and cycling bridge across the New Cut have been approved by the Council.

The bridge will connect Coronation Road (at the junction with Camden Road) to the Chocolate Path, adjacent to the railway tunnel under Cumberland Road. It is being funded by the coalition government's Cycling Ambition Fund, which is allowing cities such as Bristol to dramatically improve their cycling infrastructure.

The Council's planning committee (chaired by local councillor Alex Woodman), debated the design of the bridge, which had been criticised for being bland and utilitarian.

However, in the end the committee gave near-unanimous approval, believing that the benefit of having a new bridge outweighed any disagreements about what it looks like.

Development of the bridge will have wider benefits for the Chocolate Path. Some of the distinctive paving will need to be removed where the bridge lands, and this will be reused to repair other parts of the path which have been filled in with tarmac. Mark Wright has also taken the opportunity to write to Council officers, arguing that the new bridge strengthens the case for installing new lights in the Cumberland Road tunnel.

Alex said, "Approval of this bridge is another small step towards delivering much better transport infrastructure for Bristol. There of course remains much to do, but it is great that progress is being made."

Local Lib Dem MP Stephen Williams added, "I am delighted to see this project be given the go ahead. In Westminster I have been banging the drum for investment in Bristol, and this is another example of how the coalition government is helping the city to achieve its ambitions."

Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg announced at the end of last year that Bristol will also have access to a share of a further £114m for cycling improvements.

↑ Cllrs Alex Woodman (R) and Mark Wright (L), and local MP Stephen Williams (centre) visit the site of the new bridge

Cabot ward to be abolished?

Over the past few months, the independent Boundary Commission has been undertaking a review of ward boundaries in Bristol, triggered by the huge disparity in population size in the current wards. Cabot ward, for example, is nearly twice the size of some other wards in the city, meaning that residents are effectively under-represented.

The Commission have now published their proposals, which would see Cabot abolished and replaced with two new wards, one covering parts of Spike Island, Harbourside and bits of Hotwells, and the other the rest of the city centre and Redcliffe. Kingsdown would be moved into an expanded Cotham ward.

Local councillors Mark and Alex have greeted the proposals with mixed feelings. Their submission to the Boundary Commission consultation (included as part of the Lib Dem response) argued strongly for a new 'Redcliffe' ward, ending the bizarre situation where part of Redcliffe was in Cabot, with the rest in Lawrence Hill. This situation has been resolved in a way with the inclusion of all of Redcliffe in a single ward. However, we are very unhappy to see communities divided by Kingsdown being torn in half along Dove Street, and Spike Island split in half.

The Boundary Commission are now consulting on their draft proposals. More information, and details of how to comment if you want to, can be found at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/3535>

News and information from your local councillors and MP

Cabot Lib Dems - Working hard for our local area all year round

Progress stalls on tackling Stokes Croft eyesore

Progress on dealing with one of Bristol's eyesore sites has stalled due to the actions of a London-based property developer. The Council has been working with Knightstone Housing Association to try and spur on the redevelopment of the Westmoreland House site in Stokes Croft, which has been derelict for several decades. This has included investigating the possibility of securing a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), a plan initiated by the Council's previous Lib Dem administration, which would allow the Council to buy the building and ensure that a redevelopment scheme goes ahead.

Unfortunately, the plans have stalled for now due to the submission of a planning application for the site by a private developer called Fifth Capital. In order to justify the CPO, the Council needs to be able to demonstrate that this is the only way of securing a redevelopment. This planning application therefore significantly undermines the Council's case.

Local councillors Alex Woodman and Mark Wright have long been an enthusiastic supporters of the community vision which has been developed for this site by the Carriageworks Action Group. Alex said, "It is very disappointing that the planning application from Fifth Capital has not been developed in line with the community vision. We now wait to see what assessment is made of the planning application as this will determine what happens next with this site.."

Bristol West MP Stephen Williams also commented, "Despite repeated efforts by local politicians over many years, including myself when I was a councillor for Cabot ward two decades ago, this site has seemed quite intractable. Until recently, it seemed like progress was being made by the Council, and so the current situation is very frustrating, particularly as submitting planning applications has in the past been used as a delaying tactic by the owners to frustrate any attempt at a CPO."



↑ Stephen Williams (L), MP for Bristol West and local councillor Alex Woodman (R). Westmoreland House has blighted Stokes Croft for too long, and so the latest delay in resolving it is deeply disappointing.

Low Emission Zone Campaign

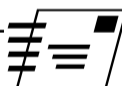
Cabot Lib Dems are campaigning for a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) for the centre of Bristol, which would discourage old diesel buses and lorries coming into the city. Older diesel vehicles are a major contributor to air pollution. Poor air quality is a significant problem in the centre of Bristol which can have a damaging impact on the health of central area residents.



Local Lib Dem councillor Mark Wright has been calling on the Mayor for some time to look into the feasibility of introducing an LEZ for Bristol. Despite warm words, progress seems disappointingly slow. Therefore, if you support the campaign, please sign the petition at www.tinyurl.com/BrisLEZ

Local news and information by e-mail

As well as this quarterly Cabot News, your local councillors also send out a monthly Cabot eNews by e-mail, and local MP Stephen Williams sends out a regular Bristol West eNews. If you want to receive these, please get in touch to be added to the mailing list.



Local issues discussed with Mayor

Towards the end of December, Cabot ward councillors Alex and Mark met with Bristol's independent mayor, George Ferguson, to raise with him a number of issues of concern in the ward. The most significant of these is the Metrobus scheme, but the discussion also included Colston Hall, parks, transport and a number of other smaller issues around the ward.

Alex said, "As Cabot News readers will probably know, Mark and I opposed the creation of a Mayor for Bristol, believing that it put too much power into the hands of one person. However, that is the system we now have, and so we are keen to try and work positively with the Mayor to make sure that the best decisions are made in the interests of Cabot ward residents."

The discussion on Metrobus related mainly to recent press reports that the scheme is significantly over budget, and therefore the Council is looking at ways of reducing costs. A confidential report, which was not seen by local councillors until it was leaked, suggested measures such as scaling back the public realm works on the Centre, reducing the amount of street lighting provided, and possibly removing funding for improvements to Cumberland Road and Avon Crescent.

Mark said, "Despite its detractors, we have supported the Metrobus scheme because of the many other benefits it brings, such as the dramatic improvements proposed for the Centre. Without these, there is a real risk that the benefits of Metrobus are outweighed by the disadvantages."

Alex and Mark asked the Mayor to look into the concerns on this in much greater detail. He promised to report back in the near future.

Other Local News in Brief...

Consultation on Library Services

The Council is consulting to try and understand how it can provide a better library service that meets customer needs, whilst at the same time addressing the significant funding squeeze affecting all Council services. The idea behind the consultation is to invite innovative thinking about new ways of running libraries in the future - the Council has no specific plans at present, and is keen to hear views from the city's residents. Details at www.bristol.gov.uk/libraries

New 'Citizen Service Point' Opened

The Council has opened a new 'Citizen Service Point' at 100 Temple Street (opposite Temple Meads) where most Council services can be accessed in person. Mark and Alex are keen to hear feedback on the new service - if you have any thoughts, please get in touch.

New Car Club Bays Proposed

The Council is proposing new spaces at: Charles St; Lower Park Row; Tyndall Ave; Deanery Road; Great George St; Charlotte St; Berkeley Sq; Guinea Street

Reporting street cleansing issues

It is the time of year when leaves and bad weather can cause blocked storm drains and flooding. The Council tries to keep drains and gutters clear of leaves, but if you notice a blockage or street cleansing problem, you can report it online at <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/contact>, by e-mailing customer.services@bristol.gov.uk or by calling the Customer Services team on 0117 922 2100.

Contacting your local Cabot Lib Dem Team...

www.cabot-liberals.org



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