

Federation of Bath Residents' Association

Chair's report June 15th 2023

FoBRA and our member Associations have once again had an extremely busy year. The sheer number of community activities that the Resident Associations of Bath engage in, the social occasions organised, the public consultations participated in, community clear ups and speedwatch sessions conducted, the overall participation in issues affecting our evolving city and neighbourhoods are too exhaustive to detail in full.

Whilst the core purpose of a Resident Association is to build community, clearly from the roll call of activities you all engage in (see the photo gallery on our new refreshed web site) you take that role further; through sheer effort and local expertise you clearly thrive by being useful and relevant for your members. Last June a newly elected Executive set out a clear intention for FoBRA to continue in your spirit, to build our community, be useful and relevant to your Associations, our members.

Specifically we committed to:

- Bring more speakers to FoBRA for better informed debate and prompt wider discussion on issues which were important to you, such as:
 - The democratic deficit in the city of Bath (Speaker : Councillor Manda Rigby).
 - The poor environmental performance of the historic building stock which makes up a significant proportion of homes in our city and drives energy costs literally through the roof for residents. (Speaker : Funda Kemal of Transition Bath),
(N.B much progress has been made across the city since this event for whole house listed building consents which have been granted for slimline double glazed window replacement in grade 2 houses and use of solar panels in roof valleys in grade 1 houses. But more can be done).
 - The B&NES Local Election hustings. (Speakers: Councillors Colin Blackburn, Vic Pritchard, Manda Rigby, Joanna Wright, Robin Moss)
- Ensure well informed working groups with a good knowledge of national legislation to share papers with you and to aid in your local discussion for either Council consultations or planning responses.
- Get better access to Councillors and facilitate more dialogue and opportunities for you to meet with our elected representatives in a constructive way.
- Aid communication across the Resident Association network of key services available to Bath residents.
- Ensure that FoBRA is represented and heard at key city Forums (Bath Area Forum, the World Heritage Advisory Board, the Bath Preservation Trust, the Avon and Somerset Police Independent Advisory Group, and new Local Plan steering process)
- Encourage the formation of new Resident Associations across the city to ensure wider participation across Bath.
- Refresh our web site to reflect all of this.

Our Team

The AGM is an opportunity for new people to stand and the Executive roles are up for re-election every year, the following have agreed to re-stand. We would be delighted if others wanted to take on roles.

Our newer members who joined in 2022.

Sylvia Sinclair stepped up to be our “lynch pin” as Association Secretary

Elizabeth Curnow agreed to be our Treasurer after Courtenay Gardner’s hospitalisation

Caroline Greenwood and Jeremy Boss have sat on the World Heritage Advisory Board (during an important year when Bath received a second UNESCO citation).

Theresa Franklin was co-opted following our meeting with Transition Bath to supervise applications across the city for tree management/removal and liaise with the Tree Officer for B&NES when those applications affected the Bath treescape.

All have agreed, as have I, to re-stand or continue in these roles

In addition Ceris Humphreys, Paul Crowsley and John Rushton agreed to continue as Transport Group Lead, Website lead and Accounts’ Examiner.

Graham Feltham has decided to step down as Vice Chair and Planning Lead after 3 years in the role. I have been very grateful for Graham’s support and contribution since I became Chair. Fortunately, Jeremy Boss from Widcombe Association has agreed to stand as Vice Chair. All roles are open for re-election and as detailed in the meeting agenda we need nominations within 10 days of this Calling Notice.

Building our community.

Social events: Sylvia and Graham organised a hugely successful Winter reception at the beautiful Elim Chapel which (despite the weather) saw a return to FoBRA social gatherings. We had a great turn out of BNES Councillors, Officers, and other stakeholders from across the city. We know that this is a really important occasion for you all to meet Councillors and create new contacts in an informal relaxed way, Sylvia’s welcoming charm and personality shone through as we tried a new venue and new organisation. A total of 80 guests attended the event and judging by how late they stayed all enjoyed the event! We plan to book the Elim Chapel for November this year given how successful the evening was.

Communication: Our secretary continues to ensure an effective two-way flow of information, consistent with GDPR guidelines. In a world of rapid social media channels, it is refreshing to have the clarity of FoBRA communications organised through our secretary. Our committee meetings at Widcombe school have been very well attended and provide a safe and courteous space for open discussion with accurate minutes prepared by Sylvia. As a longtime attendee of FoBRA meetings I am aware that it can be a challenge to get child-care or get to Widcombe in time following a work meeting but the effort is worth it, nothing can replace the cumulative energy and sense of togetherness of meeting in person. During Covid restrictions our previous Chair faced real difficulties in recruiting volunteers to take on roles in the organisation whereas I have been faced with a readiness to become more involved. This can only be down to the effects of face-to-face relationship building.

Web site refresh: Paul Crowsley has started his refresh of our website, please take a look if you haven't visited in a while. I hope that you agree that he has done a great job reworking the core website (the original structure has limitations) introducing a fresh new "cheerier" feel to the colour palette, helping to make us feel more approachable and human as a resident group, reorganising some of our content, creating new content where we needed guidance for members and keeping it updated. The gallery always needs replenishing so please do continue to share your images from your neighbourhoods with Sylvia. FoBRA is about people, neighbourhoods and Bath and it is important that our web site reflects this.

Encouraging Resident Associations to join FoBRA: Jeremy Labram kindly agreed to examine the areas that make up FoBRA membership – mapping our 33 member Resident Associations and student resident representation. The mapping demonstrated a very organised resident community in the more urban/central areas of the city certainly with some gaps out to the north west and north east of the city, (this was a lot of work so thank you Jeremy). Before we even issued Jeremy's first draft of the map our coverage changed. Marlborough Lane and Buildings Resident Association (MLBRA) re-joined FoBRA late 2022, and TARA (Abbey Area) have recently informed me that they have hope to renew their former membership of FoBRA too later this year.

Ghika Savva as the Bath Students' Liaison coordinator has encouraged our Student Representatives to become more involved in FoBRA committee meetings, I have met with representatives of the Student Unions and discussed the importance of inclusion of our younger residents of Bath. Improving student inclusion and representing their voice in Bath too is also vital for FoBRA's relevance. Their attendance at our recent hustings and the participation of a Councillor from an area where many students reside was a great example of FoBRA providing a useful forum for residents and councillors to convene. We will be mapping those areas on our map too at their request. (work in progress map to follow!)

Part of FoBRA's role is to encourage and facilitate the formation of new organised Resident Groups. I have been in contact with residents from Lambridge, Southlands and Minster Way. Minster Way have decided to remain as an informal group at this stage and not seek formal membership of FoBRA, however Lambridge and Southlands have become constituted and will be seeking to join FoBRA this Autumn. As part of these discussions we wrote a guidance note (now on our updated web site) to help new Associations form and we shared some example constitutions from a variety of our members as templates for these areas to consider when drafting theirs.

Being useful and relevant:

Papers/consultations submitted : LPPU, JNZ, Local Plan process

Our working groups continue to prepare papers which act as very useful summary reports for discussions with your own committees. The work of the Transport Group attempts to provide a detailed and informed summary of the issues we face in Bath against the backdrop of national legislation which can sometimes be forgotten in local debate. The Planning Group has had a quieter year in 2023 although this will certainly not be the case for the remainder of the year as key major projects are announced in the city. Again the

group try to report in useful summaries the key issues in relation to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) for your own committees to determine responses to consultations. Our Transport, Planning and World Heritage Advisory Board leads co-opt a wide range of you to bring expertise to their papers and consultation submissions. Their current updates are attached.

Quarterly meetings with B&NES Council leadership

I will continue to meet with the Council leadership team with our FoBRA subject leads on a quarterly basis to raise issues of concern to our members

Going forward: 2024

Major projects working Group:

Working in a more joined up way will be essential to ensure that the FoBRA position on the significant projects affecting our city in the next year are considered within the parameters of local impact on residents, the impact on Bath's World Heritage status, journey to net zero and the national planning policy framework.

Bath Rugby Stadium, extensive plans to build at Bath University campus at Claverton Down, the Milsom Quarter masterplan, Lidl greenfield site development Lambridge and the emerging Local Plan for B&NES will require a constructive approach to distil the issues and if appropriate either challenge developments in our city, and/or in circumstances where we support development in principle to challenge them to meet the highest stringent environmental, sustainability, design and quality standards minimising impacts on existing residents.

With this in mind we propose bringing the Planning, Transport and World Heritage subject leads, Ceris Humphreys (Transport), Michael Wrigley (planning) and Jeremy Boss, into a major-projects working group, Malcolm Baldwin has agreed to join this group too given his previous work on the Milsom Quarter response. Each will involve their team members before bringing the combined thinking into one distilled paper/position to be brought to Committee members. We will bring these papers to members early to encourage additional input from your Associations.

Communicating the strengths of Resident Associations in Bath

We will continue to work hard and build relationships with Councillors for our member Resident Associations. The current Council leadership have committed to quarterly meetings with the FoBRA team (a combination of myself and subject leads) which will be a good opportunity to discuss issues which as a group we have prioritised. This will be with Councillor Manda Rigby and Councillor Kevin Guy. This is a substantial commitment from the Council and we will endeavour to make effective use of this time.

Membership of NORA

We will have the chance to discuss the merits of remaining a member of NORA at our committee meeting in June. This topic raised some divergent views, and in those instances taking time to discuss and review the situation over an extended period seems like the appropriate course of action.

I look forward to seeing you all again on June 15th

Rachael Hushon
Chair

Planning Sub Committee update

Former Gasworks, Windsor Bridge Road, Twerton, Bath (22/03224/EFUL)

A joint venture between Berkeley Group and National Grid known as St William has been formed to regenerate under utilised gasworks and gasholder sites.

A detailed planning application has been submitted for the provision of 616 New Homes; commercial units (including a nursery/early years facility, micro coffee counter and riverside food and beverage space) on this former gasworks site at Bath Riverside adjacent to Windsor Bridge.

616 New Homes comprising :

251 1Bed Units

308 2Bed units

57 3Bed units

234 car parking spaces; 1029 cycle spaces; and 64 cycle spaces on external stands.

Affordable Housing to be confirmed following further discussions with B&NES regarding planning obligations and viability.

The planning application was received on 11/02/2022 and is pending consideration with a target date for a decision of 12/06/2023.

It is worth noting that the Environment Agency have stated that in the absence of an acceptable Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)they will maintain their objection and recommend planning permission is refused. If this happens then the application will be called in by the Secretary of state.

Parcel 3 & 4 Combe Hay Lane, Combe Hay (22/02169/EOUT)

An outline planning application for Phases 3 & 4 for up to 300 new dwellings.

The policy allocation for the entire site specifies a residential figure “ around 300 dwellings”. Phase 1 was granted planning approval for 171 dwellings. This application represents a 57% increase in the Local Plan housing numbers.

The planning application was received on 11/02/2022 and as pending consideration with a target date for a decision of 02/06/2023.

The Banes website has received an overwhelming number of comments.

In the pipeline going forward there are some major planning issues which should have particular relevance to FoBRA. These are:

- 1) Local Plan Development
- 2) Redevelopment of the Rec for a new Bath Rugby Stadium
- 3) Bath University
- 4) Milsom Quarter Masterplan Development
- 5) Lidl proposed development of greenfield site at Lambridge

Transport sub-committee update

Little emerged from the Council in recent months due to the pre-election purdah period. Although transport matters have figured in campaigning, this created disappointingly little space for rational debate. Once the new council leadership is established there will be a need to look for opportunities for a return to open and inclusive debate that recognizes the law/policy constraints and the climate change context. Bus services continue to cause concern. Again this is in abeyance due to local elections but is expected to become an important consideration over coming months.

Liveable Neighbourhoods: We currently expect the constitution of the new council to mean continuation of many existing projects. This will presumably include Liveable Neighbourhoods, on which FoBRA had reached an agreed position on the policy documents when they were consulted on. It is not appropriate for FoBRA to become involved in debate around individual local LN plans. The right time for any review of progress is likely to be when the potential fifteen plans previously identified have been implemented and the data is in.

Buses: Bus services continue to cause concern. This will assume greater importance over coming months as an important factor in supporting B&NES's traffic reduction aspirations.

Rec Development: The developers at the Rec have now started public consultations through Bath Rugby. Information is available on-line at: <https://www.bathrugby.com/stadium-for-bath/> where there is a Feedback Form to be returned by 31 May. The proposal for a large under-pitch car park has been abandoned due to incompatibility with measures to reduce traffic in the city. As far as other transport-related aspects of the stadium plans are concerned there is nothing of substance to report, as no information is to be provided about proposals for the Travel Plan until the full application is filed. In terms of transport key areas will be:

- (i) The plans for access and for management of match-day traffic and crowds, all of which has been poor with the current capacity and requires much greater aspiration to reduce car dependency.
- (ii) The planned usages and how their impacts will be mitigated, these matters having enormous relevance to (i) above.
- (iii) Safety related considerations (currently conditions are hazardous on many roads around the Rec with large numbers of pedestrians mingling with traffic and no measures to control or protect the crowds or traffic).

Western Gateway: Western Gateway (multi-authority partnership of leaders of WECA and various authority leaders around the West) has published a "[Strategic Transport Plan 2025-2050](#)" identifying priorities for the region. These include two matters of potential relevance to Bath: (i) North-South (M4/south coast Bournemouth/Poole/Portsmouth connectivity and options for reducing the emphasis on routing through-traffic through Eastern Bath; and (ii) the idea of opening a railway station in Corsham, which could do something towards the Eastern Approaches problem.

World Heritage Advisory Board update

Notes from FoBRA attendees (Jeremy Boss & Caroline Greenwood) Bath World Heritage Site Advisory Board (WHSAB) – 2022/2023 for the AGM

Jeremy & Caroline took over the FoBRA place at the WHSAB from Nick Tobin who had undertaken the role diligently for many years. Our role is to bring residents' views and perspectives into the work of the Advisory Board. We have attended three meetings this year and were also invited to the formal event to present the second WHS inscription to Bath as one of the 'Great Spa Towns of Europe'. Bath is now one of only 22 double-inscribed UNESCO world heritage sites in the world out of over 11,000 sites.

Through the meetings we have been briefed and updated on various subjects covered by the Advisory Board, including; Plans for an 'Architect in Residence' for Bath sponsored by BANES and Bath University, proposals for Beckford Tower (Bath Preservation Trust), Water management in drought (Wessex Water), World Heritage Centre events, Bath Abbey Discovery Centre, work of the Heritage Fund, a technical briefing on the new stadium plans from Bath Rugby's architects and the reorganisation of the BANES world heritage team.

One of the main roles of the Advisory Board is to develop and implement a 'Combined Management Plan for Bath'. These are renewed every 5 years and the latest one is being developed now. This is an important roadmap for how both inscriptions will be managed and developed linking with other City-wide plans like the BANES Local Management Plan. Our immediate priority going forward will be to ensure there is a strong residents' voice in the new plan. The next Advisory Board meeting is on the 20th June.