

Better Bristol

The Bristol Civic Society Magazine - Issue 16 Spring/Summer 2020

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- Should Bristol become a high-rise city?
 - Clean Air
- Nightlife under threat
- 50 years of the SS Great Britain
- Roll up for the Circus
- Climate Crisis



an independent force for a **better Bristol**





Front Cover:
Twenty-six storey tower on the former ambulance station site.
Photo: Mike Manson.

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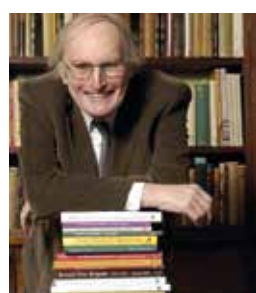
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The chairman writes

Bristol Civic Society is facing up to the challenge of succession planning, writes *Simon Birch*.

In Issue 15 (Autumn / Winter 2019) I reported that the Society is leading the way in terms of the breadth and range of its activities. Membership continues to grow, and new members report that they are attracted by the array of events and visits and by the opportunity to learn about the continuing development of the City.

Yet the Society cannot stand still. It now needs to work out how to replace one of its key activists – John Frenkel has recently announced his intention to step down as convener of the Major Sites Group. This is a very active group dealing with pre-application enquiries. At its February meeting there were nearly 50 major sites on the agenda! With 12 members present at that meeting we will jointly investigate how we wish to continue. We are all agreed that this is a key group influencing developments at the earliest possible stage and that its work must continue – and flourish.

And John Payne, convener of the Planning Applications Group, has also indicated his wish to hand over his responsibilities in due course. PAG is another well attended and very busy group with opportunities to learn much about the planning system and about current planning proposals.

We intend to take the opportunity to review how we deal with all the range of consultations – major sites, planning applications, planning policies and transport.

And of course, before too long the Society will also need a new Chair!

We would love to hear your ideas on addressing any of these matters. So please email them to me. Even better, if you have an interest in getting more involved in the Society and would like



Llandoger Trow closed and looking rather forlorn.

to contribute to our review, or indeed to any of our activities, please do get in touch. Many posts can be shared so that the workload doesn't become unduly onerous. I look forward to hearing from you.

Campaigns

Work on St Michael's is well advanced – see page 10. We are optimistic that the venue will be ready to host our AGM in early June.

Progress on resolving the future of Ashton Court Mansion is slower than we would like. But at least the City Council does recognise that decisive action is required – we watch this one with great interest!

We remain an interested bystander on the future of Western Harbour, waiting for the optimum moment to become involved in what is likely to become a long running transport and

development project.

A number of you have been in touch enquiring about the future of the Llandoger Trow, that historic seventeenth century public house located in the heart of the City in King Street. The building is closed and is looking rather forlorn but we are told that the City Council is making sure that security on the building is tight and that options for the future are being actively explored. We are keeping a watching brief.

Simon Birch

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Better Bristol was written before the Coronavirus pandemic arrived. Many of the issues in this edition may be put on hold for the moment. But we will return to them when normal service is resumed. Ed



Not already a member? Why not join TODAY!

See page 27 for more details...

www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Should Bristol become a high-rise city?

The conclusion of the three expert speakers at the Bristol Civic Society's March 5 event was an unambiguous no. Tall buildings are bad for the environment, and bad for happiness. *Matthew Montague Pollock* reports.

With lots of graphs and charts, this was a research-heavy evening. Much of the information was surprisingly new. One wondered why no-one asked these questions before. First up was Professor Philip Steadman of UCL, an expert in buildings' energy usage.

Steadman has compiled an extraordinarily large data set of 612 UK office buildings, new and old, large and small, air-conditioned and naturally ventilated, to compare their energy usage, using actual energy consumption figures. This had not previously been done before anywhere in the world.

The results were a big surprise. Tall buildings use dramatically more energy than other buildings on an ongoing basis, in fact 100% more energy per square metre. Their carbon emissions per square metre are more than twice as large. Tall buildings in fact *never* use less energy, except in the case of one Foster building where the architect has effectively encased one tall building inside another, obviously a highly expensive undertaking. Steadman was surprised by this result, because existing theoretical models of energy usage forecast that tall buildings should be mildly more energy-intensive, using around 15% extra energy. Conclusion: the computer models that architects use to forecast ongoing energy use are highly misleading, when tested against real-world observations.

What is the reason for the extra energy use? Lifts only use 3% of a tall building's energy, so they don't explain it. Maybe the air-conditioning? No - the effect survives even if you separate out non-airconditioned buildings. So what is the reason? Though this is speculative, the most likely reason appears to be that tall buildings are exposed to cold air and wind in winter, and heat in summer, because they stick up. So they need more heating and more cooling.

Tall buildings also use more "embodied energy", i.e. energy consumed during construction, before the building is



Tall buildings' shadows tend to block neighbouring buildings' light, so they need to occupy extra space.

brought into use. A group in Australia looked at embodied energy and height in office buildings, studying two low-rise offices on 3 and 7 storeys, and two high-rises on 42 and 52 storeys. On average, the embodied energy per square metre of floor area was 60% greater in the tall office buildings. So their construction has an extremely high environmental impact in terms of energy and carbon use.

We are often told that to densify urban space we need tall buildings. But this too is an illusion, argues Steadman. Tall buildings' shadows tend to block neighbouring buildings' light, so they need to occupy extra space. So in real life the typical mid-rise building has the same Floor Space Index (FSI) as a

tall building (FSI = floor area, divided by land area used), i.e. tall buildings do not in practice provide extra density.

This can be intuitively demonstrated by re-arranging Foster and Partners' 41 and 36 storey 250 City Road scheme into an 8 storey courtyard building. Both schemes would occupy the same land space, and yield the same usable areas, and have the same FSI, even though one is massively taller than the other.

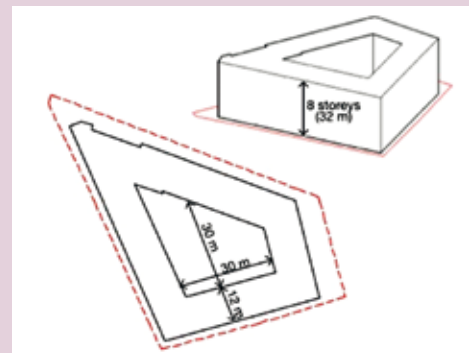
Steadman's research suggests that:

- Energy usage intensity in UK office buildings increases with height, and is *doubled* going from 5 storeys to 20 storeys and more.

Foster and Partners, scheme for 250 City Road: towers of 36 and 41 storeys, plus 7-storey blocks.



The same floor area on the same site in an 8-storey courtyard.



- Embodied energy usage in Australian office buildings is 60% greater in high-rise than in low-rise.

- Energy intensity also increase with height in UK blocks of flats.

- Computer models of energy use do not appear to predict these effects.

- The densities achieved by tower buildings can generally be achieved in slabs or courtyard buildings of less than half the height.

- Much energy could thus be saved by building lower, without sacrificing density.

Next speaker up was David Milner of Create Streets, an urbanism think-tank founded in 2013 by Nicholas Boys Smith, who was recently co-head of the government's Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission.

Create Streets are quiet revolutionaries, pioneering the collection and creation of quantitative research, which is increasingly available and, in their view, highly necessary given that architecture and planning largely lack a tradition based on empirical evidence, at least as psychologists or the sciences would understand such evidence.

Create Streets has gathered evidence which looks at how building forms can increase human interaction and happiness. What proportion of health might be derived from the environment? About 40%, according to US research. And what built forms add pleasure, encouraging sociability and happiness, and improving mental health?

- Trees and green - but preferably green in smallish spaces, with private green areas, or areas shared among rather few people (e.g. a small park).
- Streets with no or only slow-moving motorised traffic.
- Streets with active facades rather than dead spaces.
- Symmetrical buildings, with detailing and decoration.
- Views of water.

- 'Traditional' rather than 'modern' building designs.

- Buildings with colour.

- Small squares rather than large squares.

- Green suburbs (though the stress of commuting can completely undo the associated increase in happiness).

- Mid-rise buildings rather than high-rise.

Each of these effects is highly supported. Collectively they greatly outweigh income effects. Interestingly, Create Street's findings demonstrate the considerable distance between the predispositions of many architects and the tastes of ordinary people. Many architects prefer tall and modern building designs, while research shows that than most ordinary people prefer mid-rise buildings, and traditional designs.

The evidence is also clear that tall buildings cause greater loneliness and more depression, are not optimal for children, are associated with social relations that are more impersonal and where helping behaviour is less than in other housing forms. 'Crime and fear of crime are greater [in tall buildings], and...they may independently account for some suicides', notes an important survey by Robert Gifford (2007) quoted by Create Streets which concludes: "the literature suggests that high-rises are less satisfactory than other housing forms for most people."

Third speaker up was Rab Bennetts, who led us from Le Corbusier's futuristic vistas to the "international style" of today's globalised high-rise cities, including the social housing of the 60s, and the towers of Dubai, Hong Kong, Panama, and the City of London.

With long experience as the founder of the UK's leading sustainability practice, Bennetts stated that more emissions happen during the construction stage than during the entire working life of the building.

The typical cost of not only the

Create Streets: evidence from controlled studies, 1962-2007

Association	Total number of studies	% showing high rise 'bad'	% showing no link	% showing high rise 'good'
Satisfaction with home	12	92%	0%	8%
Levels of mental strain, crowding, stress, optimism	19	66%	21%	11%
Depression and more serious mental health	5	100%	0%	0%
Suicide	4	50%	50%	0%
Behavioural problems for children	5	80%	20%	0%
Levels of crime	6	50%	50%	0%
Fear of crime	2	50%	0%	50%
Pro or anti-social behaviour	5	100%	0%	0%
Levels of social engagement and social capital	16	75%	13%	13%
Children's progress in high-rise	11	91%	9%	0%
Total	85	78%	12%	11%

materials but of transporting them to the building site is so large that it could take 50 years at least before even a very ecologically friendly new building actually becomes sustainable.

Bennetts confessed that he himself had not been guiltless. Tasked with master-planning an Islington canal-side site he had sought to reduce heights and density on the canal by completing the area with a 25 storey building. But as the site was sold on and the design passed from developer to developer the building got taller and taller, setting a precedent for 2 more neighbouring high rises which have since totally overpowered the local environment.

What should be our ambition? To re-use old buildings. To use natural materials which absorb carbon, so as to achieve a zero carbon footprint almost from the word go. Seemingly an almost impossible ambition. But one we should aim for.



The construction of tall buildings has an extremely high environmental impact in terms of energy and carbon use.

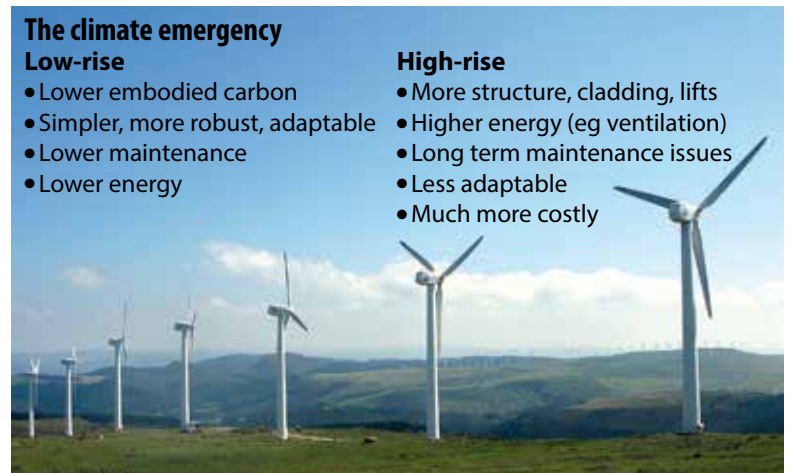
The climate emergency

Low-rise

- Lower embodied carbon
- Simpler, more robust, adaptable
- Lower maintenance
- Lower energy

High-rise

- More structure, cladding, lifts
- Higher energy (eg ventilation)
- Long term maintenance issues
- Less adaptable
- Much more costly



Planning Applications

Planning application references for each proposal are given in brackets.

The Council's draft planning advice for dealing with houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

Proposals to convert conventional houses into HMOs are regular items on the Planning Application Group's (PAG) agendas. The Society, therefore, welcomes the Council's publication of a draft Supplementary Planning Guidance Document (SPD) on this issue. We welcome the broad thrust of the SPD. Our response can be read on www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk. There is a legal definition of HMOs in the Council's document but essentially an HMO exists where a house is occupied by a number of unrelated people who live separately but share common facilities like kitchens, bathrooms and living rooms.

HMOs, like accommodation for students, are a useful element of the housing stock providing flexible, short term accommodation for people do not want or cannot afford other types of tenure. However, there can be harmful impacts on communities from HMOs particularly where there are concentrations of them. These can include noise and disturbance, unsightly waste and recycling management, loss of privacy for neighbours due to more overlooking and reduced highway safety arising from excessive on-street car parking. Residents of HMOs, if they are short term occupants, might also be less inclined to get involved with local community issues thus reducing the social cohesion of an area. All of these factors can change the character of an area.

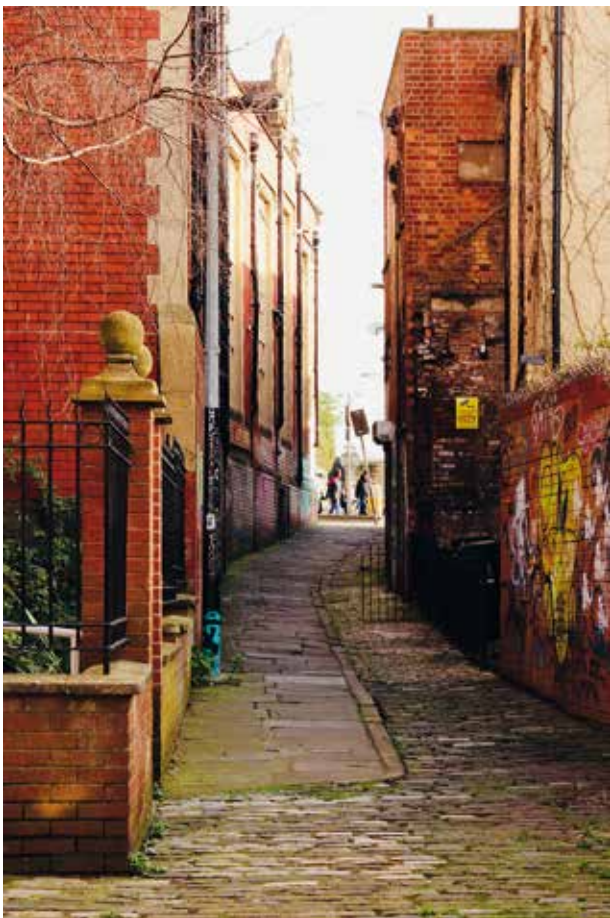
The policy proposals of the Council's draft SPD aim to prevent concentrations of HMOs. There are two main policies:

- If adopted, they will aim to prevent non-HMO houses from being sandwiched by HMO proposals;
- Proposals which would lead to a concentration of HMOs exceeding 10% of the dwellings within 100 metres

John Payne, from Bristol Civic Society's Planning Applications Group, highlights some recent issues.



Proposals to convert conventional houses into HMOs are regular items on the Planning Application Group's agendas.



Redcross Mews. The proposal includes upgrading Redcross Lane.

of a proposed HMO would be resisted.

There are also proposals to secure a satisfactory standard of accommodation in new HMOs.

There is no guidance in the SDP to indicate where HMOs would be more appropriate. Such areas could include the city centre and accommodation above shops and similar premises in the smaller centres of Bristol.

News of applications

Redcross Mews

An imaginative development has been proposed to replace eight vacant one-bed houses with a 4/5 storey building containing 34 flats including 5 affordable units (19/06226/F). The flats are mainly 1 and 2 bed flats but with some 3 bed flats. The proposal includes upgrading Redcross Lane, linking Old Market and Redcross Street, and the design of the building steps down towards Redcross Lane to reduce its impact on this narrow walkway. In liaison with the Old Market Community Association, the Society has supported this scheme which will both regenerate this part of Old Market and use the site far more effectively. We have urged the applicants, however, to integrate the affordable housing with the market housing rather than having a separate entrance for it.

Protecting community uses and activities.

There is continuing pressure to convert pubs into housing. Sometimes this also involves the demolition of the pub building. Through PAG, the Society generally objects to the loss of the pub use but, if the Council is convinced that a pub is unviable, we seek a replacement community use. Examples over the last few months include The Jamaica Inn (formerly The Inkerman), Grosvenor Road (19/06175/P) and the Windmill Public House at Windmill Hill (19/06116/F).



Left, The Jamaica Inn. There is continuing pressure to convert pubs into housing.

Besides objecting to the loss of the public house use at The Jamaica Inn, the Bristol Civic Society also considered the three storey building inappropriate in an area where there was a predominance of two storey buildings. The grey brick work proposed also bears little relationship to surrounding properties. Finally, the proposal would offer very little open space to its occupants.

There are numerous local objections to the proposals for the Windmill pub. Once again, the Society seeks to

maintain the public house use or at least a community use. The scale of the proposal is also too large for its location and the plan would over-develop the site to the detriment of its occupants and the neighbourhood.

An extremely welcome proposal for St Michael's Church on St Michael's Hill (19/05170/F) has been enthusiastically supported by the Society. Another article in this Better Bristol is devoted to this development (see page 10). Suffice it to say here that the restoration of the Grade II* Listed church for use

as a dance and performance centre is long overdue. The works to restore its appearance are also beneficial to the St Michael's Hill and Christmas Steps Conservation Area.

Digital advertising screens

PAG has considered applications for a number of large 6mx3m and over digital screens in recent months and has objected strongly to them all in terms of their harmful visual impact and the increased danger they would pose to road users. These include

proposals for Clifton Down shopping centre (20/00174/A), Newbridge Road, Netham (19/05142/A) and Cabot Circus car park (19/04090/A). The Clifton Down shopping centre application is still under consideration. Bristol Civic Society welcomes the Council's refusal of the other proposals but the applicants have appealed against the decisions with the outcome unknown at present. An earlier application for two screens near Totterdown Bridge on Bath Road (19/04821/A), one of which was recommended for permission, has been deferred by the Development Control Committee, many of whom objected to both of the screens.



Left, St Michael's on the Mount Without. Restoration work is underway.

Major Developments



Permission was refused to University Hospitals Bristol for a new 820-place car park.

BRI Marlborough Street multi-storey car park (see *Better Bristol*, issue 14, Spring 2019.)

Permission was refused to University Hospitals Bristol for a new 820-place car park. The Society opposed the application because the scheme would fail to deliver the public benefits that the Trust claimed and further overload the local roads which are at a standstill for substantial periods every day.

Western Harbour (land around the Cumberland Basin)

The Society is very concerned about the City Council's approach to Western Harbour which is not following its own guidance for involving local communities during pre application discussions and negotiations. We will continue to press for more transparency and for more involvement by the Society itself.



Left, Western Harbour. The Society is critical of the administrative process. Right, Bristol University Library. The building would dwarf its neighbours.

29 - 32 Portland Square, St Paul's (see *Better Bristol* issue 14, Spring 2019.)

This terrace of four houses has been Bristol's longest running 'building at risk', blight. The Council has granted planning permission for student accommodation for the redevelopment of this site. The Society hopes that this scheme is built, the buildings remain at risk.

New Arts and Social Sciences Library, Hawthorns Hotel Site, Woodland Road, Clifton.

The Society supports the development of a library on the former Hawthorns Hotel site but regrets that we cannot support this proposal which would be much larger than the library in the 2006 Masterplan, which the Society supported. From a lower base, the Library would be taller than the Senate House. The building would dwarf its neighbours which include the Grade II listed Bristol Grammar School and would overbear and dominate the upper parts of Elton and Woodland Roads. The mass and height of the proposed building in the Woodland Road/Elton Road area, however designed, would seriously damage the Conservation Area which forms part of the University's attraction.

The former Gardiner Haskins 'Homecentre' site, St Philip's.

The Society supports the redevelopment of this large and important site that includes a car park. The redevelopment would convert the Grade II listed Soapworks Building into flats and also deliver, offices, an apartment hotel, and retail/food units. A planning gain would be new north-south and east-west routes that would connect with two internal courtyards. However, there are two



in Bristol

John Frenkel, convenor of Bristol Civic Society's Major Sites Group gives an overview.



29-32 Portland Square. Bristol's longest running 'building at risk', blight.

aspects to which the Society objects. The first objection is the loss of the former Homecentre building on Straight Street, although the new building would retain the street façade. The Society supports the Old Market Community Association (OMCA) who object to the loss of the building's internal fabric. The OMCA have shown how redevelopment could convert the whole building to new use. We also object to a proposed 20-floor residential tower at the south east corner of the site on the junction of Old Bread Street and New Kingsley Road.

The Arc, Millennium Square

If the development does not harm the critical views of the Cathedral, the Society supports the proposal to erect a moving observation capsule beside the Grade II listed, 'We Are Curious' former Canon's Marsh railway goods shed. The capsule would look like a London Eye flight cabin and hold 42 passengers. After the capsule rises to its 'flying height' it would move through a full circle to give passengers an eye-level view 69 metres above the Square of the Harbour and beyond. The promoters calculate that the Arc could attract 250,000 passengers a year.

These are the edited highlights of some of the city's development activity. It is critical for the Society to meet developers of large projects early in the design process. MSG tends to

Bedminster Green (See *Better Bristol* 15, Autumn 2019.)

Bedminster Green the name for a development area on both sides of the Malago Road between East Street and the railway. The Society strongly supports redevelopment that would transform east Bedminster. There is now an area planning framework to coordinate development to blend this new residential quarter into the existing urban fabric. Five developers own the development rights. Unfortunately, four developers have made uncoordinated planning approaches to develop separate plots with buildings that range up to 16 floors to contain flats and student accommodation. The Society has supported the Windmill Hill and Malago Group (WHAM) who desire regeneration but oppose schemes that overdevelop the sites. Two planning applications are now refused and a third developer's planning enquiry discouraged because the schemes have sought to 'maximise' rather than 'optimise' density and do not achieve the planning policy goals of successful placemaking, quality design and liveability. The Society would like to think that the developers can reconsider and produce schemes that WHAM and the Society could welcome.

concentrate on city centre developments which affect the greatest number of residents and where local representation is weakest. The Society supports development and modern architecture.



Gardiner Haskings. The Society supports the redevelopment of this large and important site.

Bristol University - Temple Meads Campus - student accommodation

(see *Better Bristol* 15, Autumn 2019.)

The University has planning permission for student accommodation in three blocks that rise between 9 and 21 floors at Temple Island on the south side of Cattle Market Road. The Society was disappointed by the architecture. We considered the designs to be anonymous and without local character. There is no better place in Bristol for a contemporary architecture and a landmark building.

Bristol University - Temple Meads Campus - academic buildings

The University has applied for planning permission for the detailed design of the new academic buildings. The Society supports the design of the two buildings and their setting. The larger building breaks down into several buildings separated by courtyards within a glass curtain wall of different colours/textures with mirror glass sections. The Society has two major concerns. The local road system is already above capacity many times of day. Although the University plans to minimise vehicle access to the new campus, it must produce additional traffic, including buses, that will incrementally increase traffic density. There appears to be no funding for two planned pedestrian bridges to integrate the campus with the east bank of the River Avon.

Items on the Society's website have links to the Society's full responses.

The MSG meets every six weeks. The Group needs new members. Please contact johnfrenkel5@gmail.com.

The Bristol Arena

A tale of two Bristol Civic Society events
by *Simon Birch.*

May 2016 Unitarian Chapel, Brunswick Square

The talk we arranged to learn about the Arena proposals at Temple Meads did not go well! The rain was torrential, the crowd was sparse, the laptops would not connect to the projector. Eventually project architects Populous and Feilden Clegg rose to the challenge and gave a lively presentation simply using their laptops. Challenging to see the images clearly but the overall message came across well.

Questions were unexpected. How could this constricted site accommodate large acts with their legions of articulated lorries? Lorry manoeuvring, number of loading bays, parking – all these issues were hotly debated. And all this before we got on to the actual design of the Arena – which we found difficult to see anyway!

Was the proposed site really large enough to accommodate this ambitious project? Or was the ambition already being tempered by the constraints of the site?

The meeting did raise the fundamental question of whether the City Council should be involved in any way with the risks attached to such a complex and long term project? The question was left hanging and gave us all cause for concern.

We were grateful to the architects for their very professional presentation – in very trying circumstances.



Left, Temple Island Arena. Was the proposed site really large enough to accommodate this ambitious project?



The Brabazon Hangar. It is simply immense. Photo Ted Fowler.

February 2020 Brabazon Hangar, Filton

A presentation and a visit. Numbers limited by the capacity of the coach needed to access the hangars, IT tried and tested – presumably by many such presentations! Well argued case for a 17,000 capacity venue accommodated within the central hangar. Plenty of space for associated recreational activities and, of course, for all those articulated lorries with ample space to manoeuvre and to access loading docks.

Great use of an otherwise problematical and historic building. But the key challenge remained – how will the crowds actually get there – to this rather remote corner of the former

Filton Airfield? Part of the answer lies in the pace of change in this area with new housing already being built on numerous nearby sites, with Metrobus being extended and with plans for a new railway station.

Some mentioned how much better Cardiff was at planning such large public venues with the Principality Stadium and the Arena located so close to the City Centre. No answer to that one though.

Reflections

I must admit to a feeling of relief when the Mayor made his decision about the Arena – no more worries about all those lorries and, more fundamentally, about the City Council getting involved with a project way outside its usual comfort zone.

I also admit to a feeling of being awestruck when walking into the Brabazon hangar – the sheer size of the structure is impossible to convey in words. It's simply immense. It would provide the setting for an absolutely superb arena!

Assuming difficult decisions are made and construction goes ahead as planned, I will definitely be getting in line for tickets as soon as the Brabazon opens.

St Michael's on the Mount Without

Restoration is underway and requires a range of specialist skills, writes *Simon Birch.*



North roof.

It is heartening to report on the phoenix arising from the ashes of St. Michael's! Some three and a half years on from that disastrous fire there is significant new life. The church is now owned by local businessman Norman Routledge, of Kings Weston House fame, who is working with Quentin Alder, conservation architect.

Quentin emphasises that a fundamental component of the approach to restoring St Michael's has been the objective to keep the nave and aisles free of partitions and other clutter. There will be a completely flat, sprung floor with underfloor heating. Ideal for dance and a wide range of other activities and events.

As a consequence, the use of the crypt is critical to the future operation of the building by providing storage, toilets and other facilities. There is a need to lower the crypt floor by around half a metre to provide the necessary headroom. And there is a need to provide a lift for access and for moving chairs and other items.

Provision for the lift will be accommodated in a semi-circular extension using very different materials from the church – in this case bronze-coated zinc.

But the really interesting aspect of the renovation is Norman's approach to carrying out the actual work. Instead of preparing bills of quantities, going out to tender and employing specialist companies, individuals are employed directly and bring with them expertise and tried and tested associates.



New and old timbers.

Undertaking the task of rebuilding the fire damaged roof is Ollie Whitmore, aged 34, with a geography degree from UWE, who met his wife when working at Kings Weston House. Ollie is self employed and has previously worked for 8 years as a timber framer with a commercial company creating timber framed buildings. Whenever required Ollie is bringing in known associates to assist at St Michael's

Ollie has recently established his own company based in Frome*. The majority of the work has been on the north roof where a completely new traditional king post truss roof has been fabricated. It's possible to see the original eighteenth century pit-sawn timber in some of the surviving timbers. Ollie describes how he used Douglas fir – England sourced. Same as original timbers. And placed 14 tonnes of timber on the roof!

Inside the church the task of restoring the leaded windows is being masterminded by Ben Beech, originally from Derby.

Ben has been a chimney sweep and was working at a property in Bristol where the householder had a badly damaged stained glass door which was being thrown out as the repair quotes were too expensive. Ben took it home and restored it. That was 5 years ago! Specialist supplies are purchased from Creative Glass Guild in Feeder Road. Now Ben works both as a traditional chimney sweep and as a leaded glass expert, mostly for domestic customers.**

When I visited St Michael's Ben was working alongside his wife, together with two friends, all busy fabricating new leaded windows. Not surprisingly for a city church these are all very large, each window measuring 14' x 5'. In



Leaded glass windows being prepared.

total there are 18 of these windows to make; quite a challenge!

Working in the crypt and charged with making the crypt fit for future use is Mark Atwill. Mark is a very experienced stonemason with some 37 years in the trade having started aged just 17. The work really took off in Bristol during the 1980s as interest grew in renovating the many old buildings.

Mark is working with his son and a colleague, repairing the roof parapets and making the crypt fit for purpose.

Norman is planning to have St Michael's open in May, yes this year! As an act of faith we have booked the Civic Society's AGM in the nave for Tuesday 2nd June. STOP PRESS. Due to current situation this has been canceled.

*<http://www.eastsomersettimberframecarpentryco.co.uk/>
** info@chimneysweepbristol.co.uk
<http://www.quentinalder.co.uk/>



Ollie Whitmore rebuilding the fire-damaged roof.

Preserving our architectural heritage

Better Bristol is pleased to showcase the work of Claudia Feher and Callum Sinclair, two local photography students.

Claudia and Callum are currently studying Professional Photography at City of Bristol College (in partnership with Plymouth University). As part of a second-year module on Exploratory Practice they were given a brief on architectural exploration and asked to show how photography can be used as a medium for change in preserving our architectural heritage. Here we see Callum's photos of St Michael's on the Mount Without and Claudia's photos of Ashton Court Mansion.



Above, photo by Callum Sinclair.
Below, photo by Claudia Feher.



Above, photo by Callum Sinclair.

Left, photo by Claudia Feher.

Callum is 21 and from Taunton. His subjects are usually fashion and youth. Here he uses monochrome to show a beautiful but unloved building. (Now very much loved! See page 11. Ed.)

Claudia is 36 and from Hungary. She moved to Bristol recently and sees beauty in old run-down buildings, trying to show their former glory rather than documenting their current state.

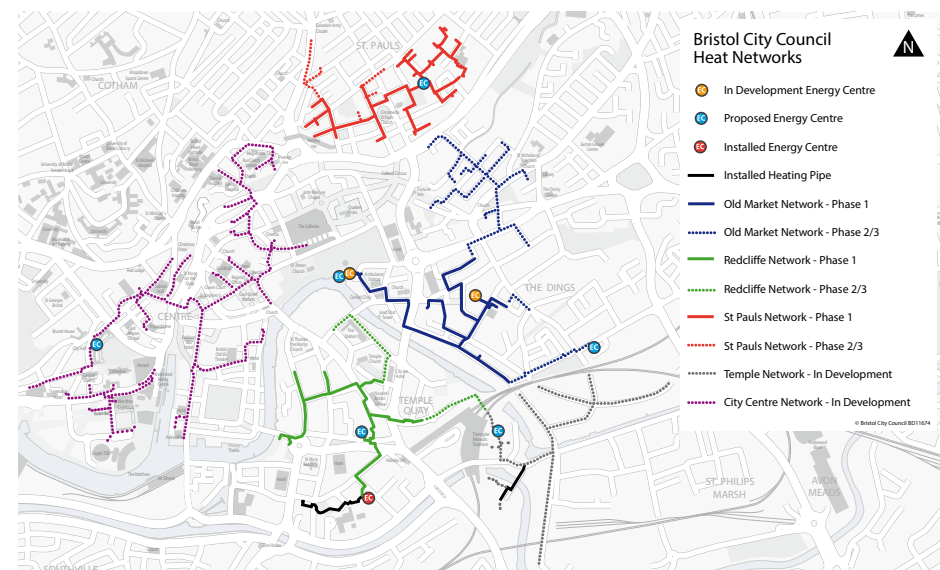


Above and right, photos by Claudia Feher.
Below, photos by Callum Sinclair.



Innovate and collaborate for a carbon neutral Bristol

Bristol is now in the first year of its decade-long countdown to carbon neutrality. **Samantha Nicol, Head of Innovation at Bristol Energy, describes three city-wide initiatives.**



Bristol's One City Climate Strategy* was launched by the One City Environmental Sustainability Board in February 2020. It describes a pathway for Bristol to become carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2030 – a highly ambitious goal, 20 years ahead of the UK Government.

It says 'Our analysis shows that to become carbon neutral we need to replace the estimated 160,000 gas boilers across the city with electric heat pumps supplied by renewable electricity or carbon neutral district heating'.

Together, Bristol based businesses, community organisations and Bristol City Council are working to help the city achieve our decarbonisation targets. Key members are Bristol City Council, Bristol Energy, the

city's green energy supplier, and Bristol Energy Network, who represent many community energy-focused groups across the city.

Their aim is to ensure that they protect what makes Bristol special, while making the city an even better place to live and work, and ensuring that generations to come can live sustainably in a zero-carbon future Bristol.

Here we look at just three of the city-wide initiatives where groups are collaborating:

City Leap

The ambitious City Leap initiative is a strategic partnership that will bring £1bn worth of investment into new energy projects to create a cleaner, greener, healthier city.



The aim is to protect what makes Bristol special.

Led by Bristol City Council and Bristol Energy, City Leap will establish a joint venture with an as-yet-to-be-determined organisation (or group of organisations) to support the delivery of the UK's first carbon neutral city. The hunt for a long-term partner began last year, and with the procurement stage underway, the council continues to shortlist prospective partners through a competitive scoring process.

Once established, City Leap will support the city's carbon neutral ambitions, build strong partnerships, create local jobs and empower communities to play an active role in transforming Bristol's energy system.

Heat Networks

Bristol's Heat Network is a prime example of the city taking direct climate action and working innovatively for a greener future. Bristol City Council's Heat Network is an innovative system of underground pipes that transports hot water from different sources to homes and businesses in order to heat them, much like a radiator for the whole city. It replaces the need for individual buildings to have their own heating systems, and often uses heat recovered from industry or from renewable sources.

Bristol's Heat Network currently supplies over 1,000 properties with affordable, low-carbon heat from a variety of sources across the city and continues to expand to new areas across the city. Bristol Energy is developing an offer with an ambition to become the city's heat retailer of choice.

Energy efficiency

Bristol Energy Network and Bristol Energy are working to encourage home and business owners and businesses to make their homes and offices energy efficient.

The Bristol Energy Network member, award-winning C.H.E.E.S.E (Cold Homes Energy Efficiency Survey Experts) Project is an example of this. It offers low cost thermal imaging surveys to identify where a home is losing heat and provides suggestions for remedies to encourage energy efficiency.

Now is the time for businesses, communities and individuals to make green choices, support local carbon reduction initiatives and tackle the climate emergency.

* <https://www.bristolonecity.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/one-city-climate-strategy.pdf>

The Council decides on a Clean Air Plan

Is it worth having?, asks **Alan Morris.**

The decision

Bristol's Clean Air Plan was decided in November 2019. The earlier consultation had asked for views on two options, a medium area zone in which older diesel commercial vehicles are charged, and a small area zone in which all diesel cars are banned between 7am and 3pm each day. Neither option reduced air pollution below legal limits soon enough, so the decision was to go for both options combined – a 'hybrid' option.

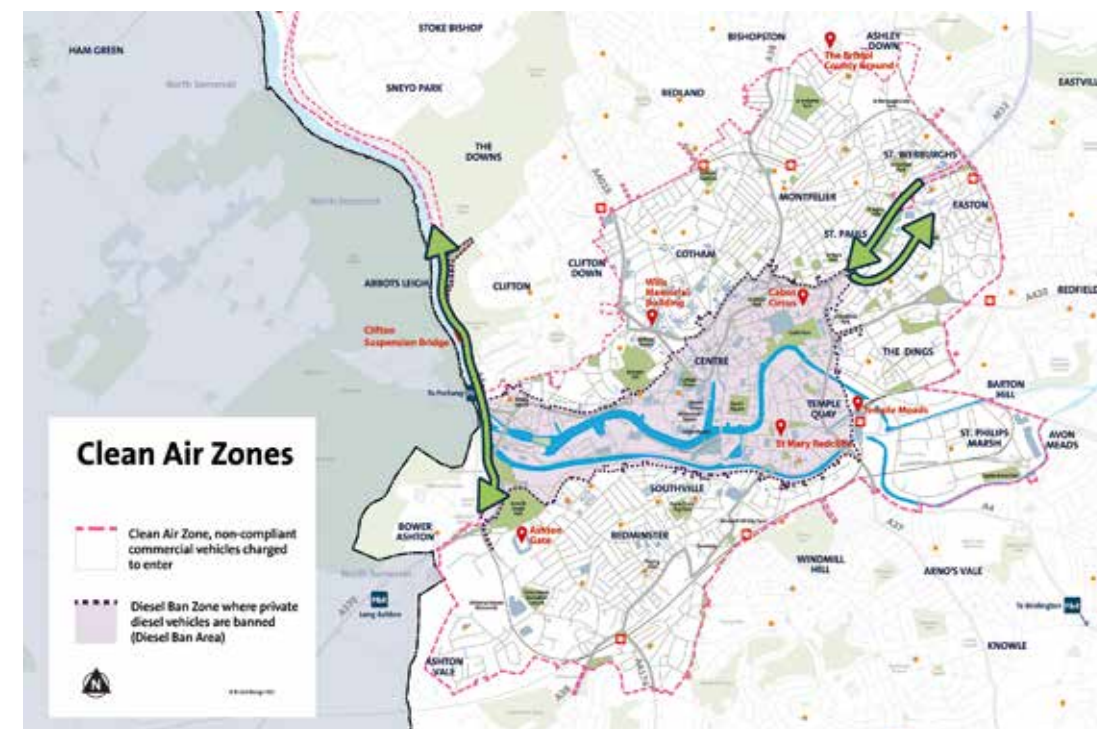
The local and national media picked up the story, focusing on the diesel car ban, which no other city has adopted.

The plan is projected to cost a staggering £113m to implement, much of it from the government, assuming that they approve the plan. And it will be a major project for the Council to undertake, absorbing resources that might otherwise be applied elsewhere. All this is the consequence of the vehicle emissions scandal in which manufacturers fiddled the tests, and the subsequent pressure by the EU and Client Earth to take action.

Is it worth it?

Despite the diesel car ban, the projected date for compliance with legal limits is as late as 2025, later than other cities. The extensive and complex modelling shows that Bristol has a problem with a few particular city centre streets – other places reach compliance earlier.

The 20% to 30% improvement in NOx air pollution by 2025 comes as much from ongoing fleet changes as from the immediate impact of the measures. The diesel car ban may apply only to the inner city, but it will affect car buying decisions wider than that. The value of the Clean Air Plan is the highly visible message that vehicles need to be changed to reduce harmful emissions.



In some areas pollution is more than 50% higher than the prescribed limit.

This 'sticking plaster' Clean Air Plan is welcome, but it is not the whole answer. The climate emergency declaration and the 2030 zero carbon target require a radical change in transport in the city. It would be better to have a joined-up plan to tackle air pollution, congestion and the climate emergency. What is needed is a general reduction in single-user vehicles so that our narrow city centre roads can meet the travel demand whilst minimising air and noise pollution.

Further work

Since November, the Council has listened to specific concerns, such as those of city centre destinations like the BRI hospital and the SS Great Britain visitor attraction. The Council

has made concessions to take Plimsoll Bridge and the main Cabot Circus car park out of the diesel car ban zone. Politically, it does not look good making an exemption for Cabot Circus but not for the BRI, but the BRI is at a pollution hotspot. Hospital visitors will be able to apply for an exemption for their car so that the number plate is exempted by the ANPR cameras. The council is discussing with the BRI how to improve bus services to the hospital.

The council has checked the modelling results at places outside the zones to answer concerns about displacement of pollution. More work is being done on mitigations to ease the impact for some of those affected – exemptions and scrappage schemes. And the Council needs to negotiate with government to fund them. Government approval was due by end January 2020 and the council's full business case was due by February 2020. Both are behind schedule. The projected March 2021 implementation date may be missed.

The Council is developing its strategy to meet the 2030 zero carbon target, but it remains to be seen whether the transport plan is strong enough.

You can keep up to date on the Clean Air Plan via the Bristol Civic Society's website: bristolcivicsociety.org.uk.

Roll up for the circus!

Performing arts in the city embraces a wide spectrum of activity and entertainment, *Nic Billane* takes a look at the history of the traditional circus and how the format is evolving, much is happening in influential Bristol.

Many Bristolians, young and older may recall the Disney cartoon Dumbo or might hum along with Nelly the Elephant song, or perhaps attend a festival event, or be more familiar with the brightly covered Big Circus tops which periodically set up on Durham Downs. The fun, excitement and thrill of the first visit to a circus usually sticks in one's mind.

Bristol continues to attract the big travelling circus shows, Circus Berlin and Moscow State have visited in recent years. But the way in which circuses operate and the entertainment they offer has much changed in recent

decades, the big top may still be seen along with clowns, and acrobats, but the large animals, lions, elephants etc. are gone, replaced by other entertainments.

But first a bit of background history. In the dim and distant past the Greeks and Romans offered their citizens spectacular forums where chariot races and gladiatorial combat were on the agenda. Skipping a few centuries, the creation of the modern circus format is often credited to a British cavalry officer Philip Astley, who in the later part of the eighteenth century in Lambeth London, invented the idea of a public show in an amphitheatre for the display of horse riding tricks. Astley expanded his repertoire, bringing other skilled entertainers such as acrobats and clowns to create crowd-pleasing



Evening classes are open to a vetted general public.

variety shows. The tradition of having a ringmaster to introduce a variety of acts, usually set to music, was quickly established, and remained almost the universal format until the 1970s.

During the nineteenth century and up till the end of the twentieth century, the idea of taking a large circus with a supporting cast of exotic animals on tour by the road, rail and sea to cities and towns across continents was taken

to a grand scale particularly in the USA by circus entrepreneurs like P.T. Barnum. Wild West circus shows were also immensely popular, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show toured and received an enthusiastic reception from Bristolians during the 1891/92 UK tour and again in follow-up tours in period 1902-4. The British circus scene in the twentieth century was dominated by household names like Billy Smart, Bertram Mills and Gerry Cottle. In 2018 the 250th anniversary of the circus was celebrated throughout the UK in theatres, museums and circuses including Bristol.

The circus world and the acts offered have moved on, driven by changing market expectations and perhaps sympathy for traditional performing animals. Interestingly Bristol is playing a surprisingly influential role in the industry's future and in the revival of the circus format. The new approach is to focus on the training of highly qualified circus personnel, on human performances, and in the development of stylistic influences from other performing arts, for instance street performers.

In Bristol the Circomedia company grew from the roots of the now defunct Fool Time Company (1986), originally based in St Pauls, which introduced the concept of school for circus. Circomedia was founded in 1993, and is the centre for contemporary circus and physical theatre, based in the city centre in St Paul's Church, Portland Square and also in Kingswood. Their objective is to be the UK's centre for research and transformational experiences arising from the circus. The Circomedia Academy at Kingswood offers education through the only 2 year BTEC in Circus in the UK, provides one of only two Foundation and BA degrees in circus in the UK (in partnership with Bath Spa University), and claims to offer the only MA in Directing Circus in the world. Student enrolment numbers are significant, BTEC course attracting over 60 students in 2018/19. With a further 46 students in a two year Degree course. Recently six students completing their MAs have secured great jobs in production and direction of circus industry shows.

The Development Agency part of Circomedia in 2018/19 puts on about 30 professional performances a year and over 15 student and youth performances. Circomedia hosts low ticket price scratch nights and the Richard Award, giving emerging artists a number of opportunities to test out their work in front of an audience. The Circomedia Youth Circus is developing strongly, with 12,000 attendances in the year. Recreational classes and training



Circomedia offer the only 2 year BTEC in Circus in the UK

sessions for adults are also proving popular. So the company is doing well developing new and qualified talent, and are linked with 25 professional circus, theatre and dance companies, contributing to Bristol's economy by providing paid work with over 60 people on the payroll throughout the year. Expansion plans have been announced subject to fund raising (3-4 £million), to move from Kingswood to the Bottle Yard Studio in South Bristol.

Another intriguingly titled Bristol-based company is the Invisible Circus, now based in Sussex Street in BS20. The company was created in 1991, starting out in Stokes Croft in 2002, and today performs internationally and at major

The British circus scene in the twentieth century was dominated by household names like Billy Smart, Bertram Mills and Gerry Cottle.

British Festivals. The company's ethos lies in its roots as a street performance troupe. The Invisible Circus has grown up in arts festivals, street performances, carnivals, and independent creation spaces. It is organised as a community, drawing together a diverse range of artists, performers, actors & directors into a dynamic creative energy. Their combined output is a variety of productions from theatrical experiences to full scale circus extravaganzas for clients like Bristol Old Vic, Circus City organisation, & Glastonbury. The company has been involved with the EU's Erasmus programme over recent years. In 2019 they received EU funding to improve the level of circus teaching throughout Europe.

Located in the former Bridewell Police station, now renamed 'The Island' is a facility which provides a circus training space and equipment suitable for the needs of the 60 membership group of

professional and serious hobbyist circus performers. During the daytime to 2-3 classes are provided for the core group who train and practice their skills on acrobatic equipment with ropes, static trapeze, hoops and Corde Lizze (aerial silk sheets used to wrap and descend). Evening classes are open to a vetted general public to practice various circus fitness, flexibility and balance skills and is proving very popular. Jane Hartoch, who administrates the facility, is very knowledgeable about the Bristol circus and festival scene and explained that interest started to grow in the early 2000s, driven by the explosion in festivals and soon attracted local government support. Bristol, being the regional capital, is a magnet for performers and the South West during the summer months is the home of festivals such as Glastonbury, Womad, and many others. Festivals provide great performance opportunities and Jane estimates that well over a thousand people in Bristol find employment in the wider circus scene. Space doesn't permit a full list of companies but other spaces for professional circus training include Albany Centre in St Pauls, and Unit 15 where larger equipment for high trapeze practice can be found.

Bristol hosts its own "Circus City" festival. Over the last six years around October/November the biennial festival is dedicated to contemporary circus performances. The event brings together circus and street performers from across Europe (circus is an international family). The programme has something for everyone, attracting new performances and world premieres highlighting circus skills in drama, music, film, and dance. Look out for the next one in 2021.

Probably nowadays Bristol can claim to be the circus capital of the UK, and the circus as an entertainment is very much alive.

www.circomedia.com

www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk



Circomedia, founded in 1993, is a centre for contemporary circus and physical theatre.

Bristol night life and venues under threat

Music venues are under threat. We must be vigilant and save Bristol's nightlife, says *Annie McGann*.

Stokes Croft's Blue Mountain nightclub has been an integral part of the Bristol music scene and a contributor to the night time economy for many years. It stands forlornly in the wasteland that a developer has created all around it, alongside the doomed buildings of the former Avon and Bristol Law Centre and Sebright Printers, and the hole in the ground which was the nightclub 'Clockwork'.

Despite community protest now and in the past and planning applications for the building of student accommodation turned down by the council, developers always seem to get their way in the end, matching their hideous building plans to the brutalism of St James Barton roundabout rather than the characterful architecture of the street leading up through Stokes Croft and onward toward Gloucester Road with its stretch of cheerful independent businesses and typical Bristolian shops and houses i.e. low-rise, individual and of human proportion. This is how we like Bristol to be - creative, busy, people everywhere, friendly, charming and a



little bit edgy, a little bit boho; trees and window boxes, mirrors and windows, with strains of music and conversation in the air. The student accommodation block planned to be built on top of Blue Mountain is the exact opposite of what Bristol people like about their environment. Yes, Stokes Croft needs cleaning up a bit but the last thing we need is a huge student accommodation block built right next door to The Full Moon (c.1716), creating a wind tunnel of this high street, famous for its character. Stokes Croft, in all its graffitied anarchistic glory, is a major attraction for locals and visitors alike and a centre for Bristol's creative and cultural life.

On 12th April 2008 there was a protest march through the city and an 8,000 signature petition was presented against the closure and demolition of Clockwork, a popular nightclub on the site of devastation caused by the

dropping of an incendiary bomb during the Good Friday raid on April 12th 1941. Despite protests Clockwork was razed to the ground and left looking like the bomb site it had been after the war; a common ploy of developers to get the community to give in and let them do what they want without opposition. The developer even bought up and closed down Sebright print shop next door which served local clubs and promoters when it came to supplying fliers and posters. In living memory, Stokes Croft has always been employment land, mixed retail and light industry. If nightlife was a chain of shops or a factory being shut down there would be uproar. Thousands of people work within the night time economy in Bristol. Closing this and that venue and business diminishes these jobs and that economy. We're talking about food on the Bristol family's table here and this disproportionately impacts on young people and black and ethnic minority communities who make up a great deal of the night time workforce.

The survival of independent venues in Bristol is paramount. With all the new development all over the city there's not a pub or a social space or bar or nightclub anywhere on any plan. Communities need places to gather and socialise. Young people need somewhere to be, to meet their clan and let their hair down.

Despite the council trying to fend it off, there's a lot of student accommodation with planning permission in the area of St Paul's and now it is creeping into streets that are home to Bristol music and culture and turning our neighbourhoods into what boils down to closed communities with dead zones all around them. Residents complain about student parties in Redland and Cotham but when Lakota and Blue Mountain go surely this will lead to more free parties and house party noise in established residential areas? Stokes Croft is not a residential area - not yet anyway. If Lakota goes and Blue Mountain bites the dust as developers intend, Bristol's nightlife will be uncoupled from Stokes Croft and set

KôLAB Studios - Above Beyond © Khali Ackford.



off to drift across Broadmead and out toward St Philip's where Bristol's premier night club, Motion, stands fighting off developers who can afford to lobby for their projects daily.

Motion has been happily making a great deal of noise at night in the middle of the industrial zone of St Philips for many years but now change of use of surrounding land is granted and this puts Motion in peril.

With music venues, clubs and pubs closing across the UK at an alarming rate, we need to take a stand to make sure that Bristol doesn't go the same way as so many other towns and cities.

Only one developer so far is taking these issues seriously and the hope is that others will follow. The intention is to construct tall buildings all around Motion. This will make the sound issues more acute due to the funnelling acoustics created by their high-rise nature. Measures taken to soundproof development



Right, Clockwork. Photo Heather Cowper.

Far right, Despite protests Clockwork was razed to the ground.



Stokes Croft is a major attraction for locals and visitors alike and a centre for Bristol's creative and cultural life.

and safeguard music venues is to be encouraged, alongside the suggestion of a Deed of Easement because the new 'Agent of Change' policy on its own is not enough. The character of the area needs to be assessed, and the existence of established music venues, their contribution to the economy and the tens of thousands of visitors they attract needs to be acknowledged. Such a proposal entails the execution of a Deed of Easement to secure and formalise the right of the identified venue to emit sounds at such times as have been established by long use. Surrounding properties/land would be bound by and subject to the terms of the easement.

It comes as no surprise that most developers have no intention of allowing this precedent to be set and do everything in their power to simply shaft Motion and buy the Grade II listed building from under them. Save Bristol Nightlife have undertaken sound level tests ourselves and it has to be said that any neighbour to Motion will need extremely effective sound proofing measures to counteract living in a party zone if they find this prospect disagreeable. Sound proofing of the

new buildings will be crucial to enable the nightclub and the new development to exist side by side.

Bristol's nightlife relies on the availability of dancefloor capacity and space where people can work together to put on entertainment and where the grassroots music scene can thrive. With music venues, clubs and pubs closing across the UK at an alarming rate, we need to take a stand to make sure that Bristol doesn't go the same way as so many other towns and cities. Our music venues are under threat. We must be vigilant and Save Bristol Nightlife.

Annie McGann runs the Save Bristol Nightlife campaign alongside her friend Leighton De Burca. She's on the board of the Bristol Association of Restaurants, Bars and Independent Establishments, Deputy Chair of Night Watch/24hr Bristol and a member of the City Council's Bristol At Night advisory board. She's on the Night Board's Safety and Access subcommittee as well as the Planning and Licensing sub-committee. She makes it her business to know Bristol's night-time industry, music, clubs, pubs and community inside out.



Deep Medi Weekender © Khali Ackford.



SS Great Britain

If you can vividly remember when the SS Great Britain arrived at Avonmouth, and the great day when she journeyed back up the Avon to the City Docks, we've got bad news for you – it was 50 years ago this year. *Eugene Byrne* looks back at an epic adventure, and at the role the ship plays in Bristol today.



Far left, Bristol Evening Post, June 23 1970

Left, June 22 1970: following her epic transatlantic voyage, the SS Great Britain arrives at Royal Edward Dock at Avonmouth where she would be patched up and floated off the pontoon for her journey up-river two weeks later.

Since her triumphant return to Bristol in 1970, Brunel's SS *Great Britain* has proved herself a huge asset to the city.

In her time as a working ship, though, she did us no favours at all. Quite the opposite.

Nowadays we all think Isambard Kingdom Brunel was a great guy. Look at the lovely Clifton Suspension Bridge! The beautifully-engineered railway line to Paddington! And his many other feats, not least that great ship!

Many of our Victorian forebears weren't nearly so enthusiastic - and with good reason. SS *Great Britain* was a case in point.

After Brunel's *Great Western* proved that transatlantic steam navigation was practicable and safe, the next logical step, as everyone knew perfectly well, was surely to build two or three more similar ships?

Thus would Bristol become the main passenger port for America, and thus would Bristol regain some of the business it had long since been losing to other ports, especially Liverpool.

But no. He built one huge leviathan incorporating several new technical features which involved tearing up the plans a couple of times.

While IKB was faffing about, others stole Bristol's lead.

Bristol's great nineteenth century historian John Latimer tartly observed:

"It was determined, to use a homely

proverb, to put all the company's eggs into one basket to build, in fact, a single ship nearly three times the capacity of the Great Western, and to leave Mr. Brunel full scope and leisure to indulge his passion for experiments and novelties.

"The consequence was a series of disasters."

Between the day she was launched by Prince Albert in 1843 and the day she was returned to Bristol she suffered all manner of mishaps and catastrophes, in between more happy and useful interludes.

...And a completely unseaworthy three thousand-ton wreck was carried home across 7,500 nautical miles of some of the most hostile seas on earth.

Laid up on the Falkland Islands in 1884 she was used as a quarantine ship and for coal storage. She was scuttled and sunk in 1937 and, barring a brief episode in 1939 when some of her ironwork was cannibalised to patch up HMS *Exeter* after the Battle of the River Plate, she was left to quietly rust away.

In 1967, the naval architect Rev. Ewan Corlett wrote a letter to *The Times*:

"The first iron built ocean-going steamship and the first such ship to be driven entirely by a propeller was the *Great Britain*, designed and launched by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. This, the forefather of all modern ships, is lying a beached hulk in the Falkland Islands at this moment."

Corlett hit a nerve. Messages of support poured in and, with funding from patriotic millionaire Sir Jack ('Union Jack') Hayward, the salvage operation got under way in the spring of 1970.

The ship was put onto a special pontoon. A huge crack on one side of the hull was bunged up with mattresses donated by Falkland Islanders ...

... And a completely unseaworthy three thousand-ton wreck was carried home across 7,500 nautical miles of some of the most hostile seas on earth.

She arrived at Avonmouth, and on July 5 1970, having been floated off the pontoon, she was pulled up the Avon, watched by over 100,000 sightseers and eight million TV viewers. Two weeks later she was finally returned to the dock where she had been built.

To the casual observer, the story of *Great Britain* since her return has been one of smooth and uninterrupted progress.

It has been nothing of the kind.

From the minute she arrived she was plunged into the controversy around the future of the city docks. Many Bristol Civic Society members will know that at the end of the 1960s there were serious proposals to cover over and/or fill in significant stretches of the docks as they were no long commercially viable and because land thus reclaimed could be used for other purposes.

A major plank in this was a series of massive roads to relieve Bristol's increasingly severe traffic congestion. But as objectors to the Council proposals pointed out, how would it look if this key piece of our heritage had a bloody

great dual carriageway thundering past?

The docks plans had a (mostly) happy ending, but the ship's future was insecure for a long time. Through the 1970s the Council kept its options open for the floating harbour. It was 1974 before *Great Britain* was granted permission to remain in the Great Western Dock, and even then, the lease on its berth had to be renewed every six months.

Matthew Tanner, Chief Executive of the SS Great Britain Trust told *Better Bristol*: "The ship was not altogether valued in the early days, but also a lot of people thought it would probably have to go to London in order to be financially viable. Ending up in St Katharine Docks or next to HMS *Belfast* or something like that."

Meanwhile, money was raised and volunteers put in measureless hours of work. The funnel and first mast were erected, a new deck was completed and, with £1m donated by Sir Jack and by Sir Paul Getty more masts went up, the Queen visited and, in 1992, the First Class Saloon was opened.

But the then-150-year-old iron ship was, to nobody's surprise, rusting.

The solution, as every visitor in the last



Above, The Duke of Edinburgh pays a visit not long after her arrival in the City Docks, 1970 (© Colin Momber)



Above, Some of the earliest conservation work; high-pressure water blasting on the hull, 1971 (© Colin Momber)

15 years has seen, was a huge glass ceiling covering the hull and giving the impression that she's floating on water. This is actually a clever wheeze to control the humidity around the hull and thus its conservation.

To get to that point was not easy. In the late 1990s, says Matthew Tanner: "The valiant efforts of the Trustees and the volunteers were becoming unsustainable. The ship was visibly deteriorating and so that meant it was getting less and less visitors."

Since then, and thanks to Tanner and the team around him, lottery money came in to sort out the hull and more features have been added – everything from the replica engine to the smell of sick in some passenger cabins.

More significantly, your visit now gets you into a re-created Dockyard and there is a fabulous new museum, Being Brunel, offering insights into the great man's work and which famously allows you to literally get inside his head. It's both fun and educational, while for serious scholars there is also the Brunel Institute, now ten years old.

Last year the Trust acquired the nearby Albion Dockyard and is now a partner in a scheme to bring shipbuilding and repair back to the harbour.

The Trust reckons that the SS *Great Britain* is worth about £15m a year to Bristol, taking in what visitors spend on their tickets and the money they spend off-site having visited the city.

"We add critical mass to the city's

Colin Momber was the official photographer of the Port of Bristol Authority. His recent book of pictures, *'Ships in the Port of Bristol'* (which does not include these photos) is published by Ships in Focus Publications, price £14.95. Copies are available at

SS *Great Britain* is worth about £15m a year to Bristol.

tourism and cultural value ... Bristol has much bigger tourist numbers than Bath, which is not something that's really appreciated here."

Tanner is keen to emphasise, though, that this is not just about packing in punters. The Trust is active in promoting understanding of science, especially among youngsters, there is work with schools, especially those in less affluent parts of town.

"It's not just another visitor attraction. The ship is just the big wow-factor thing in the middle, surrounded by a great deal of other work."

Mr Brunel, it turns out, did Bristol a big favour after all. In the long run.

For more on visiting the SS *Great Britain*, and on the 50th anniversary celebrations (which include model penguins) which start in April and which include a major event on July 18-19, see www.ssgreatbritain.org

the Bristol Tourist Information centre, the SS Great Britain shop and from the Ships in Focus website at <http://shipsinfocus.com/> You can also buy from the author – email Colin.momber@cliffhanger.me.uk for details. (© Colin Momber)



Climate crisis

Bristol Civic Society member Maggie Moss praises Bristol City Council's declaration of a climate emergency but highlights the conflict between traditional growth economics and the realities of tackling the climate crisis.

In October 2018 the International Panel On Climate Change (IPCC) warned of the enormous threat a rise of 2C, (as opposed to 1.5C) posed to the world, and alerted governments to a window of 12 years left to take the action required to avert this crisis, and avoid the worst impacts.

The following month, in November 2018, Bristol City Council passed a motion, (introduced by The Green Party), to declare a **Climate Emergency**, to make the 'City of Bristol carbon-neutral by 2030'... to 'Work with other governments (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit global warming to less than 1.5°C'... and to 'Continue to work with partners across the city and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans'....

As *Better Bristol* readers will be aware, this accompanied increasing public unease over climate change, and the intense pressures on the natural world, which finally exploded in April 2019, when Extinction Rebellion (XR) brought many thousands of ordinary people onto the streets of London, (many from our city), and followed this with disruptive action in Bristol, (and elsewhere), in July last year.

In some ways Bristol is ahead of the game. It was the first Council in the UK to declare a Climate Emergency, and is home to the BBC Natural History Unit, the Soil Association, and the Environment Agency. Our universities offer over 30 courses related to environmental sciences and conservation, and with the legacy of the 2015 Green Capital status, we are a city with large numbers of citizens with a high degree of environmental awareness.

Eight months after the Council motion, in July 2019, Marvin Rees published The Mayor's Climate Emergency Action Plan, which includes some serious attempts to move things forward: an Advisory Committee on Climate Change; the appointment of the Environmental

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY



Greta Thunberg in Bristol. Photo Harry Lloyd Evans.

Sustainability Board; the development of a One City Climate Strategy, coupled with the innovative City Leap Project (see page 13), and a recent Declaration of an Ecological Emergency (February 2020).

However, (and replicated across the country, at all levels of government), there is a clear conflict between these aspirations, and traditional economic thinking. In Bristol this is currently crystallised around the issue of the expansion of Bristol International Airport, which if it went ahead would result in significant extra carbon emissions.

At meetings, and in statements, press reports, and letters from both the Mayor, members of his Cabinet, Green Party Councillors, and protestors, there are many indications of the conflict inherent in reconciling the urgent task



Spanish rail ticket displaying carbon emissions.

of mitigating climate change, with the traditional approach to job creation, economic growth and development.

Just six months after the Climate Emergency was declared, Cllr Kye Dudd, Cabinet Member for Transport wrote: 'Bristol City Council supports the important role that Bristol Airport plays in connecting the West of England and the wider South West to global destinations... We also recognise the positive impact that it has on supporting inclusive economic growth across the region'. (April 2019.)

In June 2019 Marvin Rees told protestors 'If the airport doesn't expand, we will miss an opportunity for thousands of new jobs in the next decade, in particular for Bristol South' and overtly linked the airport's expansion with his efforts to fund an underground system for the City. (Bristol Post, 24 June 2019.)

By January 2020, when challenged by concerned councillors, the Mayor was reported as insisting the letter referred to above (was) 'simply a factual response to a planning application to changes to the roundabout and parking' ... 'The letter does actually say it's important any expansion is managed in a responsible, sustainable

way...and I want the number of people flying to go down and I don't want expansion of our airports.' (Bristol Post 17 Jan 2020).

Meanwhile protestors from the local communities around Lulsgate and many councillors, have continued to point out it is meaningless to work at bringing down emissions in the city, and at the same time support projects which will actively result in major increases in emissions of CO2, despite the jobs and growth that the project brings. (Exact data on the airport expansion differs, depending on the timescales involved, and assumed factors i.e. car journeys.)

In February 2020 North Somerset Council turned down the Airport planning application, but the arguments will rage on if, as expected, an appeal against this decision is made.

Our politicians, (and indeed all of us), are struggling to accept the new reality, that to combat climate change and environmental degradation, economic growth should only be achieved through projects that also support the reduction of fossil fuel emissions, and do no damage to the environment.

Bristol with its thriving economy, and record low levels of unemployment is in a position of being able to take this on the chin, if its politicians have the

courage to do so. Continued thinking about how to spread the wealth of our city more equally, tackling skill shortages by skilling-up people in disadvantaged areas to build the energy efficient houses we need, and continuing to promote exciting developments in hi-tech solutions to the climate emergency are all better ways going forward than 'business as usual economics'.

Whatever the decisions of our politicians, (and concerned citizens will want to stay vigilant), there is also an onus on us as individuals to contribute in the fight against a climate and ecological disaster.

So, why not take this Quiz, (with thanks to Oxford Civic Society) and see how you score:

How green are you?

At Home:

Do you usually dry your laundry:

- (a) outdoors if possible,
- (b) on the radiators,
- (c) using a tumble drier?

Is your lighting:

- (a) LED bulbs
- (b) other low energy bulbs
- (c) neither?

Is your loft:

- (a) insulated to a depth of 25cms,
- (b) insulated to some degree
- (c) un-insulated storage space?

Do you have:

- (a) insulated cavity walls or other wall insulation
- (b) double glazed windows
- (c) neither?

Mainly a) - well done
you're leading the field

Mainly b) - good,
but some room for improvement

Mainly c) - need we say?!
Contact change4climate.uk
for help and advice

Getting About:

Do you:

- (a) almost always use public transport/ bike/walk
- (b) use the car for most journeys
- (c) always use the car?

If you use a car is it:

- (a) electric/hybrid
- (b) a car club car
- (c) diesel car?

On your main holiday, do you usually:

- (a) use trains/ buses/ coaches
- (b) drive the car somewhere
- (c) fly?

Resources:

Do you repair, re-use, or recycle things:

- (a) always
- (b) sometimes
- (c) rarely?

Do you eat meat, especially beef:

- (a) never
- (b) sometimes
- (c) everyday?

Do you:

- (a) mainly buy vintage clothes
- (b) buy few new clothes and wear them often
- (c) discard items worn more than 3-4 times?

Have you:

- (a) reviewed your investments and savings and moved away from fossil fuels
- (b) switched to an electricity supplier that uses renewables
- (c) neither?

If the expansion of Bristol International Airport went ahead it would result in significant extra emissions.

Small actions DO add up. For example, if all UK households with a tumble drier dried one load outside, or on a simple rack, each week, we would save a million tonnes of CO2 in a year.

And as Greta Thunberg told us 'We must ... remember that the changes required will not happen overnight ...but if enough people are pushing for change, then change will come'.

For those who would like to know more, or take positive action at any level, there are many local groups and organisations including:

Bristol Civic Society campaigning

groups; Clifton Climate Action; Extinction Rebellion; Friends of the Earth; Green Open Doors Day; Stop Bristol Airport Expansion, plus a host of community action groups and

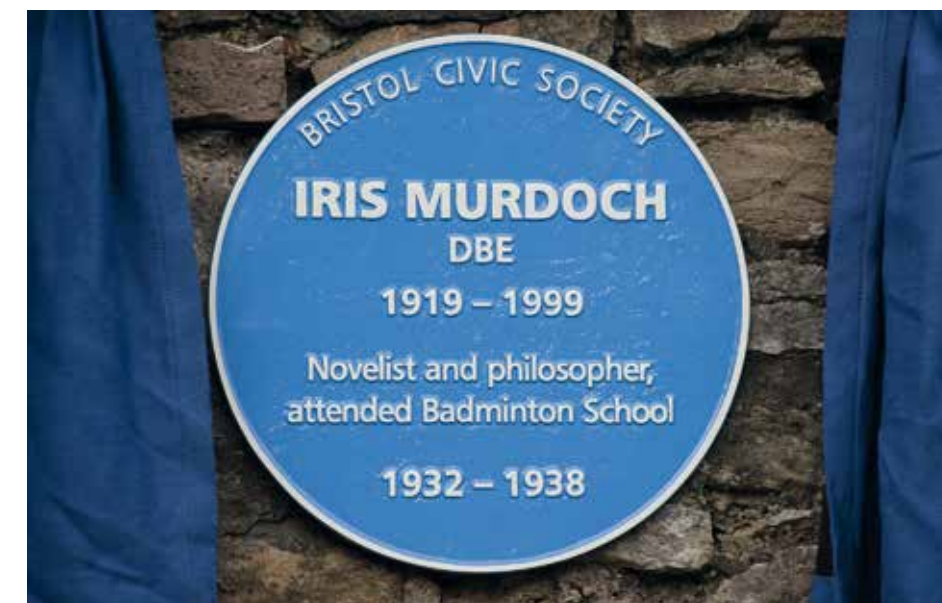
wildlife groups. If you are concerned about the way forward let the Council, the Mayor and your MP know what you think, and what you want them to do.

A blue plaque for Iris Murdoch

Gordon Young describes how the typeface used on blue plaques is designed for the job.

On Wednesday, 20 November 2019 the Right Honourable Lord Mayor, Councillor Jos Clark unveiled a blue plaque at the entrance gate to Badminton School on Westbury Road. The plaque celebrates the writer and philosopher Dame Iris Murdoch. There was some discussion about the best place to erect a plaque to such a distinguished pupil – the library, perhaps. But together, we settled on the school boundary wall so that it could proclaim its message to the wider world.

Iris boarded at the school from 1932 for six years and went on to become an internationally-recognised novelist. She



was head girl and maintained contact with Badminton School throughout her life.

The unveiling was a modest ceremony as some weeks earlier there had been a much more significant event to

mark the 100th anniversary of Iris's birth. On 3 October the school held an Iris Murdoch day, with a range of activities including a public lecture, and the entire senior school assembled to witness the Iris Murdoch plaque being unveiled on the stage.

Fit for purpose

How the typeface used on blue plaques is designed for the job

The typeface appearing on our plaques is Frutiger [this one], designed by a Swiss typographer, Adrian Frutiger.

Typefaces endure – many used in books nowadays are really old: Bembo, 1495; Garamond, 1530; Caslon, 1722; Baskerville, 1750s – even dull old vanilla-flavour Times was designed in 1929. But Frutiger was created in the 1970s, originally for wayfinding signage at Charles de Gaulle airport. It had to be legible from a distance and side-on,

Frutiger
(sans-serif)
VS
Serif
typeface

from an angle. Frutiger explained: 'What was important, was total clarity – I would even call it nudity – an absence of any kind of artistic addition'.

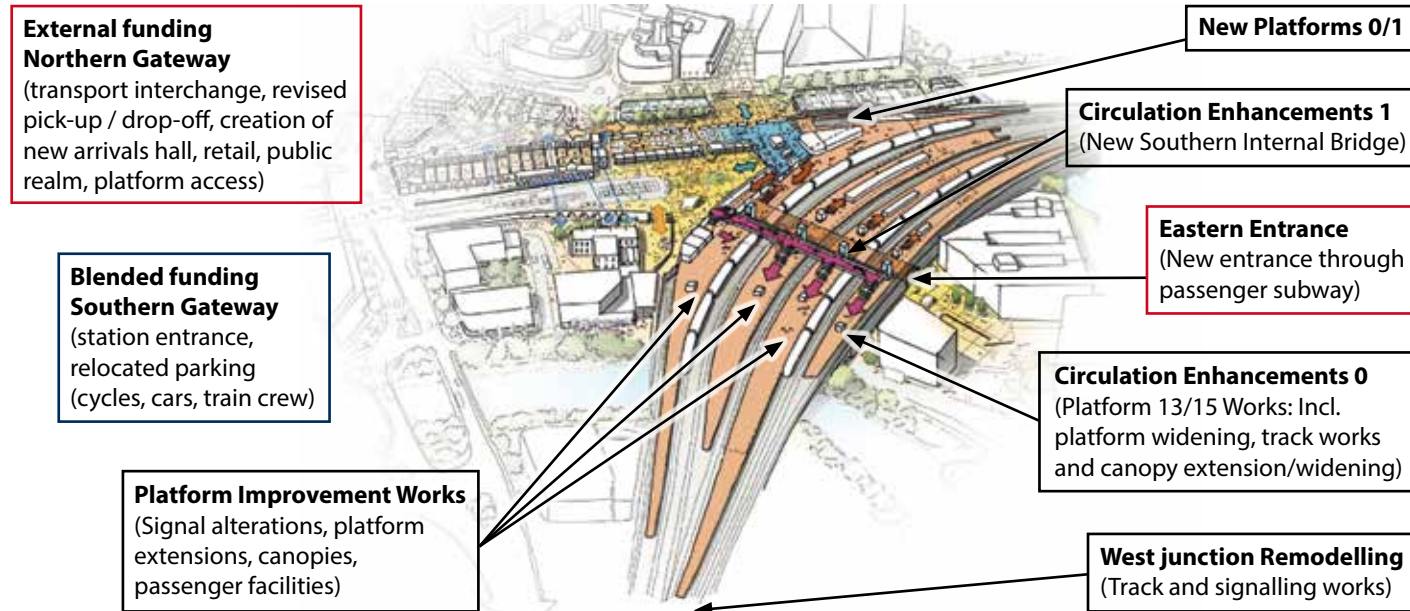
Frutiger is a sans-serif face, ideal for signage and for conveying brief messages. Such faces have been used on British motorways since the 1960s as they are more legible than serifed roman faces. But for books, readability studies prove that serif typefaces [as this] are easier to read – their subtle strokes make each character more distinctive. Our eyes can recognise them quickly. And this feature helps guide the flow of letters, words, sentences and paragraphs

because serifs can help "push" you from one letter to the next.

We can see that Frutiger has a large 'x' height: the height of characters which don't have ascenders like **h** and **l** or descenders like **g** and **p**. This is what gives it clarity. The cap **C** ends short and doesn't waste time curving on round to the right. There's an assertive square over the **i**, not a dot. Overall, we see wide, open apertures – a single-storey **g** rather than **g**; a wide **A** with a very low centre bar. A square **M** with its centre strokes descending to the base of the letter. **W** is similar, like two Vs.

Our plaques need to convey a succinct message and Frutiger's strong, geometric form tells the story admirably.

www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk



Emerging plans for Temple Meads station

After many years of waiting, there now seems to be some momentum towards specific plans for Temple Meads station, writes Alan Morris.

Passenger numbers are growing fast, and changes are essential to cope with the forecast doubling to 22m a year by 2030. A masterplan study is due for completion by summer 2020. These proposals are the first phase of plans for the wider area of Temple Quarter and St Philips Marsh.

The Temple Meads station proposals include:

- roof refurbishment – by 2023.
- an enhanced northern entrance, to include a new concourse in the Midland engine shed, with ticket office and retail outlets, and development of public realm and buildings between the entrance and Temple Quay – by 2025 – 2029.
- a new eastern entrance, with access through the University of Bristol's new Temple Campus site – by 2022
- a potential new southern entrance, on the Bath Road, with direct access to the station across a new bridge over the water and Cattle Market Road. This is a new proposal, which is still being worked through. It is at least 5 years away from implementation.

• new and enhanced internal station passenger circulation. This may include a new passenger platform bridge to take the pressure off the subway.

Some of the proposed main changes in access to the station are:

- the buses that currently access the ramp (the minority of nearby bus routes) will instead use bus stops on The Friary, and passengers will enter the station by the northern entrance.
- there will be a larger vehicle-free area at the top of the ramp, moving taxis further back. The ramp will not be available for drop-off from private cars: other locations will be made available.
- pedestrians will enjoy an enhanced direct route between the Brunel Mile crossing of Temple Gate and the northern entrance.
- bikes will be parked at a hub outside the northern entrance, instead of on platform 3.

The Society has had the opportunity to comment on the emerging proposals. We think that the configuration of connection points to taxis, buses and private cars is sub-optimal, but probably the best that can be achieved given the physical constraints. The plans place pedestrians at the top of the transport

hierarchy, and we support that. We support the improvements in public realm outside the northern entrance.

When the draft masterplan will go to consultation later in 2020, we look to see more on:

- access from the east and south.
- wayfinding signage to cope with the dispersed access points.
- specific plans for provision for disabled.
- a cycle route to the new hub that is both direct and separate from the pedestrian route.
- drop-off points for private vehicles, both access and management.

We will continue to comment on more detailed plans as they emerge.



A masterplan study is due for completion by summer 2020.

Obituary John Sansom

It is with great sadness that we heard of John Sansom's death after a long illness.

John, along with his wife Angela, established Redcliffe Press in the 1976. John always had close links with Bristol Civic Society, publishing in the 1970s a range of campaigning and influential books such as: *The Fight for Bristol*; *Changing Bristol and Modern Buildings in Bristol*.

Redcliffe's first book was *Children's Bristol*. This refreshing new take on the city was read as much by adults and by children. It sold over 20,000 copies. From then on there was no looking

The epitome of the gentleman publisher John needed little excuse to open a bottle of wine and talk about books and the arts.

back. In over 40 years Redcliffe has published in excess of 200 books about Bristol. The range was wide, but the topics that were closest to John's heart were art and architecture. It is thanks to John that Bristol is one of the best documented cities in the country.

And if that wasn't enough, he also ran the much respected imprint Sansom & Company, publishing books on contemporary art.

The epitome of the gentleman publisher John needed little excuse to open a bottle of wine and talk about books and the arts. On a personal note, John published my first book *Bristol Beyond the Bridge* and it is thanks to him that I became a writer. He changed my life. Later, I worked with John and others on the *Bristol Review of Books*. A critical success, it was nevertheless a precarious venture. From the beginning every edition felt like it was going to be the last. I approached our editorial meetings with trepidation. But John's boundless energy, enthusiasm, and generous hospitality, always pulled us through.

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY

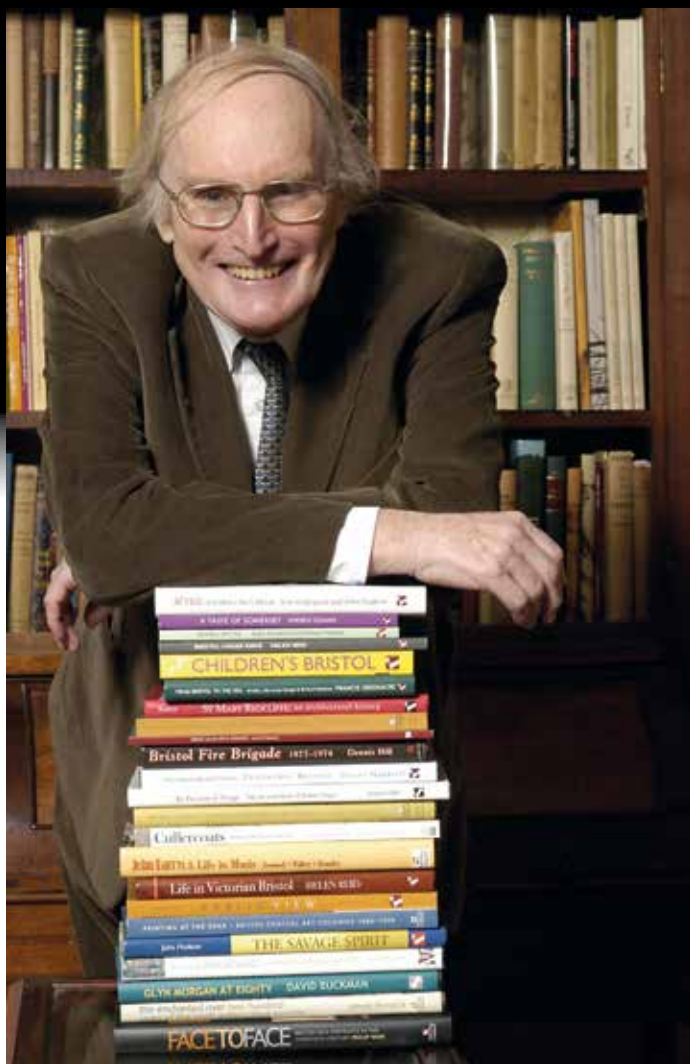
John wrote a charming memoir of his life in publishing, *Written Between the Lines*. Full of fabulous anecdotes, it is essential reading for anybody about to embark on such a precarious career. John was awarded an honorary doctorate by Bristol University, a Lifetime Achievement Award by the *Bristol Evening Post* and the prestigious Lord Mayor's Medal.

On his 70th birthday John said he had arranged for the Red Arrows to fly over his house in Pembroke Road. As we sat in his garden on a warm summer's evening, sure enough they did! What a coincidence that Clifton College was holding a celebration of

their own at the same time.

John will be much missed. But his legacy lives on. Thanks to his books many have learnt to see Bristol in a new light and consequently sought to protect the best of our city. Our thoughts are with Angela and his family.

MM



Bristol Civic Society membership Your Civic Society needs YOU!

Bristol Civic Society is more than 100 years old. It is a non-party-political body which campaigns for what is best for our city. Joining the Society is inexpensive and it is open to all. The bigger and more diverse our membership, the stronger we can be.

As a Society member you're also on the invitation list to a range of events and benefits, from serious campaigning through to expert talks and social evenings and outings.

Bristol Civic Society is:

- * Saving the best of Bristol's past
- * A powerful voice in Bristol's future
- * Campaigning on issues that affect us all - and the generations to come
- * A great way to make new friends (and maybe re-connect with old ones!)

Find out more about the Society and its work at bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Invitation

Members and friends are warmly invited to the

Bristol Civic Society 2020 Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 2 June, from 7pm

At 'The Mount Without' (formerly the Church of St Michael on the Mount Without), St Michael's Hill, Bristol BS2 3DT

Refreshments from 7pm; the meeting starts at 7.30pm.

The Agenda will include:

Chairman's Report, Finance Report, election of officers and other Management Team members & review of the Society's activities.

Nominations for officers and Management Team members must be sent to the secretary by 26 May 2020, at secretary@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Joining is easy

There are three ways to apply. You can do it via the website: bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/get-involved/join-the-society where you can join using PayPal, or download an application form. Or fill out, cut out or photocopy, and return the form below.

Have you considered leaving something to the Bristol Civic Society in your will?

Membership application to join Bristol Civic Society

Membership (Annual)	Rate	✓
Individual	£20	
Joint living at the same address	£30	
Student	£10	

Please return to: Membership Secretary, Bristol Civic Society, 52 Oakwood Rd, Bristol BS9 4NT.

Cheques, if not made by standing order, made payable to Bristol Civic Society.

Enquiries: Tel: 0117 9621592.

Email: membership@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Title..... Forename Surname

Email@

Address.....

Phone(s).....

giftaid it By completing this Gift Aid Declaration, Bristol Civic Society can increase the value of your subscription at no extra cost to you by claiming a tax refund.

I would like tax to be reclaimed on my donation under the Gift Aid Scheme. I am a UK tax payer and pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that can be reclaimed on my donation. Bristol Civic Society is registered charity No. 244414

Please tick

YES ☐ NO ☐

Standing order mandate

To: (name of your bank).....

Account Number..... Sort Code

Please pay annually from 1st of (1) 20 (2)

the sum of £..... (3) (.....) (4) pounds)

to CAF Bank Ltd (sort code 40-52-40) for the account of Bristol Civic Society (account no. 00087355)

reference no. (5) (for completion by BCS)

Name.....

Date Signature (6)

Insert (1) next month (2) this year (3) appropriate rate (4) amount in words (5) leave blank (6) wet signature needed by the bank

Events

Spring and Summer 2020

Check Bristol Civic Society website to book your place and to find updates. Some events will have limited numbers. We usually make a small charge to cover costs.

STOP PRESS:

Due to Coronavirus pandemic these events are likely to change. Please consult: www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk for latest information.



The General.



MAY Thursday 21 May at 7.00 pm.

The role of characterisation in the assessment of development in Conservation Areas.

John Wesley New Room, 36 The Horsefair, Broadmead BS1 3JE.

Join us for a presentation by Emma Bryant, senior heritage and townscape consultant at the architectural firm Purcell.

Emma will describe what the term 'significance' means in the historical built environment and how it is assessed through buildings fabric, history and setting. Emma will explain how such considerations can impact on local planning policy citing local buildings and others from the south west.

Her presentation will take place in the John Wesley New Room, where Purcell have recently been responsible for extensive refurbishment and extension. Tickets £5 and limited to 30 members



JUNE Tuesday 2 June at 7.00 pm.

Bristol Civic Society AGM.

See separate notice on p.27 for details.



JUNE Sunday 7 June at 10.30 am.

Visit to Ashton Court Deer Parks.

Learn the detail about the management of the famous Ashton Court deer parks. Led by Mark Cox, resident ranger responsible for deer management for over 30 years, we will walk around the estate and the deer. Lots of opportunities for questions. Tickets £5, numbers limited to 30 members.



JUNE Wednesday 10 June from 7.00 pm.

Design Awards - Presentation Evening.

The Station, Silver Street, Bristol BS1 2AG.

Nominations closed at the end of February and the Awards Panel will then be visiting nominated projects. See our website for more details nearer the date.

We are a small team and need reinforcements. If you can spare a little time to assist in organising our Events Programme please get in touch.

Please email events@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk with bookings, queries, ideas and offers of assistance!



JULY Wednesday 1 July.

Summer Social at The Observatory.

We are delighted to hold a new event this year - a summer social. Details yet to be sorted but we do have a stunning venue and a firm date. Watch our website for more details.

In planning for later in the year:

Weston-super-Mare.

We are liaising with Weston Civic Society and aim to organise a study visit later in the summer. There is a significant amount of new development and regeneration in and around the town.

Shirehampton - study walk.

The next walk in the series led by David Martyn will be to Shirehampton, date to be agreed in September.

Ashton Court Mansion.

When appropriate we will hold further public events and consultation - following on from the very well attended public meetings held in the Mansion and in City Hall. To join the Mansion newsletter distribution list email simon.birch7@gmail.com.

Please check the Civic Society website for updates:
bristolcivicsociety.org.uk.



MAY 1 - 31 May

Walk Fest

Civic Society members are leading three very different walks as part of the citywide Walk Fest programme. See separate Walk Fest website for joining instructions:

- **Westbury Park: shaping of a neighbourhood.** Jeff Bishop, Thursday 14 May & Saturday 16 May.
- **Norman Walls.** Ed Hall, Tuesday 5 May & Tuesday 12 May & Tuesday 19 May.
- **History of Tobacco Industry.** Simon Birch, Sunday 31 May.



MAY Tuesday May 12 at 2.00 pm.

Study visit to The General and The New Yard.

A second visit to this very successful regeneration project to look at the newly completed residential blocks to the rear of The General main building and also the refurbishment of the Edward VII building. Hosted by developers City & Country. Tickets £5, numbers limited to 30 members.

Bristol Walking Alliance events in Walk Fest.

1-31 May 2020.

'Walkability' walks

Two 'walkability' walks in different parts of Bristol will explore good and bad walking environments. The walks will be in Greenbank in Easton, and from Temple Meads to Castle Park. See Walk Fest publicity for full details.

Wednesday 20 May, 7pm at the Watershed

Bristol's street trees

Street trees offer many benefits in the urban environment. But there can also be problems. What is Bristol's relationship with street trees? Bristol Walking Alliance and Bristol Health Partners are hosting a Street Tree twilight event.