

# St. JOHN'S RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2006

## NOTICES

### **Annual General Meeting**

This year's Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 April at 7.30pm in the Apostle Room at Clifton Cathedral on Pembroke Road. Please note that this is not our usual venue. We really do plan to keep the meeting short this year, about one hour's duration, and there will be an opportunity for you to meet with other neighbours for a glass of wine after the meeting.

PC Paul White will talk briefly to us about local policing, and we plan to have an open forum to discuss other local issues. If you have any suggestions for issues to be raised at the meeting please let me know on 973 0708. Just leave a message if I am not at home. We are looking for volunteers to help deliver our newsletter in Alma Road, Alma Vale Road, Apsley Road, St John's Road and Whatley Road. This is not a very onerous task as it only happens about four times a year, but is very necessary and the AGM is an ideal chance for you to volunteer.

SJRA Annual Accounts will be posted on the Association's website (address at the end of this newsletter) not later than 1st April 2006. The Treasurer will be happy to answer any queries on these accounts at the AGM.

All members are invited to attend, but we do request that you pay your 2006/2007 annual subscription (£3 per household or £2 for individuals), if you have not already done so, at the door when you arrive. We would also like to confirm people's addresses and contact details, particularly flat numbers. We do hope to see you there.

Sue Pears - Secretary

## PLANNING

In the last planning report (in Summer 2005) we noted that the Amusement Arcade at **50 Whiteladies Rd** had been granted permission to become a food & drink outlet, but only on condition that it closed at 8pm. We wondered then whether this welcome condition would be obeyed, and (not surprisingly) the operators applied last month to change the closing time to 11.30 pm. We are obviously opposing this. We noted too that permission had been given to change **12-14 Apsley Rd** to sheltered accommodation, and work has now started on this. Various other undesirable applications have either been refused or withdrawn: to extend both **6 and 44 Upper Belgrave Rd** considerably; to change **58 Alma Vale Rd** into 4 flats, or turn the ground floor into a flat; and to turn the front garden of **53 Apsley Rd** into a parking space. A number of other applications have been approved, subject to conditions: raising a wall height at **1 Miles Rd**; converting a basement at **7 Hurle Crescent** and a garage at **2 Chantry Rd**, into living accommodation; rebuilding a rear annex at **33 Whatley Rd** and converting the interior; building a rear annex at **40 Whatley Rd**; converting **102 and 104 Pembroke Rd** from bed-sits into 8 and 6 flats; and building two houses in the grounds of **59A Alma Rd**. Applications to convert **1A Hurle Rd** from offices into a dental surgery and to build a rear extension at **12 Hurle Crescent** have yet to be determined.

Several applications outside the immediate SJRA area are also of interest. One seeks to convert **Seeley's Hotel, at 17-27 St Paul's Rd**, into 12 flats, with 12 more behind. Another very recent set of applications seeks to improve the car parking, the restaurants and the ballroom, and to build 18 more bedrooms, at the **Avon Gorge Hotel**. Lastly, an application in January proposes to restore **Clifton Swimming Pool**, and build a first-floor pool-side restaurant and other attractions there. If this proposal proves financially viable, it will provide an unexpected and welcome solution to a long-standing problem.

Bob Chambers

## **LICENSING**

At the time of the last Newsletter, the new Licensing Laws had only just come into effect, after a marathon effort on the part of the City Council's Licensing Committee to process the 1500 or so new licenses being applied for. Many of these applications were non-contentious and were granted without a hearing, but about 300 were objected to for various reasons, including about 15 in or very near our area (including the 'Strip') and for these 15 we had to go along to the hearings to voice our objections. At the end of each hearing, the Chairman informally announced the Sub-Committee's decision and a detailed written statement of the decision was supposed to follow shortly and be sent to interested parties.

Astonishingly, three months later, these written decisions have yet to appear, and until they do it is not possible to appeal against them, even if we wish to do so. Along with our partners in Redland and Cotham Amenities Society, we may well wish to in one or two cases where the decisions of the Licensing Committee seemed particularly perverse.

Meanwhile, new applications for licences continue to come in at a modest rate: at the time of writing there are 30 pending applications in the whole of Bristol, of which only one is in or near our area. That is for the 'Flipper' fish and chip café in Whiteladies Road, which wishes to serve alcohol till 11 pm and stay open till 3 am on Mondays to Thursdays, and till midnight and 3.30 am on Fridays and Saturdays. Along with RCAS, we shall be opposing this application.

One of the more iniquitous features of the new Licensing Act is the concept of TENs – short for temporary event notices. 'Temporary events' can include all sorts of quite innocuous activities, such as putting on a violin recital or selling drinks for an hour or two at a fête, but they can be much less desirable than that. Publicans and others can simply give ten days' notice that they propose to stage some kind of activity – which may include for example heavy metal music, karaoke, sales of alcohol, or all of these – all day and all night for not more than four days at a time, and no-one can stop them except the police, who may object, but only on the grounds that it may lead to an increase in crime. No-one else can object at all.

Fortunately this extraordinary provision has so far led to no outrageous activities, at least in our area, but we have to keep an eye on the list of current TENs on the Council website. This can be found (along with the list of licence applications) by going to <http://www.bristol-city.gov.uk>, and from there to Business/Licensing & Street Trading/ Licensing Act 2003 – Register.

So far, too, the wintry weather has protected us from the kind of late-night revelry in the streets that many people feared with the extensions of opening hours, but that may still erupt in the spring. We shall see.

Bob Chambers

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH**

Following the retirement of his predecessor, PC 1452 Paul White has recently been appointed as the Beat Manager for the SJRA area. He can be contacted on 0117 945 4453. The non-urgent contact number for the Police is 0845 456 7000. If reporting any crime on this number please ensure that you mention that you are reporting it as a member of your Neighbourhood Watch.

Reported crime figures in the Redland sector, which includes Clifton, Cotham, Redland and Bishopston, for the year to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006 show an increase of 6.9% over the same period in 2004/05. There has been a significant reduction in Domestic Burglaries in the 12 month period but increases in vehicle related crime (thefts from vehicles, with the current attraction being satellite navigation systems) and personal thefts (telephones etc.) combine to out weigh other reductions.

The 'Covert Car' scheme has been trialled – very successfully in terms of vehicle stealing reduction – in Bath and is now being operated in Bristol. Initial results are very encouraging in reducing vehicle thefts and break-ins. Basically it is a car fitted with sophisticated tracking and immobilising devices – none of which are visible from the outside of the car.

The Home office has produced a document “Neighbourhood Policing – your police; your community; our commitment”. I have a copy of this should anyone be interested in seeing it but, briefly, it sets out the approach that the Police will be adopting towards this matter in the future.

The future sees Neighbourhood Policing being delivered by mixed policing teams under the control of uniformed Officers – the Beat Manager perhaps. The teams will be dedicated to their community, will be visible and accessible, and will consist of:

**Uniformed Police Officers.**

**Community Support Officers** (CSO’s) – they are described as uniformed members of the police team who will provide a high-visibility presence in the Community. Bristol currently has 220 CSO’s with the target of attaining a total number of 550 by 2008.

**Special Constables** and other volunteers.

**Neighbourhood Wardens** who will be employees of the local authority.

**Members of the local community.**

It is proposed that this will enable a forum for exchange of a community’s views/expectations of police force with powers responsible for providing that service. It is envisaged that communities will need to address their current expectations of police response times, numbers and methods.

General contact information:

Crimestoppers is completely independent of the Police. It is an independent charitable trust. Informants will NOT have to declare any personal details, nor appear in court/police station or any other public place associated with the information that they give. Crimestoppers is NOT a substitute for the 999 Emergency Call system but is, merely, an information gathering service.

*They want to know what you know – not who you are – 0800 555 1111*

Contact the Mail Preference Service on 0845 703 4599 or <http://www.mpsonline.org.uk> to prevent unsolicited mail.

Contact the Telephone Preference Service on 0845 0700707 or <http://www.tpsonline.org.uk> to prevent unsolicited telephone calls.

To check for ‘scams’ go to <http://www.ofc.gov.uk> or go to <http://www.google.co.uk> and type in ‘Urban Myths’ plus a subject (e.g. carjacking or prize) in the search box. This will reveal all manner of current scams on your chosen subject.

Ritchie Harrison

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Save Clifton Down Railway Station**

How many residents know that Temple Meads station is only 15 minutes by train from Clifton Down and a full price day return is just £2.00? Compare this with travel by bus.

The Stapleton Road to Clifton Down railway line was opened in 1874 and the passenger service to Avonmouth commenced in 1885, mainly for the benefit of dockland labour.

After WW2 passenger usage diminished, adjacent land like the coalyard at Clifton Down was sold off for development, the line was made single track, stations became unmanned and the timetable offered only infrequent trains which did not allow proper integration with mainline services.

Although this under-utilised service is almost unknown to many people, passenger numbers have increased by over 100% since 1979. Now, when we are suffering the worst traffic congestion of any major British

city, there is a real threat to the future of the whole Severn Beach line. Bristol City Council have withdrawn their £120,000 annual grant to Wessex Trains and the franchise will be taken over by First Group on 1 April 2006. The wording of this contract has not yet been made public but there is a strong likelihood that timetabling will not be improved but the fares will increase.

Although there is a strong argument for keeping the line open now, there will be even greater justification in the foreseeable future. Large scale residential development at Severn Beach and increased industrial operations at Avonmouth will mean more demand at the western end. New major office and leisure developments around Temple Meads will also result in increased passenger journeys to this terminus. There are many good reasons for promoting more suburban trains on other lines around Bristol. But at present the Joint Local Transport Planners are ignoring the options of moving more people by rail, and instead they are concentrating on bussing them in and out of the city centre. In view of our escalating traffic problems, does not this strike you as very short-sighted?

This is not the only threat hanging over the future of your local rail station.

In spite of the fact that over £30 million was spent in 2003-04 upgrading the Severn Beach line for through mainline train diversions, the council are already talking of converting the nine miles of track between Clifton Down and Avonmouth to a concrete guided bus-way. At current prices this would cost at least £65 million, and that ignores the extension over the proposed Avon barrage into Portishead. What happens to the bus passengers when they arrive at Clifton Down station and how they continue their journeys has not yet been revealed.

Under new legislation we, the long-suffering Bristol public, have only until 24 April 2006 to object to these plans. It is up to residents to take up this case with their local MP or councillor and register their protests now.

The Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR) handed in a 3,000-signature petition at the Council House on 6 February. If you would like to know more about their campaign you can email them at [severnbeach@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:severnbeach@hotmail.co.uk) or look at their website [www.fosbr.org.uk](http://www.fosbr.org.uk). To join the Friends, send £5 to FOSBR, 17 Belmont Road, Bristol BS6 5AW and their newsletters will keep you up to date with their activities.

Warren Marsh

## **AOB**

If any readers have any ideas for what they would like to see in the Newsletter, then please tell the editor or other committee member. Even better, if you have something relevant that you can contribute then I would be delighted to hear from you.

News is sometimes available, along with current and previous copies of the Newsletter, on the SJRA website which is <http://www.digitalbristol.org/members/sjrra/sjrra1.html> (note the double 'r's).

SJRA members may attend committee meetings if they wish. Please contact Sue Pears if you wish to do so.

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