

**NOTES TAKEN DURING  
OPEN FORUM FOR LEIGH WOODS  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2015 @ 8PM  
AT ST MARY'S CHURCH LEIGH WOODS  
CHAIRMAN: KATE BUSS**

***CHARLES CAVE - PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATE FOR DISTRICT COUNCIL***

Charles attended at 7.30pm prior to the Open Forum/AGM as he had another engagement. He attended in his capacity as our possible future District Councillor. He explained the ward boundary changes that had been put in place in 2014. Leigh Woods will now join with Long Ashton, Wraxhall and Failand to create a new district.. This will reduce the number of Councillors from 60 to 51. It will now be a 2 member ward. At the moment the Councillors are Bob Cook (who retires as of 7th May 2015) and Charles Cave. The first election since the boundary changes will take place on 7th May 2015. As a result of these changes Carl Francis Pester will no longer be a prospective candidate for Leigh Woods.

Redwood Lodge has been sold and a planning application has now been received for a residential retirement village. There will be a completely new build with properties you can buy. Residents will be able to live there for the rest of their lives.

He then held a question and answer session.

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| Q       | How do you see the two members splitting the responsibilities of a large ward as of 7th May?  |
| A       | There is no point in doing the same job - we could be played off one against the other.   |
| Q       | Is Bob Cook standing again?   |
| A       | No - he has had a minor stroke  |
| Comment | Leigh Woods could be treated as the poor relation in the new Ward. Hope that Leigh Woods will be properly represented.                        |
| A       | You will be - Leigh Woods will not be an exception. We need more information from Leigh Woods for the Long Ashton and Leigh Woods newsletter. |

The Chairman thanked Charles Cave for making time to come and address the meeting and Mr Cave then left.

***GILL OGDEN then spoke on behalf of the Church***

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| 1 | The Welcome Pack is being re-vamped. Please let either Gill or Leslie Nash know of any new residents and they will ensure a Welcome Pack gets to them.  |
| 2 | The Church is intending to hold more Open Days. They have approached the Visitors Centre to advertise the Open Days to encourage visitors to come on up to the Church. They will need help with teas and showing around the Church. |

**DAVID ANDERSON - BRIDGE MASTER**

David gave us an update on Bridge matters and the Maintenance Schedule that has been put in place. Our main project is the work on the Clifton Tower. The scaffolding is progressing well and will be completed by the end of April. The whole tower will be wrapped to contain dust. The works to the Tower will be undertaken by the same contractors that are putting up the scaffolding. The works include conservation of the exterior masonry faces; taking out cement pointing and replacing with lime mortar. The roof: taking off the corrugated sheeting and replacing it with a stronger grade. Repairs to the original cast iron girders which are supported on bath stone pillars. These pillars need attention particularly the pointing and the metal ties used. Improvements to the drainage system and access systems.

The work is expected to take 6 months so we are expecting to be finished in October. This time next year we will be undertaking the same work to the Leigh Woods Tower.

The same contractors will be undertaking the painting of the cross girders below the deck this year. Our own maintenance team will be removing for refurbishment and reinstalling 15 of the short hangers.

David then took questions from the floor:

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| Q       | Is the bridge being closed at any time?   |
| A       | No, except taking down of the scaffold possibly one weekend.  |
| Q       | How has the increase in the toll affected the number of car crossings?  |
| A       | Average monthly figures: twelve months before the rise 275,000 crossings p.m. The eleven months since 252,000 p.m, a drop of 8%. There has been a shift from cash to card - formerly close to 50% now around 45%.<br>Despite this here has been an increase in income. The business plan allowed for a reduction of 20% paying by cash. The reduction has actually been less than that 5%. And there has been a small increase in the number of crossings by Bridge Card. |
| Q       | Will there be any more restoration of the vaults this year?   |
| A       | 2 weeks ago we cleared more of the shafts: cleared all of the rubble blocking the access to the remaining lower vaults. Hopefully now access to all vaults. Will be checking this later this week.  |
| Q       | Do you have data on traffic flow of pedestrians and cyclist?  |
| A       | No data. There has been an increase over the last 8 years since I've been here. Don't know if there are any more commuters amongst this increase.   |
| Q       | You have a wonderful visitors centre but no signage either side of the bridge. What are you going to do about it?   |
| A       | Laura would agree with you. We are pushing to get decent signage. Need planning permission to erect copper sheet saying Visitors Centre vertically next to one of the copper fins. It will be visible from the toll barriers. Also there will be signs on posts in the flower bed.  |
| Comment | Lighting very good on zebra crossing.   |
| A       | Yes, a lot safer and speed tables working very well.  |
| Q       | On Clifton side pedestrians think the humps are zebra crossings which they are not. Was this intended?  |
| A       | The idea was to cause confusion to encourage vehicles to slow down. Seems to be successful.   |

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| Q       | What are you doing to stop coaches on the Leigh Woods side of the bridge?   |
| A       | Bristol City Council have created a bay on the Clifton side and all coaches are directed there. However a few coach parties who do not pre-book just turn up in Leigh Woods, and we have no control over these.   |
| Q       | We can see where the compound for the scaffolding for the Clifton Tower is. Where will it be for the Leigh Woods Tower?   |
| A       | In the same place. The work force will walk across the bridge. Same contractor will use the same method of bringing its kit in bundles and off load to footway or a bay 10ft up. Truck will park on a toll lane and off load. We will control the traffic, it will be in off peak time and for as short a time as possible. We will keep an eye on it. We will have to close the cycle lane for 1-1.5 hrs each day. |
| Comment | Joggers seem to think they can plough through pedestrians crossing the bridge. They can be rude and barge through. Flagging up what is becoming an issue walking on the bridge.   |
| A       | I have noticed this myself. When one walkway is closed there is a huge amount of traffic. Staff get abused by cyclists being asked to dismount. I haven't got an answer.  |

### **BILL MORRIS - NATIONAL TRUST**

Bill said that in respect of the latest new plans: A document has been circulated regarding the public consultation. Anna Russell is General Manager for Tyntesfield and Bristol properties. We are trying to improve the welcome to the site in Valley Road - we are making it pedestrians only except for staff and disabled parking. It will benefit the tress as there has been encroachment on to the woodland.

Planning Application is needed for permission to site a mobile catering unit by the office and a composting toilet. There will be an information centre in one of the buildings. The parking issue on North road : strong feelings were shown at the public consultation. We can't do anything without the agreement of North Somerset Council. We have requested that the walkway is reinstated and we hope they agree.

Withdrawal Project; 5 fishing boats in the centre of the wood. Launch Saturday 18th April for 6 months.

Programme of Improvements: resurfacing of Nightingale Valley will be ready for Good Friday. Also a wet weather shelter is planned for the woods - a small building that will need planning permission.

Bill then took questions from the floor:

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| Q       | the planned portable catering unit - how will it be powered?  |
| A       | It will be placed next to the office and take its power from there.   |
| Q       | Has the National Trust looked to provide parking in the woods?  |
| A       | We are restricted as to what we can do. It is an SSI and we would n't get permission to create a car park.  |
| Q       | What about the resurfacing of North Road?   |
| A       | We have put forward several ideas to the North Somerset Council and it will be up to them what is done.   |
| Comment | I understand the wish to develop the Woods but this is not joined up thinking. You are creating a new facility with no parking arrangements. And if a pedestrian walkway is put in North Road it will make the road even narrower. My real concern is for emergency vehicles and going ahead with this forgets the impact to the local community. But its hazardous. It's a nonsense. |

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| A       | We have met with Rob Thompson, Highways Officer and the Deputy Leader of the Council for NSC who takes the lead in highways matters.  |
| Comment | If you reinstate the walkway it will stop people double parking.  |
| Q       | With visitors increasing but without proper provision for parking the parking situation in the area will get worse. Do you have any projections?                            |
| A       | No. But we are planning to collect data this year.  |
| Comment | You have successfully increased the use of the woods and the National Trust is a responsible operator but this development is predicated on local roads for their parking . |
| A       | There are other options available - there is a large car park in the centre of the woods.   |
| Q       | I didn't know there was a car park there. Are there any signs?  |
| A       | Sign on Abbots Leigh Road at the entrance to the road leading to the car park   |
| Q       | Have you considered re-locating the visitors centre to the car park?  |
| A       | We want to develop this end of the woods.   |
| Q       | What are you going to do about cars going down Valley Road?   |
| A       | If anyone parks there we will leave information on the car.   |
| Comment | You should put something in the literature - at the moment any literature just says there is plenty of parking. You should something more sensible about the parking        |
| A       | We can't control other people's literature.   |
| Q       | When will catering van be open? Will it be taken away each evening? How will you manage rubbish?  |
| A       | A company from Hampshire will run the catering. I don't know the core hours. It will not be moved in the evening.   |
| Q       | Who will keep the area clean?   |
| A       | Those responsible for running the unit.   |
| Q       | The woods are clean at the moment but there is potential chaos with picnickers and their rubbish. How are you going to keep the woods tidy?                                 |
| A       | How nice that you think the woods are clean now. People really responsible and don't believe it will get worse. We will deal with the detritus asap.                        |
| Q       | Leigh Court has a large car park. Couldn't that be used? That end of the Woods could be a major access point.   |
| A       | Sometimes the car park is not available but we are happy to explore this option   |
| Q       | 5 fishing boats in the woods. Is this relevant?   |
| A       | Yes. see our website <a href="mailto:leighwoods@nattrust.org.uk">leighwoods@nattrust.org.uk</a>   |

**CARL FRANCIS PESTER - DISTRICT COUNCILLOR**

The Chairman thanked Carl for all the hard work he has done on our behalf in the 11 years he has served the area as Councillor. He will no longer be our Councillor because of the boundary changes.

Carl replied saying he had enjoyed serving Leigh Woods and said it was one of the best wards to serve.

Council issues differ from Ward issues as the funding comes with different budget constraints. There could be problems post election. NSC is short of funding per capita compared with other councils. Difference annually is as much as £20m compared with some other councils.

The Council continue to use a company to look at other ways of saving expense. Particularly building management and back office funding.

Council facilitates rather than runs the services. The front line services have improved despite less money.

Planning, Parking and Potholes:

Planning: more difficult to challenge planning decisions now as they are all put together.

Parking: many issues to follow up

Potholes: council continues to put money into repairing roads, but some are beyond actual repair so these are having to be resurfaced. The road outside St Catherine's School is due to be completely resurfaced.

Future: 4-5 key things to consider:

1. Housing: [judicial review] look at sites before numbers are foisted on us.
2. Influence of Bristol: local area partnership should be with which Council? It's probably better to go into a Somerset partnership
3. Portishead Railway: capital provision made revenue funding. Not sure. not to be an excuse for more housing.
4. Management competence: why are we running a council: a council for officers or a council for residents. We need to think about management and we need people able to deal with issues.
5. Vision: Where will we be in 25 years time? Need to encourage inward investment.

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| Q | What is happening to Kingston Lodge?   |
| A | This is still with the planning officer. To be able to re-possess we need to ensure legal to be able to take over. Need to be able to meet costs. Dispose without responsibility NSC have already spent £30-40,000. If council says no leads to less money. ?????? |
| Q | Is there a handover period for the Councillors. Are there any change of boundary?  |
| A | No. It's a slightly strange situation. There is a change to the number of Councillors. The change takes place on election Day. Danger:- there is a need to put marker down with both Councillors quickly.  |

Cedric Nash, as the Chairman's predecessor, also thanked Carl for all his help when he was Chairman.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers and they then left the meeting.