



**Bristol
Older People's
Forum**

**Spring 2026
Newsletter
Charity no. 1162616**



Welcome to the Bristol Older People's Forum Spring newsletter

Making Bristol an age-positive city!

It's been a busy and exciting few months, and we're delighted to share some good news. We've secured a further four years of core funding from Bristol City Council, from March 2026. This means we can continue and build on our main services and projects, including this newsletter.

We've also launched a new two-year Nature Together project, tackling nature decline while encouraging more older people to connect with wildlife, whether that's enjoying a local park, rewilding neglected green spaces, or getting involved in other hands-on activities. We plan to work with younger people to bring generations together. Two new team members – Annali Grimes and Lauren Hinks will be joining us to support the project. So, we welcome them aboard!



0117 927 9222



**The Create Centre, B-Bond Warehouse,
Smeaton Road, Bristol BS1 6XN**



At the recent BOPF Open Forum Helen Godwin, the Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) did a short presentation and answered questions raised by BOPF members. As the visit was limited to half an hour, she will be coming back to a future meeting – likely to be in the Autumn.

Our new regular e-bulletin is available online for members and supporters. This is a monthly email update about our upcoming events, research opportunities and other items of interest to members. The March email includes the photo that is on the front cover of this newsletter. Check your junk emails if you haven't received it, and if we haven't got your email address, please let us know.

We know many of you prefer printed information, and that will remain a priority for us.

Transport issues (particularly buses) continue to be top of BOPF members' concerns. So, we have put together a short briefing paper to kick start further discussion, with the aim of developing a coherent summary of issues to share with those who develop the policy and make the decisions. You can read it on pages 14-16.

In this issue you will also find the dates and times for all our services, including the music club, Death Café, and open forum on page 16.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Do let us know what you think, and if you'd like to write something for our summer 2026 issue, we'd love to hear from you.



Christina Stokes | Bristol Older People's Forum Chair



In your BOPF newsletter

Introducing the Nature Together Project.....	4
A fall isn't ageist - but the words we use are.....	8
Hello from the Board - Tara Mistry 'No Speak English' - A journey of migration and resistance.....	10
"Fings ain't what they used to be" So what?.....	12
Getting There Isn't Easy: Bristol's Transport Barriers for Older Residents.....	14
Lunch! A chat with older people.....	17
BOPF 2026 Dates for your diary	18
Bristol City Council update - changes to Broadmead.....	19



Little Egret fishing in Colliter's Brook (Ashton Rise section) © Caroline Rigg

Introducing the Nature Together Project

The Nature Together Project launched in the spring of this year! BOPF is one of three Bristol community organisations that received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Nature Towns and Cities programme. It is a two-year project to address nature decline and get people closer to nature.

The project will be led by a core group of older adults. They will be working with our new BOPF project team, supported by Bristol City Council, the Climate and Nature Partnership and Avon Wildlife Trust. It builds on BOPF's Community Climate Action Plan launched in June 2025.

There is a commitment to ensuring older people across the city are involved in the development of the project. It will focus on local, nature-based activities, intergenerational work, and building connections between older people across Bristol.





Meet the Nature Together team

We have two project workers who will be working alongside our project advisory group to deliver the programme.



Annali Grimes – Nature Together Project Worker

Hi! My name is Annali. I enjoy connecting with people and their passions and to help create better neighbourhoods, societies and futures for all. In the past, I've started and supported creative grassroots arts projects and also supported engagement on research-led innovation projects. I'm excited to work with BOPF members on this innovative opportunity to help co-design a programme, which acknowledges and values the contribution older people bring to the city in caring for nature, while creating more inclusive and accessible opportunities for people to get more connected to nature.

I am a mum and love getting my family out in nature and mountain biking. I also grow veggies at a communal allotment.



Lauren Hinks - Nature Together Project Support Worker

Hi, my name is Lauren. I come from a Public Health academic background, with experience working in the NHS and as a social prescriber for Age UK. I am really interested in how nature can be used to improve health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation for older people. I am also passionate about improving access to nature for disadvantaged groups. I volunteer weekly at Windmill Hill City Farm as a Support Worker for adults with additional needs, helping them to participate in gardening and animal care tasks.

In my free time, I am a keen cyclist, runner and love all things arty! I am also trying to learn how to grow fruit and veg in my garden.

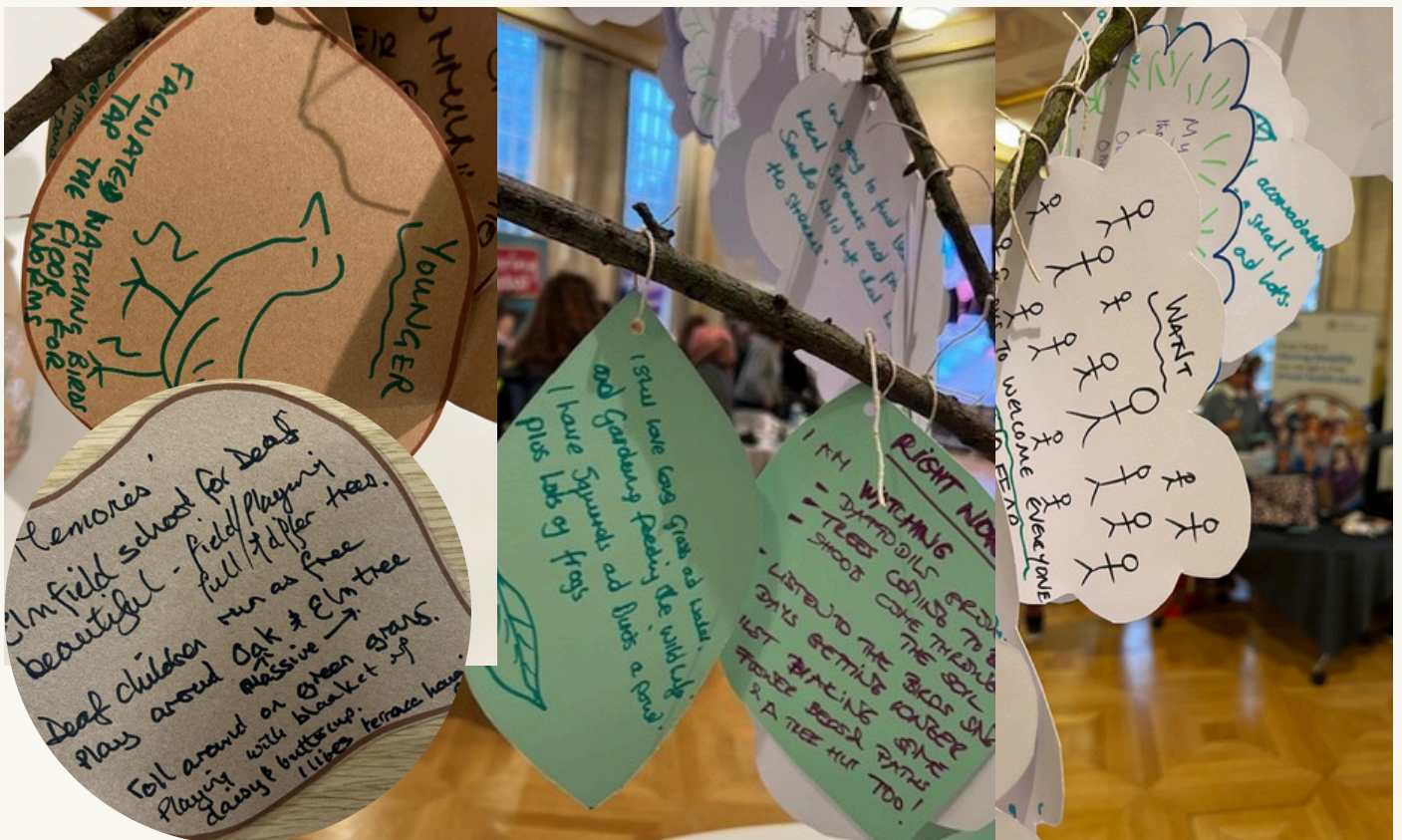


Nature Together at International Women's Day 2026

The BOPF team held a workshop at the International Women's Day 2026 celebration at City Hall on 7 March. This annual event is organised by Bristol Women's Voice, who we often collaborate with.

Our workshop was a space for women over-55 to connect, share hopes and fears, and ideas about reversing nature decline. Together we created writing and art expressing why community climate action matters to us. We hung these on the BOPF tree for attendees to view and add to on our stand for the rest of the day.

- Brown leaves were first memories of nature
- Green leaves held observations of how we see nature now
- Clouds represent hopes for the future





We want to hear from you!

In the summer, we will issue our very first nature themed newsletter. As part of this, we want to share stories of people over-55 who are doing amazing things in nature across the city. The stories we heard on International Women's Day were very powerful and we want to hear more.

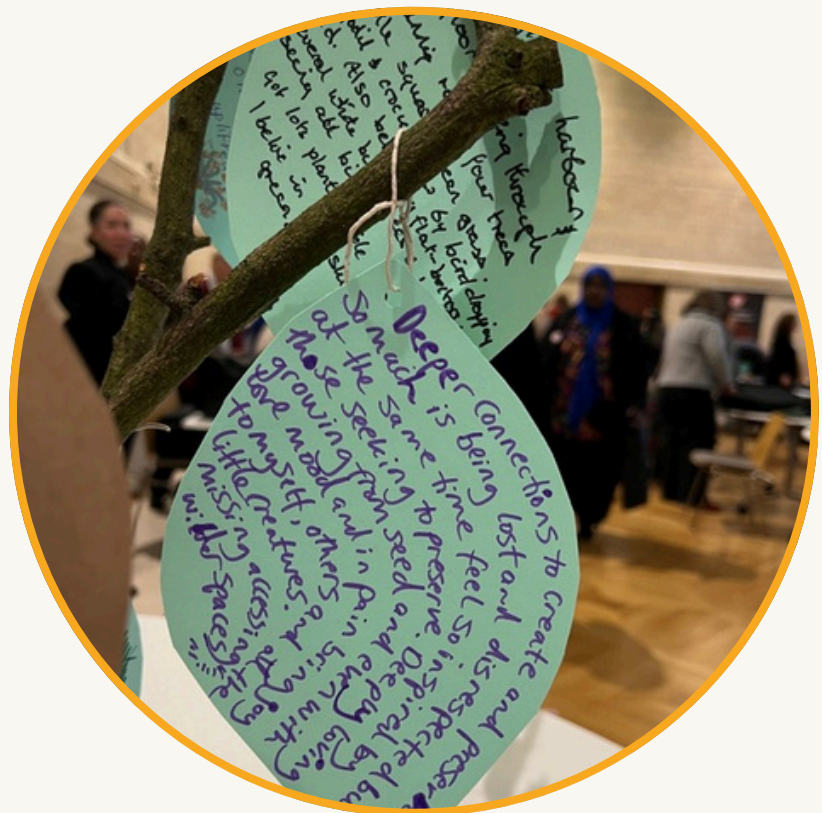
Are you an amateur forager? Are you a birdwatching enthusiast? If you want to tell your story, get in touch!

There are so many great nature things going on across the city but it can be hard to navigate! We will be creating a map for the newsletter which will show you how you can get involved with nature on your doorstep.

If you know of, or are involved in, any nature-based activities or groups, please get in touch.

email: nature.together@bopf.org.uk

phone the office: 0117 927 9222





A fall isn't ageist – but the words we use are

Language is one of the most powerful mirrors of culture. Often, the smallest quirks reveal the biggest truths. Take the way we talk about losing our balance. A younger person falls down. An older person has a fall. Just a few words different yet loaded with assumptions.

On the surface, this phrasing seems harmless, almost polite. But a closer look exposes a subtle linguistic divide that reinforces a powerful, often damaging stereotype: that older people are fragile, vulnerable, passive, and defined primarily by decline.

When a young person falls, it is incidental. They tripped. They were running too fast, not paying attention, or perhaps had one too many beers. The fall is part of a vibrant, uncontrolled life. It is a verb, a momentary lapse in action.

But when an older adult has a fall, the grammar shifts. The fall becomes a noun, a static, almost clinical event. The person is no longer the active subject; they become the backdrop for the incident. The language implies frailty, inevitability, maybe even blame. The fall is not an accident; it's a symptom.

'Othering' older people

This phrasing subtly pushes older adults into a separate category. It casts them as 'other' - a group to be handled gently, monitored, spoken about carefully.



While respect and care are vital, defaulting to fragility can diminish agency far more effectively than any medical condition.

The danger of negative stereotyping

The words we use affect how older adults are treated by family, healthcare providers (‘a fall’ is treated as a clinical event rather than just an accident) and society at large. Terms like having a fall reinforce paternalistic attitudes, suggesting older people need protection rather than independence. They can feel watched rather than supported.

And repeated framing of older adults as vulnerable can influence self-perception. If society constantly signals that you are prone to alarming events, you may internalize that expectation.

The consequences go beyond emotions. Research shows older adults who see themselves as frail or at risk are more likely to reduce activity; and ironically, increasing the very risks language warns about. Words shape behaviour, and behaviour shapes health.

Reframing risk without stereotyping

Acknowledging risk does not require stereotyping. Falls later in life can be serious, but seriousness does not justify reducing a whole demographic to its vulnerabilities. What if older adults simply fell, just like everyone else? What if age wasn’t treated as a linguistic signal of fragility? By seeing falls as what they usually are, momentary events, not identities, we empower older people while still acknowledging genuine risk. Language evolves, but only when we notice what it is doing. Re-examining small expressions is a step toward dismantling the quiet, pervasive stereotypes that shape how we perceive ageing, and how older people see themselves.

A fall is not ageist. But the words we use can be. We here at BOPF will continue to challenge this narrative.

Remember language can trip you up!

Ian Quaife | BOPF Director



Hello from the Board - Tara Mistry

Tara joined us as at BOPF as a trustee in 2020 and recently published this book which we feel contributes to the social history and story of migration in Britain and to us, it helps explain her motivation for her activism and roles she occupied in our city of Bristol for over 40 years.



Tara originally trained as a probation officer and came to Bristol to work in Easton in 1982 and never left!

She was a lecturer at Bristol University involved in training and education of social workers for 10 years before moving into research and evaluation and consultancy work. Tara served as a Non – Executive Director – including as a Chair and Vice Chair, on a number of Health Boards in Bristol spanning 20 years.

‘No Speak English’ – A journey of migration and resistance

‘No Speak English’ – A journey of migration and resistance offers deep insight into South Asian lives in Britain over six decades.

It is a powerful new memoir, ‘No Speak English’, illuminates the bold and emotional experience of migration through the eyes of one family. Drawing on personal memories and family history, Tara captures the vulnerability, strength, and determination that define the migrant journey.

As a seven-year-old, Tara boarded a ship to England in the harsh winter of 1963, equipped with the phrase “No Speak English” for protection. The narrative explores what it means to be a visible minority, shaped by skin colour, religion, language and culture.

Structured in three parts, the memoir begins with the early 1900s journeys of the author’s grandparents through the family’s migration to Kenya and subsequent return to India.



The second part details her father's move to England, while Tara and her immediate family remain in India. She paints a vivid picture of life near her maternal grandparents in Navsari. The family's eventual migration to Leicester in January 1963 is set against the backdrop of wider politics and societal challenges, including patriarchal and gendered traditions, and strategies for overcoming adversity.

Finally, Tara focuses on the themes of identity, discovery and the challenges to racism, personally, politically and professionally in Bristol since 1982.

'No Speak English' highlights the resilience and triumphs of a community across generations. A paragraph at the end of the book is a letter written by Tara's daughter to her Grandmother on her 80th Birthday. It sums up the impact of migration on the next generation.

"As my mum writes she tells stories of you moving from India. My mum is so good at informing us of what you went through. I hope you don't think I am ignorant to the facts. I am so proud of what you have done and in awe and amazed. I cannot imagine but all I can say is the bravery and sacrifices you have made in turn made us who we are today. My Grandmothers have shown me that to be strong we have to learn and cope with change... They have taught us our history and because of that we are well equipped for the future."

For further information visit www.taramistry.com or copies are available in Arnolfini bookshop or at the Bookhaus at Wapping Wharf.



“Fings ain’t wot they used to be!” So what?

One of the few joys of old age is to be able to wallow in nostalgia. Ah, the Good Old Days: better music, cheap beer, available and affordable housing, face-to-face sociability, etc., etc., etc.

I am a child of the ‘50s and a teenager of the 60s. My abiding memory of childhood was being cold. We had coal fires downstairs (which I had to make and stoke up), no heating upstairs with your coat on top of your blankets to keep warm in winter nights when ice would form on the inside of the windows. No holidays in Sunny Spain. It was a caravan near Skegness (I come from Nottingham). You had to watch out for the barbed wire in sand dunes left over from the war and every so often the beach was cleared because a mine had been washed up.

Still, at least I had the 60s: live bands with good music at the Club, mods and rockers chasing each other and a wonderful spirit of rebellion towards the end of the decade. Never mind the fear of being turned to radio-active dust in a mushroom cloud during the Cuba Missile Crisis. Never mind the generally acceptable racism, sexism and homophobia.



Why am I looking back? Mainly because I am old and then I was young. There is another reason. I have been an active trade unionist for 56 years in the National Union of Teachers which is now the National Education Union. We have just formed a Members Who Are Retired section for the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire area – what used to be, if you include Bath, Avon. As well as social activities and supporting the Union’s campaigns, we want to act as the memory of the profession.

Education has changed profoundly in the past 25 years, some would say for the better, most would say for the worse. For much of my career as a teacher, I could be a professional with the freedom to develop the way I taught History so it was interesting and matched the capabilities of the students. Education was child-centred and developmental. Exam results mattered but for the benefit of the individual student and not as a Stalinist performance target. I had the energy left over to organise extra-curricular activities such as expedition clubs, film clubs and school stage productions. On the whole, I enjoyed the job and retired (at 60 on a final salary, index-linked pension – generally unobtainable now) with many happy memories.

Now things are different. Teachers are chronically over-worked, over-managed, over-inspected, under-resourced and under-paid. There is a huge turnover with many unable to survive the job after the first couple of years. There seems to be worsening malaise amongst young people.

We do not want to lecture working educators on “the good old days”. That will only cheese them off. We want to precisely identify what is better and what is worse in the education system. The point will be to help the Union defend what is better but under threat and fight to restore the good things we have lost.

BOPF members, especially trade union members (most unions have retired sections), might want to look back at their own work and life experiences to see if a similar exercise is possible. If the “good old days” were so good, why can’t we get what was good back?

Nigel Varley | BOPF Trustee



Getting There Isn't Easy: Bristol's Transport Barriers for Older Residents A BOPF summary of issues - we want your views

Introduction:

Over the last year BOPF have been asking our members for their views around transport. We are also representing members at many of the transport and regeneration meetings at local and regional level, as well as being a member of the One City Transport Board. The following paper is a brief overview of what we found out during this time. Getting around Bristol can be a challenge. From buses to trains, taxis to pavements, the city's transport network can be unreliable, inaccessible, and unsafe. The impact goes beyond inconvenience: it affects healthcare access, social activities, and everyday independence.

Buses

For older people, bus travel can feel like an obstacle course. Service cuts and timetable changes, as well as infrequent routes can leave residents isolated. Even when buses run, multiple journeys (you often need to catch two or more buses to get across Bristol) can be daunting, especially for anyone with mobility challenges.

Accessibility is inconsistent. Wheelchair spaces are often occupied by pushchairs, and without guaranteed space, wheelchair users can be left stranded at bus stops. Shelters and seating are also limited, step-free access is not always available, and early-morning restrictions on concessionary passes further limit travel options. Electronic bus information is often unreliable or absent, particularly at more isolated bus stops.

Some community transport services provide targeted support, helping residents get out and about safely. But again, services are patchy and only available in certain parts of the city.

On cost grounds, the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) has decided not to pursue bringing buses back under local control, as in London and Greater Manchester. Many see this as a backward step, leaving services in Bristol and the region in the hands of private operators such as First Bus and Stagecoach. We at BOPF will continue to support the call for public ownership.

'Share holder profits before public service are the driving force.'



Rail Travel

Over the next decade and beyond, Bristol's main station, Temple Meads will be transformed as part of the Temple Quarter regeneration scheme. Step-free access, clear signage, and better connections have been highlighted in early planning documents. BOPF will continue to press for proper involvement, beyond the tick box exercise.

Smaller stations like Lawrence Hill, Parson Street and Stapleton Road lack lifts, proper seating, shelter, or real-time information. Poor lighting and low staffing at night create safety concerns, leaving older residents hesitant to use trains at all.

Taxis, Apps, and Costs

Taxis and private hire services can bridge transport gaps, but for a number of reasons often exclude older residents. High costs, app-based booking systems, and cashless payments make hailing a ride tricky. Improvements at key hubs, like designated drop-off zones at the Southern Gateway (south of Temple Meads, adjacent to Bath Road) aim to make taxi access safer and easier. We want to push for more training for taxi drivers (including Uber) to better understand the needs of older and disabled people.

Pedestrian Challenges

Uneven pavements, cluttered crossings, and obstacles like street furniture, A-boards and the like make walking risky. Smaller train stations in Bristol often lack sheltered waiting areas or accessible routes. For older residents, even short journeys can be stressful or dangerous. Bristol is also notorious for cars parking on pavements in residential areas and high streets – with little or no action being taken. Poorly parked e-scooters often block pavements. Those with hearing or sight loss are concerned about potential collision with 'silent' bikes and scooters.

'The scooters ride on the pavement and you can't hear them.'



Including older people in policy development and decision making.

Older people are often excluded from transport planning. Consultation, where decisions are already set are tokenistic, and superficial. Genuine co-design (where people participate in the planning and development from the start) is a more effective way of meeting needs.

Bridging the Digital Divide

All our transport services rely heavily on apps, digital timetables, and electronic ticketing. We know, through the BOPF membership, that not everyone is online. Printed timetables, staffed help points, community networks, paper-based information, phone lines with real people on the end, and digital skills training should be prioritised.

'I asked for a paper timetable at the bus station, they said they don't do them anymore, you have to go online.'

Moving Forward

Older people face challenges on every front: unreliable buses, inaccessible stations, unsafe streets, limited consultation, and digital exclusion. The solution is clear:

- Make all stations step-free and safe.
- Develop transport hubs to make accessible transport connections easier.
- Talk to us at BOPF!! Include older residents in genuine consultation and co-design.
- Maintain both digital and non-digital communications.
- Prioritise safe pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, tackling hazards like e-scooters, cluttered pavements and unsafe parking.

Accessible transport is not just a convenience, it is essential for independence, safety, and social connection. For Bristol's older residents, it is time for the city to step up.

So, we want to hear your views

Email us, write to us, phone us or come to the BOPF Open Forum and tell us your story.



Lunch! A chat with older people

This short film explores the powerful links between age, food, health and culture. Over the past few months, we've sat down for home-cooked meals and honest conversations with six older people from diverse backgrounds. Pictured above are Ian and Lloyd after their excellent lunch together.

From a lifelong vegan activist to a man who has never cooked, their stories challenge stereotypes and reveal a richer, more surprising picture of later life.

Funded by Feeding Bristol and created with filmmaker Neil Maggs - known for capturing the voices and lived experiences of ordinary people, this documentary puts the lives of older people centre-stage.

We're launching the film this April with a special premiere screening and Q&A at a central venue. Come and watch, and join the conversation. Full details coming soon.





2026 Dates for your diary

Open Forum - Thursdays 10:30-12:30

Triodos Event Venue

The Foundation, Lower Ground Floor, St George's Road, Bristol, BS1 5BE

16 April, 25 June, 20 August, 22 October (AGM), 3 December

Challenging Ageism Workshops - Wednesdays 10:30-12:30

Online via Zoom

1 April, 13 May, 8 July, 16 September, 11 November

Housing Action Group - Mondays 15:00-16:30

Online via Zoom

13 April, 22 June, 7 September, 16 November

Death Cafe - Tuesdays 10:00-12:00 (spaces limited, so booking essential)

The Courts, Bridewell Street, Bristol BS1 2QD

5 May, 14 July, 22 September, 10 November

My Music, My Memories and Me! - Fridays 13:30-16:30

Bristol Beacon, Trenchard Street, Bristol BS1 5AR

17 April, 19 June, 4 September, 30 October, 4 December

For more information and booking visit the [BOPF Eventbrite page](#) or call the office on 0117 927 9222.

New BOPF members are always welcome! Check out our website or give us a ring.



Change coming to Broadmead - Bristol City Council update

Broadmead is changing. In preparation for thousands of new homes and leisure and retail facilities, Bristol City Council is working to make it more accessible, greener and vibrant.

In the long-term, we aim to pedestrianise the Horsefair and Penn Street. This summer, you will see the area start to change to prepare for this transformation.

At the junction of Union Street and The Horsefair, the council will remove the Bristol Shopping Quarter sail and food kiosks, as we transform this junction to become a new public space.

This summer bus routes will also change, with services that currently use the Horsefair and Penn Street going around the outside of Broadmead instead. Buses will stop at new and upgraded bus stops on Lower Castle Street, Bond Street, Broad Weir and Fairfax Street.

As traffic movements change, so will the location of disabled parking and taxi ranks. We want to maintain good access for everyone at all times, so we will put in new disabled parking and taxi ranks before removing the old ones.

New disabled parking spaces:

- Brunswick Square
- Silver Street and Bridewell Street
- Castle Street and Queen Street

New taxi ranks:

- North Street (bottom of Stokes Croft)
- Nelson Street
- Bond Street South
- Broad Weir
- Fairfax Street (after the Galleries is redeveloped)

You can see a map of these changes over the page (page 20).

We will also improve pavements, build new cycle routes and new public space equal to 10 tennis courts. Throughout the construction phase, the council is planning a programme of art and events in Broadmead.



Thank you for your patience while we work to sustain the vitality of the city centre and improve the transport network.

You can find out more about these plans, learn about diversion routes, contact the council and get regular newsletter updates at www.bristolonthemove.com