Bathampton Meadows Alliance Working Group   September 2019
NEWSLETTER TO THE BATHAMPTON MEADOWS ALLIANCE
Website: bathamptonmeadowsalliance.org.uk

Dear Member,
Further protecting & enhancing the local benefits of the Meadows
Introduction
We are writing to you as someone who was engaged or kept in touch with the Campaign to stop the proposal for a 1400 Park&Ride Site in the heart of the Meadows. As the small Bathampton Meadows Alliance Working Group, we hope you will be interested and want to keep abreast of the steps we are taking to give long term protection to the Meadows from any inappropriate development.

We would value and take into account any views you wish to put forward now on the summary that follows and the draft Vision, Aims & Contribution Statement.

We have recently loaded more information into this BMA website. Further information will also be presented at the Village Consultation Events we are preparing for November. These will be publicised locally and on the website. We'd be very pleased to meet you there to hear your views first hand.

Of course, if you do not want to be contacted further please let us know.

Summary of the steps we have taken so far
Following the successful campaign to stop the Park&Ride on the Meadows, the Alliance Working Group felt it was of vital importance that the Meadows be put beyond the reach of inappropriate development in perpetuity. In looking at options, it was clear to us that only National Trust ownership offered this level of protection, as it has statutory powers to make land 'inalienable' so that the Meadows could never be compulsorily purchased.

Ahead of the 2019 local election the BMA Working Group asked each political party to set out what they would be prepared to do towards this goal, if they were elected. The Liberal Democrats who now control the Council said they would 'instruct Council Officers to negotiate with the National Trust for the transfer to them of all council-owned land on the Meadows'. The BMA now aims to work with the Council and the National Trust to ensure that our aspiration is achieved and to create a vision for the Meadows that has the widest possible support from local communities.

Bathampton Meadows is a wonderful asset that the whole community should be able to protect and enjoy. It is one of the "green fingers stretching right into the city" that contribute to the setting of the City of Bath World Heritage Site. This vital green corridor is much-loved and widely valued for the benefits it brings to public health and wellbeing and the role it plays in supporting biodiversity. We believe the whole green finger, from Bathford to the City deserves special protection, although we acknowledge that some of it is in private ownership. Unless this happens, the land remains at threat of compulsory purchase by the Council for development, as it did in 2016, or other unexpected development plans.

Now that we have this commitment from the Council to protect the Meadows, the BMA Working Group is keen to offer skills and volunteer time to facilitate the next steps. We believe there is a need for a wide public debate about the Meadows to establish what people value most and want they want to see protected and enhanced. Given our previous track record and wide community reach we believe the BMA are well placed to facilitate this discussion and to help deliver the public and stakeholder consultation required to underpin any agreement between the National Trust and the Council.

To that end the BMA Working Group has worked through the summer to produce draft proposals that we aim to share with our wider membership and Parish Councils, voluntary groups and local people early in the Autumn. These drafts include our Vision and Aims for the protection and enhancement of the public benefits of the Meadows, a statement of principles and measures to protect the meadows natural and historic assets and the outcomes we believe these will achieve. We are working on digital mapping to express our vision clearly and flexibly, to help public consultation.

Our work to date has identified a network of public rights of way, some of which are well maintained, others not. We aspire to making as many people as possible aware of these rights of way and ensure they are useable. Some of these routes are only suitable for able-bodied walkers. We would like to improve these routes where possible and go further by encouraging access for cycling on key routes in a sympathetic manner. In these ways we aim to open-up new and existing parts of the Meadows for those with less mobility.

We are aware that Sustrans has already worked with B&NES to explore key cycle routes closer into the city (2014 study). We would like to extend this work out towards the villages, linking them into the network. The next piece in the jigsaw would be to extend the recently-endorsed West of England Combined Authority's (WECA's) proposals to link the West of Bath riverside all the way to Pulteney Bridge

We have been campaigners from 2016 and now want to offer our time and skills for free to help envisage and deliver a long-term solution. During our Park&Ride campaign we argued that this was not a sustainable solution to Bath's transport needs. We discovered that traffic dropped by 30% in Batheaston in the school holidays and discussed the many things that stop people choosing sustainable travel. With the support of our wider community we now hope to see safer routes to school for our children, better disability access and sensitive, sustainable connections between our villages and into the city that provide a real incentive to walk or cycle. All of this within an overarching principle of protecting the things we value most about the Meadows such as access to nature and tranquillity.

We hope you will continue to be interested in this work and to give your views. If you were forwarded this message and are new to our Campaign please visit our website at bathamptonmeadowsalliance.org.uk and please contact us via the website if you have any queries.

Bathampton Meadows Alliance Working Group