

## DO WE NEED GREEN BELTS?

Bristol Civic Society thinks we do. They preserve green landscape close to built up cities. They prevent urban sprawl and extended commuter journeys. They encourage regeneration within the city boundary. This is "sustainability" we understand. But new spatial visionaries are looking for special circumstances which will justify the first breaches in Bristol's green belt - the first steps on a very slippery slope. We're suspicious. Are you?



Jerry Hicks reports:

On 1 September I presented our concerns to Bristol Cabinet and received verbal assurances that "they are on our side". In response to written questions I have now received written answers which indicate serious intentions to respect the green belt and regenerate our deprived areas with mixed development including badly needed housing. This is very encouraging. However green belts do not have absolute protection "in exceptional circumstances". So we must be alert!

A copy of Jerry's presentation was sent to Mark Prisk MP who has a private member's bill for The Protection of Green Belts which will have a second reading on 16 June 2006. We have received a letter from Mark Prisk thanking us for our support and indeed he has received support throughout the country.



## OBITUARY: Champions of a Free Press

It is with deep sorrow that Bristol Civic Society must report the recent deaths of two outstanding Bristol journalists - **Roger Bennett** and **James Belsey**.

Both will be remembered for their versatile cultural distinction; but Bristol Civic Society are particularly grateful for their lasting legacy to our city's environment.

The battle to save our unique city docks from in-fill is well recorded. Yet it might never have been fought but for an unprecedented series of articles by Roger Bennett. On 20 October 1969 he launched a full page exposé in the Bristol Evening Post of what was afoot. This 'bombshell' was followed by full page and double page articles on 21, 22, 23 and 24 October and Bristolians rose to his eloquent challenge.

Roger's subsequent charismatic career as broadcaster and musician endeared him to thousands; but his youthful triumph may prove his greatest memorial.

James Belsey was another talented and versatile member of the Evening Post who expanded the scope of his distinguished 'cultural' journalism to encompass environmental crusades. These included a full page report of Bristol Civic Society's lengthy study by Jerry Hicks and James Bruges on unacceptable conditions in Hartcliffe. This was brought to the attention of a visiting Minister and laid the foundations for Bristol's "City Challenge".

As a free lance James later produced a well researched broadsheet for Bristol Civic Society on the curious history of Canons Marsh. This played an important role in raising the vision for this

For both these true friends of Bristol who did so much to raise understanding and promote creative actions for the benefit of Bristol, we offer sincere thanks.

Jerry Hicks