

## **NOTE OF MEETING**

**Thursday February 4<sup>th</sup> 7.15 – 9pm**

**Online Zoom Meeting**

Attendees: Rob, Susan, Margaret, Fabian, Freya, Rod, Elaine

Apologies: Rosie

### **1. Approve AGM Minutes**

The December minutes were approved.

### **2. Projects**

#### **a. Troopers Hill Red Slide**

The closing date for the grant application is February 5<sup>th</sup>. Susan submitted the application in December, and we are still able to fundraise for 3 weeks. Susan is continuing fundraising to build support and show people really want to it. Over 50 people have now donated, and the total has just gone over £1300.

### **3. Conservation work on Troopers Hill**

#### **a. Bristol Parks winter works**

Despite the bad weather, winter works has started. At least 2 visits from the team have been completed. Work has been done by the track in Troopers Hill Field, around the flagpole and around the triangle near the Sally's glade area.

#### **b. Winter works funded by Friends of Troopers Hill**

We agreed to fund re-cutting gorse last year. The council will place the order for and pass on the bill to us. Work is planned for the first week of March when there is little risk of any nesting birds.

Rob is talking to Becky at the council about how to get funding so the same work can be repeated in futures years.

#### **c. Winter works planned for volunteers**

A work party took place on December 6<sup>th</sup> to tackle bramble by the Greendown oak that was felled last year. The group took out saplings growing from the banks around the oak and removed brambles from and close to the oak to make it more friendly for children.

Work parties had been planned to restart in the new year however they have been

cancelled because of lockdown.

Solo volunteering has continued. Neil and Fran have been able to do some work as well as Rob.

**d. Litter picking**

Elaine has been doing a great job litter picking and recruited Bertie, who met with Susan to get some bags and a litter picker.

**e. Steps**

The new timber for repairing the steps has been delivered, however work to repair the steps has stopped because of lockdown. As soon as the ParkWork team are able, they will return to do the repairs.

**f. Contacts for new volunteers**

Susan has been getting new messages from people wanting to volunteer. Susan has a standard message she replies with to explain how it works under the tiered conditions. Susan is keeping list of names and contact details to people after lockdown and when work parties can restart.

**4. Troopers Hill Field**

**a. Walnut trees**

4 new walnut trees were planted on December in Troopers Hill Field using section 106 money which was allocated for tree planting.

**5. Troopers Hill Woods**

**a. Kissing gate post**

The gate post coming into the woods from Lamb Hill is rotting and dropped. The gate still works but will only get worse. Rob has notified the Parks team and asked that if anyone knows of anything that needs fixing, they can tell Rob and Susan who can inform Parks.

**6. Update on antisocial behaviour of the night 4<sup>th</sup> November**

The incident has been dealt with informally. The 4 young people involved have been spoken to by the neighbourhood police officer with their mums present. It was agreed they would come and do some volunteer work on the hill, however this has not happened yet because of lockdown.

Claire, the neighbourhood police office phoned Susan to explain that the longer the

volunteering is its left, the less impact it will have. Claire is looking into arranging a zoom meeting with Susan and the people to talk about the impact of what they did. Claire suggests Susan explains to them the cost of everything that was vandalised. For example, £62K for the new paths and the marker posts cost £3K for the set.

Susan is very pleased with how the police have responded – they have gone the extra mile.

Bristol Waste have cleaned the graffiti that was sprayed on the garden walls at no charge.

Unfortunately, there has been another graffiti incident. It was first cleaned off by a couple of dog walkers that Susan knows, however, it has appeared again. The Parks team are going to clean it up and will do so in the next few days.

## **7. Events**

There have been no events. All are paused. If anyone has any ideas of events that can be done in a safe way with lockdown, please share with Rob and Susan. Events will be reviewed by the group once lockdown is over.

## **8. Networking**

### **a. Social media and website**

Rob has updated the website to add more information around history, the tar works, a big fire at Temple Meads and history around creosote production.

If anything needs updating on the website, let Rob know.

### **b. Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation**

Rob explained that the Foundation is still going despite the slow start last year. Not many events have taken place. Family bulb planting took place in December in Netham Park. A wildflower planting project is planned for College Green. There are also plans for more work in Netham park.

### **c. RHS South West in Bloom**

At the last meeting, Susan asked for feedback on how we would feel about parting ways with the RHS because of the way they present advice to gardeners on eradicating weeds using glyphosate.

For many months, Susan had been speaking to Jon Wheatley, a member of the RHS committee and chair of South West in Bloom about this. Jon had been forwarding

messages to other members of the RHS but there had been no responses or recognition.

This morning, Susan received an email from Kay, the RHS Community Participation Officer, followed by a telephone call where Kay explained the RHS is very thankful this had been brought to their attention and apologized it had taken so long to respond. Kay explained the RHS needs critical friends in their organization, and she was going to bring this to the attention of her manager who has national responsibilities and reports directly into the chief exec.

Tim Upson, Director of Horticulture, Education and Communities, sent the following email shortly before our meeting.

“Dear Susan,

Thank you for sharing your concerns about how the representation of the use of weedkillers and their representation on the RHS website. Apologies for taking time to respond, and thank you for your patience on this, and to Kay and Andrea who brought it to my attention. It was interesting to see what is happening with community groups in Bristol as I recognise many of the place names having lived there previously.

I can assure that we share the same views on the use of weedkillers, that they should only be used in a very targeted way and as a controlled measure for tackling the most serious problems such as invasive species. This is the approach we take in our own gardens where cultural methods of control are employed and prioritised, and I understand you are also managing Troopers Hill in this way too.

At the RHS we do not underestimate the role we have to play in influencing people’s gardening practices and the importance of consistent messaging across all our programmes, initiatives and communication channels. Thank you for taking the time to highlight where we can improve our information and communications about weedkillers on the main RHS website.

It is heavily influenced by feedback from our diverse users, both those wishing to access more factual information, and understand different methods. We will review the related materials on our website and look to ensure there is consistency in the tone and language used. I will also ask our advisors who input into the website to review the emphasis on the advice that weedkillers should only be used in a controlled way as a last resort, so to ensure it reflects the practices in our own Gardens. As the website is extensive in terms of the information and advice I know it will take them a little time to do so. We will also explore the opportunity for us to write an article on the matter to help clarify our position in this regard. We might come back and discuss this further, where needed and if you are willing?

I do hope you will remain an IYN group with South West in Bloom, as we really need groups like yours to provide us with feedback and help us evolve.

Yours sincerely

Tim Upton

Director of Horticulture, Education & Communities”

Susan asked the group whether we should pause on our decision to disassociate from the RHS given this update. The group agreed and said we will review at the next meeting.

Keith Weed is the president of the Royal Horticultural Society. Rob will be talking to him later in the month through Bristol and Bath Parks foundation. It sounds like he is very much onboard with cutting down on weed killers and is trying to change the RHS, what they do and their image.

**d. Duke of Edinburgh**

Susan has had 8 emails from people wanting to do littler picking on the hill for their Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Susan was able to speak to Chloe, the children’s teacher at Brunel Academy to explain that we are not cleared to work with people under the age of 16, however Susan has passed on information that Chloe can use to create a briefing pack, do’s and don’ts while on the hill, and is happy to sign off photos and hours they worked to help with their assessments.

**e. BBC Radio Bristol**

Susan has been asked to appear on BBC Radio Bristol for 5 minutes a month to talk about what’s going on in St George. In January, Susan talked about the consultation on ‘suicide bend’ and the red slide. Next time, Susan will talk about the community centres and praise the great work they are doing.

**f. Planning application**

Susan received an alert for a planning application to fell trees on a property that is very close and visible from Troopers Hill at 94 Fir Tree Lane. The original planning conditions require that the tree area that is located on a bank should be treated as a nature reserve.

The new planning application seeks to remove 10 trees and Susan is concerned this could impact the wildlife that use that area as a corridor to Troopers Hill.

Susan has commented on the application as an individual and brought it to the attention of neighboring properties who share the concern. Susan asked the group for our views and whether we should comment as a group on the planning application.

The group had some conversation, and all shared the concern that felling the trees could impact wildlife coming onto Troopers Hill.

Rod commented that the trees run along a number of properties, so if this application was granted, other properties might make similar applications that if granted, would cause further impact.

Fabian commented that he has received reports from people along Troopers Hill Road concerned about the stability of the bank behind their houses. Removing the trees could affect the stability of the bank. Instead of removing the trees, reducing the canopy might be an alternative approach that works better.

Everyone agreed that a comment should be made about our concerns as a group on the planning application. Susan will draft a response and share with the group before posting.

**g. Future Proof Parks**

The Young Rangers project is finishing, and Susan has been asked 3 questions by the organizers to gather feedback about the project. Susan shared the questions to gather comments from the group.

**Question 1: What have you learnt from engaging young people in the activities.**

Young people are keen to be engaged and are helping us engage with community. Has had a very positive impact and they are very pro-active. The art competition was very successful.

**Question 2: What changes have there been for the group**

Freya, one of the Young Rangers is a committee member which is fantastic and very important to have someone who can represent, share the views and opinions of young people in the committee.

**Question 3: What plans do we have for working with young people in the future**

We would like to repeat this. The work with the Brownies and young people on the Duke of Edinburgh scheme are great examples of this. We are getting first contacts from our Instagram account run by the Young Rangers.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held from 7.15pm-9pm on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021.