



NOTE OF MEETING

12th November 2015. Methodist Church, Summerhill

Present , Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Norman (Treas), Kit (Memb Sec) Margaret (Cttee), Rod, Elaine, Helen (minutes).

Apologies: Keith

The Minutes of the previous on 10th September 2015 meeting were approved

Issues and thank you's for Parks staff

- Rob and Susan had discussed the 2015/16 winter works programme with Bristol Parks staff. The plans were very similar to previous years but works would start earlier this year than they did last year to allow for interruptions such as machinery breakdowns.
- The Council's landscapes team had already back-filled two sets of steps and would be asked to attend to the remaining steps. Rob commented that during the first year since Julian's retirement, any worries about maintenance being neglected had not materialised. Strimming was carried out by the same person every time and all the problems highlighted by FOTH had been addressed.
- the flag at Green Down needed repairing, Rod warned that the fabric could deteriorate during the imminent stormy weather. The flag represents the Bristol Green Capital Year 2015 and the question of a replacement flag at the year's end was discussed. At the September meeting Fabian had suggested that the new flag should bear the words 'Welcome to Troopers Hill' and it had been agreed to start a Facebook discussion about flag design. It was acknowledged that the eventual flag would need to be ordered with a spare to cover wear and tear or some form of accidental damage.
- Maintenance of the bed outside the Greendown entrance had been discussed with Bristol Parks. In future, the bed would simply be strimmed.
- Chair reported that there is now a bin suitable for the disposal of dog waste at every entrance to Troopers Hill.
- In response to a request for bin bags, Parks staff had supplied enough bags to last a few years and 4 aperture hoops. The Friends expressed their appreciation.

Troopers Hill Field

- Chair had made two grant applications for play facilities, value £25k and £50k, for equipment suitable for 5-11 year olds and under-5s respectively. Decisions were expected on the success or otherwise of the applications in March 2016.
- on 16 February 2016 seven trees (1 hornbeam (memorial tree) and 6 cherry trees) would be planted, it was expected that the planting would be attended by school pupils. The opportunity to apply to the Council to sponsor a tree would remain open until 20 November. Two such applications had been received so far.
- The grass cutting arrangements had been mentioned in recent discussions. Different cutting regimes applied in various areas and the main part of the field should be cut 8 times a year, leaving a wildlife edge on three occasions. The tarmac path had been wrongly categorised as an edge but the misunderstanding had been rectified. The cutting of the raised areas bordering the track should recognise the presence of spring flowering bulbs.
- Rob provided an update on the proposal that, to avoid patches of wear, the goal posts could be set in sockets enabling the locations to be varied from time to time. A trial was to be carried out at Dundry Park and 1 other park. A set of sockets cost £1500. The meeting discussed methods of locking the goal posts in place. It was agreed that an interim solution to the worn patches could be pursued while awaiting the results of the trial.

Action: Rob to contact Bristol Parks about goal posts.

Work parties and other works

Since our last meeting

- It had been agreed that the Community Payback teams would spend some time removing gorse bushes and time assisting Parks employees with the winter works on other occasions.

- A Parkwork team had been constructing steps between the former Lamb Inn and the woodland at Crews Hole. The eventual junction between the path and Crews Hole Road was currently under consideration. It was suggested that a finger post could be used to indicate the path and that, given that the building materials had been funded from Beeses' donation in 2014, their 2105 donation could pay for the sign post. It was recognised that FOTH had previously intended to clarify and perhaps extend the area for parking at the approach to the path, for visitors to the LNR.
Action: Rob to approach Didac Ltd about constructing an appropriate sign. .

- On Saturday 3rd October, volunteers had successfully removed bracken and bramble above the entrance E steps, the party had been joined by a couple of Friends who had recently left the immediate neighbourhood.

- The work party on 7th November had been cancelled because of wet weather

Before the next meeting:

- On Saturday, 5th December work was expected to be concentrated in and around Sally 's Glade

- As usual, the January work party would take place on the second Saturday of the month (9th January)

- The February work party would be held on 6th February and on the first Saturday of the month for the remainder of 2016.

Events

Since our last meeting

- The Lichen Walk on Sunday 4th October had been attended by relatively few people, however, it had been very entertaining and the numbers had permitted detailed question and answer sessions.

- The Family Fun Dog Show on Sunday 11th October had gone very well with a good attendance and atmosphere, the tea tent had been popular. Kit observed that the crowds had tended to dissipate towards the end of the afternoon. He had completed the monitoring report which was a condition of the grant funding. Susan completed a before and after fouling audit and reported the results.

- The dog warden had visited the Hill but had not seen anyone failing to pick up after their dog, she had replaced some worn stickers. Susan to obtain quote from Wards for metal signs with the same image. Worst fouling at lane behind Malvern Road. Kit suggested that the signs not be paid for by FOTH and Rob agreed to approach the NP.

- The Fungi Foray on Sunday 1st November had been led by John and Doreen Bailey from the Somerset Fungus group. It had been the first such event without Justin Smith. The walk started on the Field and continued on the Hill. The report of the Bailey's findings was expected soon and it was agreed that they should be booked again for next year.

Before our next meeting:

- The Geology Walk was planned for the afternoon of 29th November. It was the last of the Neighbourhood Partnership Green Capital funded walks. So far eight people had booked a place.

- The AGM was set for Thursday 3rd December. The meeting discussed changes to event booking arrangements, considering online and telephone options and setting up the information line to function as a booking line.

Action: Rob and Susan to consider their availability in relation to booking arrangements

- Susan invited Friends to this year's FOTH Christmas social on 18th December at Kit and Helen's.

Events for 2016

- Susan shared the outcome of the planning meeting that had taken place on 29th October. The number of periodic meetings had been reduced to four plus an Annual General Meeting. Star Parties were planned in February or March. Ed Drewitt had been booked for a Dawn Chorus walk on St George's day, 23rd April. Rob would lead an Avon Valley walk in May. There would be no Music on the Hill in 2016. Rupert Higgins would be asked to host a Bugs and Beasties event on the Saturday of the Balloon Fiesta.

- Kit asked about the timeline for constructing the play area (in the event of successful grant applications). It was hoped that the works would be completed by Autumn 2016. The project was

being managed via the Council for reasons relating to VAT and responsibility. The completion date would be constrained by the grant conditions.

Networking

- Bristol Metropolitan Academy students (year 9) had visited the Hill as part of a promotion of local nature reserves across Bristol. The Geography curriculum included map-reading, and the Learning Trails on the Hill were good teaching aids for this purpose. Arranging the event had generated useful links with Academy staff. A subsequent geography visit had been cancelled due to poor weather.
- Susan had circulated correspondence relating to the Pesticide Safe Bristol Alliance. Susan outlined the aims of the Alliance. Rob explained the Council's current aims to reduce the use of herbicides and that glyphosate is used particularly to control weeds at roadsides, etc. Susan described the carefully controlled use of glyphosate on Troopers Hill, by Bristol City Council, to remove the invasive Japanese Knotweed plant. Over an acre of land has been recovered and a gain range of native plant species are become re-established. While the meeting supported reduction of pesticides in general, several participants expressed doubts about the extent to which the Alliance's agenda aligned with FOTH's constitution. It was agreed to reconsider the approach after the Alliance had attended the Bristol Parks Forum.
- Rob displayed proof copies of the Discover East Bristol map, depictions of Troopers Hill featured prominently in the artwork. Editions of the map were to be displayed in libraries, parks and community centres to highlight the locations of green spaces in the neighbourhood. A launch event had been arranged for 8th December in St George Library.

Assessments for awards

- Susan intended to arrange a date for the Pride in Parks assessment in January or February. The awards would be announced in March.
- Rod had completed and sent in the application for Troopers Hill LNR to be listed as a Dark Skies Discovery Site. He had obtained support from Bristol Parks and the Bristol Astronomical Society without any problems. It was confirmed that a site visit would not be necessary. If the LNR was accepted, the British Astronomical Association would need a photograph, Rod had one that he considered suitable and would provide it as required. The meeting discussed publicity arrangements in the event that the status was conferred. There would be drawbacks to wide publicity, including the risk of excessive visitor numbers. It was agreed that it would be acceptable for the site to be named on the Astronomical Society and Friends of Troopers Hill web sites, but perhaps not in Visit Bristol, for example. It was generally felt that the Council web site should give Troopers Hill the same publicity as other Dark Skies locations.

Action: Rod to check whether Bristol Council 's web site shows details of existing Dark Skies Discovery sites.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

Rob reported that numbers of friends and followers were increasing steadily and he had updated the web site to advertise the date of the Dawn Chorus walk in April 2016.

Newsletter

Kit told the meeting that the December issue would include pictures from the Dog Show, an item on a tree bark cake mould, and a report on the progress of applications for Dark Skies Discovery Site status and the play areas grant. It would also refer to Ruth Coleman's leaflets for short walks in Local Nature Reserves in Bristol and to the consultation on road safety measures for Troopers Hill Road.

Date of next meeting: The Annual General Meeting on Thursday 3 December 2015.