

Attendees: Susan, Rob, Margaret, Rod, Elaine (part), Penny (part), Lizzy (part), Steph and Rosie  
Apologies: Cllr Fabian Breckels, Adam, Dom and Freya

Introductions were made. In Adam's absence Rosie agreed to take the minutes.

1. **Approval of Minutes from June meeting**

Approved

2. **Projects**

Memorial Trees

Two bereaved families each wanted to sponsor a tree to be planted on Troopers Hill Field (THF or the Field), but public consultations were needed before the Council could approve this. Posters alerting the public should be going up within the coming week. The proposal is to plant two Scots Pines to make a triangle with the existing one. Memorial trees have guaranteed care and health for the first two years of their life or are replaced.

Memorial Bench

Rob had been approached by a bereaved couple at the last gazebo event who had enquired about a memorial bench. He thought that possible suitable places would be in the Field near the turning circle or to replace the existing flat steel bench with a wooden top that was rotting. The flat steel bench could be recycled to another spot. He and Susan would discuss it with Teija (Bristol City Council Parks service contact) at their next meeting and go back to the family. He said that we tried to keep park "furniture" off the Hill as it was a nature reserve not a park. A bench would cost in the region of £2,000 and it was agreed that the family pay FoTH who would then pay Parks as had happened before.

Blackswarth Road Wood

A charity attempted to raise funds to buy the wood for the community. Rob had contacted the leader to offer support. This initiative also had the support of local Councillors and Kerry McCarthy MP. It was very well supported by the community and had raised a large sum of money. Unfortunately, this was outbid and the wood had been sold (subject to contract) to an unknown buyer. More positively, a new version of the local plan had recently been published and the wood had been reclassified as a Local Green Space. Also, a Woodland Tree Protection Order had been applied for.

**Action Susan – to follow up the progress of this application.**

If successful it would make it very difficult for anyone to build on this land. Once the new owners were known Susan would introduce herself and the Friends and offer advice and support. Another positive had been the donation of a four-figure sum from a donor in New Zealand who had donated it to the purchase of the wood with a proviso that it should go to the FoTH if the purchase was not successful. Proceeds from the Sound Bath had also been received on the same basis.

3. **Communications**

Paper Newsletters

The editor, Ruth, had suggested that the main article of the next newsletter should be on "stargazing". Rod would contribute and BAS would be given a chance to read any articles before publication. The next edition would be published in January.

There had been an offer of a Planetarium show, as a fundraiser, which will be held on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February at the Wesley Memorial Church.

Susan had been forced to return to non-recycled paper for general printing as the recycled had continuously jammed her printer.

#### 4. **Nature Conservation Work on Troopers Hill**

Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier funding

The Conservation Officer at Bristol City Council applied to Natural England for this funding. It would be for 5 years and offer much more security in terms of funding conservation management on Troopers Hill. The conservation officer and a representation of Natural England are in discussions on the allocation of funding to manage Troopers Hill as a lowland heath habitat.

BCC Climate and Ecological Emergency Community Grant

£3,000 of BCC Climate & Ecological Emergency Community Grant had already been spent on work last winter out of the original £5000 grant, a balance of £2,000 remained. It was agreed that the Friends would add £1,300 from their own funds to total £3,300 for on-going works. This would leave approximately £1,400 of Friends of Troopers Hill funds earmarked for conservation work.

It was agreed that the forthcoming work should concentrate on the rotational management of scrub and gorse as per the grant application. The bulk of the work was getting rid of the cut scrub from the hill, not cutting it.

Council commitment to Troopers Hill is still very important. Susan is writing a plan of winter works for Parks staff to be agreed with Bristol City Council.

Nature Conservation Work Parties

Since the last meeting some work parties had been rained off. The work had concentrated on bracken in July and August and on Canadian Goldenrod in September. Dom had led two groups which had worked on Broom and saplings and Rob and Neil had tidied the area which had been affected by the fire. New dates had just been issued with more to come.

Willy had offered to be trained as a group leader.

A corporate group (BT) was coming in November.

BCC had made an early start on winter works which was excellent.

#### 5. **Maintenance**

Margaret had noticed the rotting of the signage at Crews Hole Road "layby" which had been repaired by Didac. Susan had emailed a thank you.

Margaret had also noticed a stack of branches blocking a path towards the top of the Hill. She had reported it to BCC and closed the call when the branches were cleared. It transpired that a member of the public had cleared the branches.

The Troopers Hill Field noticeboard had been spray painted but a resident of Malvern Road had seen this and cleaned it before the paint had dried. She had been thanked.

Crews Hole Road “layby”

BCC was obtaining more quotes. Susan had emailed BCC for an update.

Rosie had noticed cracking in the tarmac on the path alongside THF from Malvern Road.

**Action Rob or Susan to contact Manager of the Landscapes Unit under Parks**

## 6. **Resourcing**

Rob and Susan would be taking 6 months off from April to October 2024. Was there anyone else to take on some of the events such as leading school parties (from Year1 to 6<sup>th</sup> form), organising the gazebo events and others? It was decided to discuss “events 2024” at a separate meeting. Susan will send invitations to active members.

There could be up to 9 committee members. Freya had decided to stand down due to pressure of time; Adam had resigned as Secretary which Rosie had taken on and who would be proposed as a committee member at the AGM. Rob, Susan, Margaret and Rod were happy to stay on. Margaret agreed to take on the Eventbrite administration.

Rosie asked if there was a bigger question about the future/succession and how to fill the various roles with people who knew about education and ecology.

Susan would be asking the work party leaders for their available dates and if they could take on decision making on which areas to work on.

## 7. **Preparation for the AGM**

No changes to the Constitution were suggested.

## 8. **Events**

Past

Drop-in Gazebo

Rob reported that there had been 2 drop-in gazebo events in July and September which had not been hugely busy but all conversations with the public had been interesting and fruitful. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary walk had been wet but interesting and enjoyable.

Barbara Harris had led the sensory walk which had been very good and hopefully another would be arranged.

Bugs and Beasties 12th August

This had been well attended and enjoyable but sadly the weather had been poor and there had been no balloons.

Future

The Fungi Foray on 11 November was fully booked with a waiting list. There was some discussion on how Eventbrite appropriated tickets after cancellations and Susan would take a closer look. It had been advertised via a make-a-note-of-the-date email and posters around the Hill.

## 9. **Networking**

FoTH had been awarded an “outstanding” in the **Pride of Parks and It’s Your Neighbourhood Scheme**. The award ceremony is on 4 November at Horfield.

Do we want to enter next year? This would be discussed at the events planning meeting.

University of Bristol has asked if the geography students could run another soil/water study. Susan thought that a test of the soil on a set of steps where an unusual type of plant was

growing – Ploughman’s Spikenard, alkali loving rather than acid – might be an idea. This could be extended in various directions from the steps. A study of the impact of dog urine in various locations?

Steph suggested we provide a map of the 17 compartments of the Hill so they could compare the acidity of soil across the site. This could be an interesting basis for comparison in future years.

Rod asked if there were details on the drainage of water on the Hill or any details of rainfall. No one knew if there were rain gauges in St George.

10. **Fundraising**

Everyone seemed to think that the fund-raising website page was OK.

11. **Meeting closed at 8.40pm.**

Next meeting AGM on 7 December at St Aidan’s Church Hall.

Rob gave his apologies in advance!