

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday, 1 June, 2017 7.15pm

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Rod, (Committee member), Margaret (minutes);

Apologies: Judith, Rich, Fabian

1. Approve February minutes

The February minutes were approved.

2. Issues and thank yous for Parks staff.

- Winter works 2016/17: Susan was very pleased to report that Parks staff had done exceptionally well with the works this winter.
- Bracken: Susan explained that it was the time of year when the bracken needs to be taken down by strimmer.
Action: Susan to email Pete Stadden again about strimming the bracken.

3. Work parties and other works:

- Saturday 4th February to Saturday 27th May: Rob reported that all these work parties had taken place, none having been rained off. Work had been done to cut back broom, bracken and saplings in March and to cut back bramble and saplings in the gully in April and May. On the last two work parties Susan and Norman also used trimmers, having been trained by the Council in this. There was an additional work party on 27th May to take down Himalayan Balsam in Troopers Hill Woods. 8 people turned up for this, which was good, but it had been hoped there would have been a bigger turn out in view of the extra publicity that had been done in the Crews Hole area. There were some new attendees at both this and the other work parties.
- Work parties before next meeting: Saturdays 3rd June, 1st July: Rob had been contacted by someone planning to bring a group of 10 to the 3rd June work party as part of a hen weekend.
- New ParkWork – Rob announced that, from June, ParkWork will be working on the hill every 3rd Thursday of the month at 10 am, for at least half a day. He explained that ParkWork is aimed at helping people back into work, originally funded by the government, and now funded by a grant from St George Neighbourhood Partnership.
Preventing wear and tear on refurbished steps: one of the tasks ParkWork will undertake is to work on the steps, clearing off the faces and topping up with stones.
- Attracting more people to work parties/survey of good dates/times: Susan had only received 3 responses to her survey so will not pursue this. She commented that it appears that the main way people find out about the work

parties is by seeing the posters when they walk on the hill or by word of mouth.

4. Projects

- New Little Elizabeth bench: Susan had been assured that the order has now been placed by the Council and the bench should be received in about 6 to 8 weeks.

Action: Susan to chase if not bench not delivered by mid July

- Plans for fencing on Troopers Hill Road and plans for a new path and replacing the track on the Field and the wheelchair access path: Susan reported that the Council have given an estimate of £75k to £91k for this work. She has looked at possible grants and has found that FOTH would be very eligible for a Heritage Lottery grant of up to £100k. This would also allow funding for another invertebrate survey by David Gibbs, the last survey having been done in 2007. The grant could also provide funds for a new interpretation board on Fungi and Lichens to be positioned at the second entrance on Troopers Hill Road, and possibly some new flags. Both the flags and the board would display the Heritage Lottery logo.

Rob has prepared a web page with the title 'Ways to Nature'. It was agreed that this title should be used for the whole project, as it covered both the fences and gates, the information board and the access paths.

As part of the application we need to provide evidence beforehand that the local community supports the project. Susan has drafted a questionnaire that will be put on the website for people to complete electronically. 2000 hard copies will also be printed: 1500 to be hand delivered to homes nearby and 500 to be placed in local shops, etc. Rod had approached the Horse and Jockey pub who would be happy to hold a supply of questionnaires..

Action: Rod to ask landlord of Horse and Jockey about collecting responses, at least those completed in the pub.

Susan will ask for volunteers to post the questionnaires: Margaret and Rod both said they would be happy to do this, and Margaret also offered to enter the data on to the database. Susan will get a quote for the printing and possibly ask Woodwise Academy if they would fund. The closing date would be 12th July.

Action: Susan to ask for volunteers to deliver questionnaires.

Action: Susan to obtain quote for printing and possibly contact Woodwise Academy for extra funding.

Rod will speak to Fiona Lambert from the Bristol Astronomical Society about giving a letter of support to the project as it would improve access for the Society's Stargazing events.

Action: Rod to speak to Fiona Lambert about letter of support

As part of the application we also need to say how we will measure success.

Susan suggested that we include some guided walks in the fund request and these could then be used to gather responses.

The meeting looked at the questionnaire and some suggestions for amendment were made. Susan asked for any further comments to be sent to her.

Action: Susan to complete design of questionnaire

Action: Susan to contact local schools and businesses about being a drop off point for completed questionnaires

- Signage for woodland path: John Gibson of Woodwise Academy is happy to provide a sign for the woodland path from the parking space on Crews Hole Road
- Funding for Troopers Hill Woodland: Susan had been contacted by Paula Spiers and Becky Belfin to say that there is a possibility of being able to access funds for the woodland which could be used for signage for the woodland paths and also, possibly, a bench. Susan will await further information.
- Flag: Susan reported that the current flag is deteriorating and will probably need replacing by end of year. Rob added that the flagpole will also be due for inspection soon and may be nearing the end of its life. It was agreed that, if the flagpole has degraded to the point where it needs to be removed, then it should not be replaced.

5. Troopers Hill Field

- Log Play equipment: Susan reported that the Council had started to take down the log play equipment by cutting the logs down to the level of the concrete. She had sent an email to find out what the next stage would be and to check that work would not take place during the school holiday when the play area would be busy. Susan received a reply to say that they will be taking out the rest of the structure after the school holiday, and that the area would then be covered in top soil and seeded. People had been asked for suggestions, on Facebook, about what should replace the log play equipment. A few people have said they would like it replaced with a similar structure. Susan thought a wildflower area would be good; Rob suggested it could be left just grassed as it would probably be an area people would gather anyway.
- Memorial bench, tree sponsorship: The family of Paul Atkinson approached FOTH in January to say that they would like to provide a memorial bench and also sponsor a tree on Troopers Hill field in his memory. The bench has now been installed on the part of the field near the proposed new path, and a tree has been sponsored. Another memorial tree has also been sponsored recently.

6. Events

- The Star Gazing in February was well attended. Unfortunately the sky clouded over just as the event started but the attendees enjoyed the event anyway, looking at the telescopes and talking to the members of the Bristol Astronomical Society;

Moth Night: there was a very good sign-up for this but 10 people did not turn up on the night. The group had been limited to 20 and several people had been put on a waiting list so it was disappointing that non-attendees had not let Susan know in advance that they were not coming. In future Susan will use Eventbrite to book events like this.

Avon Valley Walk and Bristol Walking Festival: There was a good turnout for the Avon Valley walk and the Walking for Health walk which were both part of the Bristol Walking Festival.

- Next event – Bugs & Beasties/Solar observations – Saturday 12th August: Rob has bought some new nets and bug pots with the donation received earlier this year. Rod suggested Susan contact Fiona Lambert to confirm that the Bristol Astronomical Society will be able to do the solar observations again this year.

Action: Susan to contact Fiona Lambert

- After the next meeting on 13th July, which will be brief, there will be a picnic on the Hill to which everyone who has ever helped with FOTH events, work parties, etc will be invited.

Action: Susan to send out invitation email

7. Impact of Council Cuts to Parks on Troopers Hill

- Susan reminded the meeting that the Council is suggesting that the operational part of Parks should be cost neutral by the 2019/20 budget. Currently Parks costs £4m to run. Susan has written to Asher Craig, Cabinet member responsible for Parks, to question this proposal and asking whether there is a timetable. Asher replied that there is a timetable but this has not been published yet. Rob pointed out that the Parks Forum will be meeting Asher on Monday so they can ask her for further information then.
- Future maintenance and management/ Management plan update: Rob reported that the current management plan will be updated to cover the period up to April 2018 but suggested it might then be a good idea to do a complete review as the current plan will have been in place for 10 years. If surveys of the Hill are done before then, including the proposed survey of invertebrates, then these can be used to inform a new plan. It may be possible to obtain a grant to pay an expert to provide a new management plan.

8. Networking

- Toddler group and after school club on Troopers Hill: The toddler group is doing very well but it has been harder to pull people in for the after school club. They had a successful session with Year 3 from Summerhill Academy, and they are hoping there will be funding available to do more sessions with

schools, Mali is currently on maternity leave but Amy will keep the project going.

- WI Red: Susan has not heard any more about the proposed visit from WI Redfield.
- University of Bristol study of dog fouling audit: Susan has not heard any more about this but has not followed it up.
Action: Susan to follow up.
- St George Community network: Rob explained that the St George Community Network will replace the St George Neighbourhood Partnership. He volunteered to be the Troopers Hill representative on this group and this was agreed, with thanks to Rob.
- Downend History Group: Rob has been booked to give a talk to this group in April 2018 for which a payment of £30 will be made. The group will also visit the Hill in 2018, with a further payment to be made for this.

9. Awards

- Susan was congratulated on winning second place in the University of Manchester Alumni Volunteer Awards, for which FOTH will receive £200.
- Susan asked the meeting whether FOTH should enter for the South West in Bloom Pride in Parks Award again, at a cost of £20. After discussion it was agreed that we should enter for this as it could be helpful when applying for funding.

10. Facebook/Twitter/website Update

Numbers of followers on Facebook and Twitter continue to grow: 1024 Likes on Facebook and 693 Followers on Twitter. Rod requested that his role of administrator for the Facebook page be switched off when he is not needed to cover the page.

Action: Rob to switch off Rod as administrator until next needed.

Rich had volunteered to look at setting up events on Facebook but has not been able to do this on his mobile phone. Susan will look at doing this on a desktop computer.

11. Newsletter

Susan will prepare a new newsletter to let people know about Ways to Nature and the Bugs and Beastie/Solar Observations event. This will be done on line, but also in hard copy if the volunteer editor is available.

Next meeting

Thursday 13th July at 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road