



NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday, 5th March, 2026 7:15pm
Wesley Memorial Church Hall

Present: Susan (Chair), Neil, Fran, Iain, Jill, Katy, Rob, William and Margaret
(minutes)

Apologies: Rosie, Fabian, Elaine, Alvaro

1. Approve minutes of AGM

The AGM minutes were approved.

2. Nature Conservation work on Troopers Hill

Nature conservation work parties:

- Recent: Rob reported that, despite the poor weather, only two work parties had been cancelled since the last meeting. There had been two work parties each month in December, January and February with good numbers, helped by the attendance of 4 Duke of Edinburgh students. Work parties have taken place in different parts of the hill; at the most recent one a large amount of broom had been removed and left by the contractors gate for the Council to collect. Some of it has gone but not all.
ACTION: Susan will contact the Parks department if not collected by Monday.
- Upcoming: at the next work party on 7th March, to be led by William, work will be done on the slope near Sally's Glade and Rob will also take a couple of volunteers to remove saplings on the slope above the nursery. Susan has sent Neil details of work to be done at his work party on 19th March.
- Dates of work parties April/May/June: Neil has given Susan dates for his work parties; Jill has already said she can do 25th April, and offered 9th May, 6th June and 4th July. Once William has given his dates Susan will set the work parties up on Eventbrite and send out an invitation for volunteers to book places.
- Winter Works (BCC): Susan reported that Parks had done a fantastic job with the winter works this year, and had completed everything in the management plan.
- Winter Works (contractors): Rob reported on the work done by Green Mantle, This was funded by the Countryside Stewardship grant and donations to Friends of Troopers Hill. The funding allowed for 14 man-days over a week and work had been planned for up to 3 areas. In the end Green Mantle completed the work in all 3 areas, which was more than was expected. They worked on the slope above the nursery, and also cleared a lot of the bramble which had grown up on both sides of the steps at the bottom of the hill, making the path more inviting and safer. Rob noticed that the steps are now drying out more quickly. The only possible disadvantage is that the tipping area at the bottom of the hill is no longer hidden away, but hopefully it is not too obvious.

Finally Green Mantle cleared a lot of the bramble near the area where the Himalayan Balsam grows. Susan said that we just need to keep an eye on this area and ensure that we maintain access. Jill asked what plants would be likely to grow to fill the gap and wondered whether it would be a good idea to spread some seeds, perhaps taken from the heather on the hill. Rob said that it was probable that plants like tansy would grow there, also wood sage and golden rod. He thought there was probably enough seed in the area without having to spread any. Susan said that, years ago, a Parks manager had suggested she try and collect some heather seed from the hill, but she could not get it to grow.

Greenmantle have invoiced the Council for the work and we have paid the Council for our contribution of £2000. This saves us having to pay VAT.

3. Funds

- Funding winter works 2026/27: Susan has drafted a document showing proposed winter works for 2026/7 which she circulated to the committee before the meeting. There are several areas on the hill where work cannot be done by volunteers safely and Parks are also not able to do it, so we would have to raise funds to pay for the work to be done by a contractor. Before Susan can apply for a grant she needs the work to be approved by the Council's Nature Conservation Officer. The proposed work includes removing saplings that have grown on the steep slopes above the nursery and also on the rock face at the end of the gully. Parks cleared this in 2006 but are not able to do it again now due to safety reasons. Greenmantle are experienced at doing this sort of work (they work in Cheddar Gorge). There is also an area of very old gorse that needs to be removed, and finally there is a steep area on the south side of the gully where there is an area of scrub around an oak tree that needs to be removed, the tree will be retained.

Susan has also written to the tree officer about a holm oak on the hill that has grown quite large and is probably causing the growth of several more holm oaks. In the past permission was given to cut down a large holm oak in the woodland that was leading to lots of holm oaks growing on the hill, so there is a precedent for this. Once cut down the holm oak can be left where it is as it is on an inaccessible area of the hill.

If the work is approved, Susan will then put in an application for a grant, possibly from a landfill company.

- BCC Active Travel Grant: Last year money from the Active Travel Grant paid for the new information board at the Malvern Road entrance, which was unveiled on a St George Strollers walk recently.
- Funding for an information board for Troopers Hill Woods by the layby entrance: CIL funding was obtained for this. The design work has been done but Susan is still waiting for a quote from Arien Signs to produce the sign board.

ACTION: Susan will contact Arien Signs again.

4. Maintenance and Projects – Hill, Field and Woods

- Meeting with BCC 24/02/26: Susan and Rob had a useful meeting with Mary and Teija from Parks. Teija is temporarily moving to a new role covering another area of Bristol, and Mary will be taking Teija's place. Another of the Parks staff will then cover Mary's role. They looked at the various works that need to be done.
- Repairs to steps on Local Nature Reserve: The Council has no funds to repair the steps but Rob is hoping that he may be able to get a Corporate work party to do this work. If not we may need to try and get funding from elsewhere.
- Greendown entrance timbers and hedge: Rob reported that the timbers forming a wall at the edge of the path at the Greendown entrance are so rotten they cannot be repaired. One option is to replace the timbers with slightly smaller ones that would fit in the gap but these would probably need replacing again in another few years. A longer term solution could be to take out about 10 feet of hedge and then bring in a machine to create a slope to replace the rotten timber wall. We would need to find funding for this. Fran asked whether there would be any views from the local residents about this. Susan said that she knew several of the residents of Greendown and they are very supportive of Friends of Troopers Hill. Jill wondered whether there could be an issue with water coming off the hill onto the road. Rob thought this would be unlikely to be a problem but, if necessary, a hedge could be put in at the top of the slope. Rob asked if the committee was happy with a section of the hedge being removed. This was agreed.
- Malvern Road gate: The gate is catching on the ground and would be difficult for a wheelchair user to open. Parks will try and repair.
- Play area saddle net: Susan circulated photographs showing the wear that has occurred on one corner of the saddle net, due to children standing on it to reach the monkey bars. Susan has received a quote of £1,600 for a replacement net, but this does not include VAT or cost of installation. The Council has no funding to replace play equipment. Once Susan has a quote for the full cost she will circulate the committee for views on whether we try and raise funds to replace it, or just have it removed. In the meantime the team that inspect play equipment may decide it is unsafe anyway and remove it. The previous manager of the inspection team has left and Susan has so far been unable to find out whether someone has been appointed yet in her place.
- Tree planting on Troopers Hill Field: Susan reported that there have been several new trees planted on the field including a field maple, wild service tree, downy birch and silver birch, plus 3 cherry trees as part of the Sakura project. The cherry trees have been planted between the Summerhill entrance and the milestone footpath, and the other trees have been planted west of the play area giving more shade to the play area.

- Repairs to steps in woods: Susan has put in an application to the Active Travel Grant, jointly with the Birch Collective, to repair the steps in the woodland. If successful, Luke from the Birch Collective would be paid to manage the work, which would be done by their volunteers
- Birch Collective, Woodland Management: Birch Collective have been doing some excellent work clearing and replanting in the woodland. There has never been a conservation management plan for the woodland but now the Forest of Avon are contributing an ecologist to produce a plan, due to be published in April. This could be helpful when applying for grants.

5. Past Events

- Emra Plaque unveiling with Lord Mayor: Rob said this had been organised jointly with the Civic Society and had gone well
- No Star Gazing this year: Susan reported that, for various reasons, she had not tried to organise a star gazing event this year. In view of the poor weather this would probably not have been able to take place anyway.

Future Events

- Bird walk with Duncan? Susan is aware that Duncan has only just returned to the UK, but if and when it seems appropriate Susan will ask him whether he would be happy to lead another bird walk. His first walk was excellent.
- History Walk – Sunday 10th May 10 am – Rob is leading this walk as part of Walk Fest
- Other events that were suggested at the events planning meeting for 2026 were a wildflower walk, Drop-in Gazebo, Bugs and Beasties, and a Fungi walk. Susan offered to lead the wildflower walk on Sunday 5th July. The Bugs and Beasties event will take place on Saturday 8th August to coincide with the Balloon Fiesta. We will agree dates for the drop in gazebo and the fungi walk later.

ACTION: Rob to contact Rupert Higgins to ask if he is available on 8th August

Jill suggested an arts group could be invited to come to the hill with their easels for a couple of hours. Paintings could then be auctioned off to raise funds. Everyone liked this idea.

ACTION: Jill will talk to the arts group she is involved with. It could possibly take place at the same time as the drop-in gazebo.

6. Networking

- History talk at Hanham U R Church: Rob gave this talk covering the history of the Hill, the Emras and also the Butlers, some of whom were buried in the churchyard there, and Susan talked about the St George Strollers. They received a donation of £30. Rob had also received a donation of £20 from the Brislington Twalkers when he talked to them during their recent walk around St George

- Bull Inn ACV Application: Rob reminded the meeting that the owners of the Bull Inn had successfully appealed against the Bull Inn being nominated as an Asset of Community Value. It was not planned to take this any further as it would probably lead to a costly court case.
- University of Bristol Soil Sampling project: Susan reported that the project this year was looking at the impact of gorse on soil structure. They would look at an area of well-established gorse, an area with new gorse and an area with no gorse at all. Findings will be presented at the university on 12th March at 12/12.30. Rob and Susan will be going and invited other committee members to join them if they would be interested. The written report will not be received until later in the year when it has been marked.
- CIL funds/Community Meetings: Rob had attended tonight's meeting about CIL funds. These funds are available for new work, not repairs and traffic issues are likely be the priority this year, so we will not be applying this time. Consultations are currently taking place about crossing improvements on Conham Road which have already received funding.

Fabian had received an email from a constituent asking about funding to increase the size of the fenced off area round the play area on Troopers Hill Field to allow more space for picnics in the dog free area. Susan responded to Fabian with information about the cost of the original fencing, which would have increased by now, plus there would be the cost of lifting the old fencing and installing new fencing. Susan offered to meet up with the constituent to find out exactly what she is suggesting.

- Susan has received information about a reptile survey on the hill. This is being done by a wildlife project team from the West of England Combined Mayoral Authority, and involves mats being left at various places on the hill for a couple of months. Information cards will be left with the mats explaining what they are so that they do not get moved or picked up as litter. Susan said she will not publicise them as this might lead to people moving them.
ACTION: Rob said we should let Elaine know so that she does not pick them up as litter.
- Susan displayed a Dunfords Dairy milk bottle dating back to at least 1984 that had been found on the hill during the winter works. She will contact them to see if they are interested in having it and whether she can raise any funds for it.

7. Friends of Troopers Hill

- Change to constitution to clarify committee role?: Rob said that one of the issues that had come up during the ACV appeal was that FOTH had made the decision to support the application by email rather than at a meeting. Now that meetings are less frequent than they were, Rob suggested it would be a good idea to amend the constitution at the AGM to reflect the fact that decisions can be made this way. This was agreed.

- Committee roles from January 2027: William has expressed an interest in taking over as Chair from Susan. He and Susan will meet up to discuss the role. Jill offered to take over as Treasurer from Margaret for a year or two. Fran offered to put up posters. Once William and Susan have met, Susan will circulate a list of roles that remain to be filled.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Next meeting

Thursday 7th May

Meetings in 2026:

3rd September

3rd December (AGM)

All meetings in person, on Thursdays at 7.15 pm, at Wesley Memorial Church Hall