



**Friends of  
Troopers Hill**

## **NOTE OF MEETING**

**Wesley Memorial Church, Bryants Hill  
Tuesday, 10th November 2009, 7.15pm**

Present: Susan Chair, Jamie (BCC) Rob(WP), Jude (Treas) Bryan, (Cttee) Roy, Alex (Cllr) Fabian (Cllr) Helen (Minutes)

Apologies: Kit, Val, Pete, Gillian, Maureen, Pauline, Margaret.

The minutes of the previous meeting of September 2009 were approved without amendments. All remaining actions to be addressed in the current agenda.

### **Issues and thank yous for our Community Parks Officer, Area Parks Manager and Park Keeper**

#### **works on the replacement fence and gate at Greendown**

Rob said there was still a question over the colour of the tarmac. The red paint proposed had been unsuitable, and when consulted, while most people who responded had no strong opinion that the tarmac should be any colour other than black those few that had a preference said the colour should be left the current black.

A problem had arisen where people continued to walk down the bank leaving an unsightly bare patch, rather than use the new, graduated, safer exit. It was proposed that stout temporary fencing (chestnut palings) would be installed to allow the ground to recover while planting with low shrubs (ideally heather – Chair had collected seeds for growing on) would discourage the use of the “desire line”. Bryan suggested incorporating some boulders into the planting, and it was agreed that the proposal would receive due consideration.

Roy circulated some photos to illustrate the effect of the improvements.

Action: Chair to obtain a plan and timetable for the remaining works from Fiona.

The invoice for the interpretation boards had arrived. FOTH gave Jamie a cheque for the new dog bin (funded by St George Neighbourhood Partnership).

#### **- continued excellent maintenance on the Hill**

Keith was commended for his work on clearing tree and sapling regrowth on various specific areas of the hill. He is using his previous knowledge of the terrain to good effect.

#### **- VOSCUR award**

Jules had shared the award with Ollie Roberts of St Pauls. He had been commended for going beyond the call of duty in his role as park keeper for Local Nature Reserves Troopers Hill, Eastwood Farm and Callington Rd. Examples of his additional contribution included advising Friends' groups on best use of volunteer hours to achieve the management plan, resolving problems in an imaginative and cost effective way, and maintaining the delicate balance of a good relationship with the Friends' groups while addressing his employer's priorities.

#### **- new benches**

Installation of the benches would await Kit's return since his assistance and possibly the Land Rover would be needed to transport materials.

Action: Rob and Kit to arrange dates

### **- soil falling from Troopers Hill on to Troopers Hill Rd**

Jamie had consulted Highways colleagues. He had been told that full resolution of the problem would entail significant engineering works, which would be neither cost-effective nor practicable. An action plan was in prospect to consider less intrusive solutions to deal with the problem incrementally.

### **- review of the management plan**

Chair and WPO in conjunction with Jamie and Gary had reviewed the Plan, with the aim of updating the responsibilities assigned to certain roles which had changed since re-organisation of functions within the Council.

The plans to cut back woodland growth surrounding 'Sally's Glade' had been re-examined. It had been found that the nature of the soil under the trees would probably not support the habitat of the Glade, so that there would be little point extending it further. Accordingly it was proposed to maintain the tree-line as it stands.

The management of mature heathland involves removal of older heather to allow space for new growth. It was considered that since new plants were still spreading from the existing areas, removing the older plants was not an immediate priority. Also with such a small area, 20 acres, an incident such as a fire could destroy large areas of heather making re-growth difficult. Older heather will only be removed on a needed basis in small areas.

The management plan included a dog bin at all entrances to the LNR. The need for a dog bin at the woodland entrance to Sally's Glade was considered unnecessary as the entrance to the site for dog walkers would be Lamb Hill. It was considered prudent to wait and see what use is made of the existing bins before committing to a new bin for the one remaining entrance, the lower of the middle two from Troopers Hill Road.

Providing the path running to Troopers Hill Road with an all-weather surface was not considered to be necessary given that the road provided an alternative route in the worst conditions. The need for improvement would be kept under review.

The management plan would be revised and updated ready for the forthcoming Green Flag submission.

It was clarified that the grant obtained by FOTH for interpretation signs had been for smaller signs than had been installed, Bristol Council were to be responsible for the difference in cost. The expenditure details of the YANSEC grant had been passed to Fiona. Rob confirmed the grant money was intended to fund both materials and labour.

### **Events for next year**

Chair announced that a planning meeting would be held Tuesday 24 November at 7.00, at 3 Corkers Hill. The meeting would follow the format of previous years, in which the distribution of meetings, work parties and events throughout the year would be decided upon. There followed a discussion of possible alternative venues for FOTH meetings that were closer to Troopers Hill than the current venue, namely, Summerhill Methodist Church, Summerhill Club and an upper room at the Air Balloon Tavern.

Action: Susan to i) produce calendar in time for planning meeting [completed at time of writing] and ii) to price alternative venues.

### **- Insurance cover**

It was confirmed that for next year, the Council's insurers had agreed that a Council presence would not always be necessary at FOTH events provided that an appropriately trained person is on hand. A minimal premium of £5 per event would be payable.

## **Play facilities on Troopers Hill Field**

There had been good progress, the precise finishing dates were awaited from the designer. It was expected that the safety fencing would be removed shortly, while work on the felled tree and the stump were still outstanding. The laying of tarmac, chippings, scalping or other free draining surface at the gate to address the large muddy puddle forming at Summerhill Terrace would be done to a similar timescale though it did not form part of the same contract.

It had been observed that the alignment of the goal posts on Troopers Hill Field was perhaps not ideal given the proximity of the climbing equipment and the possible trajectory of footballs.

Action: Susan to raise concern with the project manager.

Susan proposed an event to celebrate the inauguration of the play area on Saturday 5 December at the close of the monthly work party. Scouts would plant a hazel screen and the planting of the last few trees would provide a photo-opportunity.

## **Work parties**

- completed since the last meeting

The sapling cutting and litter pick had commenced on Saturday 3rd October but a deterioration in the weather had halted the work party half way through. Susan thanked Bristol Parks for 25kg of anemone, crocus and daffodil bulbs, the plans to plant bulbs on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November had been rained off, but FOTH had managed, despite more rain, to plant the bulbs at Troopers Hill Field on Saturday 7 November, in just over 40 minutes.

Rob commented that that more work party time had been lost because of rain this year than in any other year since work parties began.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award candidates continued to participate in work parties.

- Next work parties

It was proposed that activities on Saturday 5th December would include sapling planting (see above), installing the new benches (if not done earlier) cutting back bramble and unwanted saplings.

The first work party of 2010 would take place on Saturday 9 January.

## **Events**

The meeting expressed a big vote of thanks to Kit and others for all the hard work involved in organising the Dog show. There had been some indecision on the day about whether to go ahead given the poor weather. Next time Friends intended to be better prepared for carrying on in the event of sudden rain, including protecting the equipment from the weather, Bryan suggested that some of it could be accommodated in the van.

Action: Chair to make donation to Wesley Memorial Church in respect of the loan of their tables for the event.

## **Next events**

Justin Smith would lead a Lichens, mosses and Liverworts walk on 6 December at 10.30 am.

On the afternoon of 6 December FOTH's Annual General Meeting would be held. The meeting would include a review of the year with slides, Kit's new video of the Bugs and Beasties, Accounts, and elections. The meeting would be held in the mid-afternoon in an attempt to attract a wide audience.

The possibility of publicising the event with a door to door leaflet drop was discussed. It was commented that dropping flyers at a lot of houses is labour intensive and it might be preferable to put up more posters.

### **Funding**

- FOTH had applied to the Public and Commercial Services Union South West Regional Fund for a grant and had succeeded in obtaining £50 to be spent on craft materials in support of FOTH events.
- FOTH's share of the proceeds from Beeses Beer Festival amounted to £535, and the meeting expressed thanks to Beeses for their generous contribution.
- Rob explained the scope of the Council's recently announced Wild City project to encourage local communities to access nature on their doorstep, he listed the 7 key sites (The New Cut, Northern Slopes, Hengrove Park Mounds & Hawkfield Meadow, Stoke Park, Callington Road Nature Reserve, Eastwood Farm LNR and Lamplighter's Marsh). The project would also provide support to groups at seven 'network' sites, including Troopers Hill, the others being Lawrence Weston Moor LNR, Narroways Millenium Green, Manor Woods Valley LNR, Stockwood Open Space LNR, Royate Hill LNR and Badock's Wood LNR. Funding had been sought for a person of ecological background who could also organise events, as a potential successor to the post formerly held by Sally Oldfield. FOTH recognised that the project might provide an opportunity to develop outreach leaflets as Susan had suggested at the September meeting in the context of the PCS grant application.

### **Networking**

- The Council's Green Space Plan consultation for the St George area was expected to take place in January 2010. A recent meeting about Dundridge Park had been well attended. The meeting had generated proposals for a more formal park and perhaps a café on the site. It had been recognised that it would be important to protect the wildlife corridor between Dundridge Park and Crews Hole Road.
- Bristol Parks Forum. Rob reported that the forum had discussed the topic of events insurance and sought input on how to get more events happening in Bristol's parks. Ideas had emerged for allowing voluntary groups to manage events budgets. It appeared that FOTH was leading the way in holding events in the parks.
- St George Neighbourhood Partnership. The meeting expressed approval for the latest edition of the newsletter.
- BBC Radio Bristol – Four Friends (Susan, Kit, Chris and Pete) had volunteered to be recorded talking on subjects chosen via Ben Prater's Bingo Balls on 23 November, the recording would be broadcast in sections during the Drive time show that week. The opportunity would be taken to publicise the AGM and other forthcoming events.
- Christmas social. Friends were invited to a social evening on Friday 11 December at 7.00 at Kit and Helen's house.
- Friends of Netham Park had invited the Chair of FOTH members to their recent meetings. She commented that the new play facilities planned for Netham would be impressive and represent an asset to the area. It was remarked that it would be advisable for the two Friends groups to co-ordinate timing of events to avoid potential clashes.

### **Newsletter**

Thanks to Kit for last issue.

- ideas for the next (Winter) issue included encouragement for anyone wishing to provide articles possibly mentioning the PCS and Beeses funding contributions, celebration of this year, Green Down and Play Area.

## **Winter Warmer Appeal**

Jude mentioned that she has volunteered the Modelmania premises as a collection point for blankets food and other donations for the RSPCA's winter appeal.