

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday, 12 October, 2017 7.15pm

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd

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

Apologies: Fabian Breckels (Cllr), Richard, Norman, Amy

1. Approve July minutes

The July minutes were approved.

2. Issues and thank yous for Parks staff.

- Byelaws notices – the new byelaws signs have now been put up at the entrances to Troopers Hill, making it clear which activities are prohibited, which need permission and which are allowed. Troopers Hill Nature Reserve has different signs to other parks in Bristol as this is the only park where barbecues are prohibited. Signs will be put up at the entrance to Troopers Hill Field making it clear that barbecues are allowed on the field. Rob pointed out that drones are not allowed either on the hill or the field. Susan reported that the neighbourhood police officers have not yet been briefed on how they should deal with breaches of the byelaws as the police officer who would have been organising this has now retired. This is now being dealt with.
- Greendown – Susan reported that the hedge at Greendown has been cut. The grass has also been cut and baled, except that the upper section has been missed. This has been raised with Teija in Parks and will be included in the winter works. The bed outside the entrance at Greendown is being dismantled as the logs that were holding it in place are now degrading, and the bed is no longer needed. Joe McKenna's Parkwork team are doing this work. The area will be landscaped.
- Rob mentioned that Parks had done some excellent work in the summer taking out saplings at the top of the gully. Susan has thanked them.
- Winter works – Susan has asked for a meeting with Parks to talk about the winter works. This work includes going over some of the areas with a Scag, edging paths and cutting back scrub so that gradually the grass areas get larger.

3. Work parties and other works:

Rob reported that the weather had been good for the work parties until the last two.

ParkWork work parties take place on the 3rd Thursday of each month. In July ParkWork cleared broom above Sally's Glade and in August they cleared saplings and broom from an area of heather near the gully. It rained in the

morning of the September work party but they still were able to prune the goat willow in the morning and then work on removing the Greendown bed when the weather improved in the afternoon.

The Saturday work party in August cleared bracken that was growing amongst the heather at the end of the gully, and then moved on to taking out saplings and bramble further up the gully. In September the work party took out saplings above Sally's Glade. Unfortunately the October work party was rained off, except for a small amount of litter picking.

- Work parties before the next meeting:
Thursday 19th October and 16th November (with ParkWork)
Saturday 4th November and 2nd December
- Insurance: there had been some concern about whether the Council was still covering volunteers under their insurance if they were not being supervised by a Council employee. This has now been clarified and the insurance does still cover volunteers, as long as the group leaders had received appropriate training from the Council.

4. Projects

- New Little Elizabeth bench: The bench has now been installed, together with the plaque with Elizabeth Emra's name on it, on the post opposite. The plaque had been purchased with funds donated by the Avon Local History Association following a guided walk by Rob last year.
- Ways to Nature: Laurel Miller, Development Officer for the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has responded to our project enquiry to say that HLF would probably not support an application for tarmac paths as this would not be seen as good value for money but the other aspects of the application (fencing, interpretation board, invertebrate survey and revised management plan) could possibly be funded. She mentioned that they have recently funded an Avon Wildlife project that dealt with similar issues and suggested that FOTH contact them to look at possibilities for joint working or to learn from their project. Rob has a contact at Avon Wildlife Trust, Matt Collis, who he and Susan will meet with.

Susan suggested that there are other avenues we can explore for funding for the paths, but as the fencing is the greater priority we should carry on with the application to HLF first. Susan has now spoken to Laurel and received helpful advice. For example, HLF expect some match funding towards project costs but if there are mitigating circumstances that make this difficult then these should be explained as part of the application.

When looking for funding for the paths, Susan will first approach the landfill funds, and then ask the Council about using some Section 106 money for match funding. If the landfill funds turn us down, the next step would be to apply to the Council entirely fund the paths from Section 106 money.

- Natural Learners: Amy contacted Susan to say that, for various reasons, they will not be running Wild Play on the hill in the autumn after all, but will use the winter months to look at the data collected and put together a draft funding proposal for next year. They would then hope to put on more sessions in the spring and summer. Susan said that we have been very happy with the work they did and she has told them, that subject to seeing the application, she would be happy to support their draft proposal for funding.
- Woodland: Paula Spiers, Avon and Frome Valley officer, has some funds available to improve the Avon valley, and has suggested that some of this could be used to improve access to Crews Hole woodland. Rob and Susan walked through the woods with Paula and Becky Belfin and together they came up with the several ideas to improve access. These included improving the path through the woodland where it has been made narrow by overgrown buddleia; putting up a sign at the top of the new path that goes down to Crews Hole road; and opening up an old track that was used when the landfill was tipped onto the hill. The path is partly there but scrub needs to be cleared at the end nearest the top of the hill to make it usable. This would be a gentler path through the woodland and up the hill. Hawthorn could also be thinned in the woodland. A company called 'Greenmantle' have been asked to give a quote for doing this work.
- Defibrillator: Susan has received an email from Didac Ltd, at the Woodwise Academy, to ask if FOTH would be interested in helping to fund a public access defibrillator there. After discussion, it was agreed that we would be happy to offer £100 towards this. Susan will also point Didac in the direction of other organisations that might help fund this.

5. Troopers Hill Field

- Tree maintenance: a mature tree had come down in Troopers Hill Field in September. The tree has been removed but it has left a hole. Susan has asked Leigh Cadogan, Tree Officer, to arrange for this to be filled. Susan has also chased Leigh about other maintenance works needed for the trees on the field, including the removal of the dead ash tree, the recaging of two cherry trees and protection to the trunks of two memorial hornbeam trees which have suffered bark damage,
- Tree sponsorship - Susan has also written to Leigh Cadogan to request that the two trees that we have lost, the ash and the recently fallen tree, be recorded on Bristol City Council's mapping system as trees available for sponsorship
- 1st anniversary of play area: the work party on 7th October (had it not been rained off) was to have included a little celebration of the opening of the new play area which was completed in October 2016.

6. Events

- Last event: the Bugs and Beasties hunt on 12th August went well. It was good that several families came specifically for the event, and there were enough pots and nets this time, with the new ones we had purchased. Elaine came as a volunteer to help with the event which was much appreciated. The RSPB input was also successful. Rod commented that, even though there was not much sun that day, he felt the Astronomical Society did some good outreach work with their solar telescopes as they attracted a lot of interest from people attending the Bugs and Beasties event or coming to wait for the balloons. There were no complaints about litter on the field afterwards and no problems with people trying to use barbeques.
- Next events:
The Fungi Foray on 5th November is already fully booked. Susan was pleased that most people seem to have been made aware of the event by the posters on the hill, or reminded of it by her article in the St George and Redfield Voice. Susan is going to write an article for November's Voice on the winter works and the need for volunteers to help at work parties.

The AGM will take place on 7th December. It was agreed that this would just be a simple meeting followed by a longer period of socialising with coffee/tea and cakes.

Panorama Walk – Rob mentioned that on Tuesday 17th October there is an event on Panorama Walk unveiling a plaque to mark the work done on the path using funding received by Cory. He also mentioned that it is 60th anniversary of the opening of the Avon Valley woodland by Tony Benn.

- Events in 2018. The following programme of events for 2018 was agreed:
 - Star gazing in February or March:
Action: Rod to talk to Fiona at Astronomical Society about this event
Action: Susan to advertise it in January Voice
 - Dawn Chorus with Ed Drewett on 24th March at 5.30 am. This has already been arranged.
 - Avon Valley Walk to be led by Rob as part of Walking Festival in May
 - Bugs and Beasties in August
 - A Geology Walk later in year.
Action: Susan to talk to UWE lecturers about doing a geology walk
 - We will also do a stand at the St Aidan's Church Fayre as usual in March
Action: Susan to find out date of the Fayre

Susan will put together a newsletter and leaflet of events to go out in December and will ask Didac whether they would be kind enough to print these again.

7. Impact of Council Cuts to Parks on Troopers Hill

- Petition: The 'Protect our Parks' petition had reached 3500 signatures, the number required to ensure the Council has to debate the issue, but Rob has

found out that 200 of those signatories are not people living in the affected areas so a few more are needed. There is expected to be some sort of consultation on the plans for Parks in early November.

- Toilets closure: Susan has put in her comments on the effect that the toilet closures would have on Walking for Health groups, like St George Strollers, and has said that there must be alternatives in place before the public toilets are closed, particular in places like the Downs.

Susan added that she attended a boat trip for Walking for Health volunteers and was delighted to realise that there are now 16 volunteer leaders in St George Strollers (although some of these are for back marking only).

8. Awards

We have been assessed as Outstanding for the sixth year running for the RHS and South West in Bloom 'In Your Neighbourhood' award. The Award for Pride in Parks will be announced early next year.

Next meeting

AGM Thursday 7th December at 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road