



Note of FoTH meeting Thursday, 14 November 2013 Summerhill Methodist Church

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Norman (Treas) Kit (Memb Sec), Bryan (Cttee), Clare (Cttee), Jude (Cttee), Margaret (Cttee), Helen (minutes)

Apologies

Fabian, Jules

Minutes of last meeting

Approved with a minor clarification to note that FOTH had withdrawn the grant application to Community Spaces because of time constraints and restrictive conditions.

Issues and thanks for Community Park Keeper, Area Parks Manager and Grounds Maintenance team

Area Parks Manager, Jamie Roberts has asked the landscapes team for a quote to top up the refurbished steps with fill as necessary. As part of the conditions of the Big Lottery grant to improve the steps Bristol City Council agree to maintain the steps for 5 years.

On the previous weekend (9 November) a Community Payback team had cut down scorched broom burnt in fire on the Hill in summer. They piled it up ready to be removed. The work was done on the advice of ecologist Rupert Higgins to remove support for encroaching brambles.

It had been confirmed that the hedge at Greendown was on the list to be cut this winter.

The patches of wear on the Field have not been addressed and it was recognised that relocating the goal posts might provide a solution. Also outstanding was the question of future maintenance to the planted bed just outside the entrance to Troopers Hill at Greendown.

Winter maintenance plans had not been finalised but it was thought likely that they would resemble last year's arrangements. It was acknowledged that the Council budget (to be published for consultation on Monday) might have implications for maintaining local nature reserves.

Troopers Hill Field

The meeting discussed a recent B&Q initiative in association with the Royal British Legion to promote sowing poppy seeds to mark the World War 1 centenary. A Friend had suggested that poppies might be encouraged to grow on Troopers Hill Field. It was agreed that the play area and the bank (previously planted with daffodils) could be suitable. Friends recognised the importance of discouraging the introduction of poppy seeds on Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve.

Action: Chair to write to Denise to explore whether it would be acceptable for seeds to be sown on suitable parts of the Field.

The missing cage for the hornbeam sapling had not been replaced, and it was noted that a hole in the surface near the slide fills with rainwater and becomes a puddle every year.

The Chimneys

Rob reported that the works to the upper chimney had finished and access had been restored to the interior as the structure had been made safe, strengthened at the top and weeds removed from the stone work. The chimney will continue to be monitored to check for evidence of movement. Chair had received positive comments regarding the speed of work and the re-opening.

Contacts with the Press

A recent Press release about the chimneys had not been taken up, but the Bristol Post had published a half-page article about the new audio trail – the first green audio trail in Bristol. (<http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Audio-guideListen-beauty-Troopers-Hill/story-19996256-detail/story.html>). While the reporter was there, someone was seen downloading the trail information, which appears on a poster carrying a QR code. It was proposed that the details [Audio Trail starts here, QR code and logos] could be transferred to a permanent plate at the start of the trail. Friends were asked to think about a possible location. Rob suggested making use of the previous signage fixed on the fence between the Field and the allotments, also displaying the information on a small sign at the entrance from the woodlands, Bryan and Jude mentioned that the trophy shop might provide a source of etching locally. The links to the trail pages were briefly discussed.

Chair reported that Troopers Hill was becoming more widely known. UWE's initiative '80 by 18' (80 things to do by the age of 180 included discovering the rare creatures living on Troopers Hill. The draft text had been sent for consultation, but needed amendments and the photo was outdated. Kit asked about the longevity of the project. Clare had reservations about advertising other organisations' projects. Others had reservations about attracting an influx of people, their potential behaviour and possible damage. Displaying the plaque was not approved. Careful drafting on the leaflet/website material could address the concerns about public transport and constraints due to LNR

Awards - It's Your Neighbourhood

Susan and Kit had gone to the award ceremony at the Mansion House. Susan provided a brief description of the content of the Lord Mayor's speech and its references to volunteers.

Work parties

5th October: 13 volunteers including 2 new people had addressed broom that was encroaching into a grassland area above the entrance E. A small party had revealed fly agaric fungi by cutting back bramble ready for the Fungi Foray. More work was carried out on saplings along the path from the bench to the stand of silver birches.

2nd November: Another new person attended the work party which had removed saplings and bramble above the lower chimney

Next work parties before the next meeting:

7th December – there would be a choice of carrying on from the last time, above Entrance E, or working in Sally's Glade.

4th January (first Saturday of 2014) activities tba.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

Clare reported little change in numbers attending walks since the introduction of a charge which will become a voluntary donation in the next programme. Enough income was available to cover necessary costs. The St George Strollers are planning to use a £650

Wellbeing grant from the St George Neighbourhood Partnership to fund a special walk once per quarter during 2014. It is likely that coaches will be hired for these walks. Fuel costs of coaches are an issue and when quotes are received for all the proposed walks there may have to be a review of plans.

A short discussion took place over the practicalities of printing and laminating posters.
Action: Bryan to display posters in Model Mania.

The Ramblers Association and Macmillan Cancer Care have taken over management of Walking for Health. They had drafted accreditation criteria for Walking for Health walks which appeared over-prescriptive, concentrating particularly on the physical aspects restricting the distance and duration of walks, whereas the Strollers currently take into account the physical, psychological and social benefits as well. The Council co-ordinators of Walk for Health Bristol, the scheme which includes the St George Strollers, will give their views at a workshop in the near future.

Some of the St George Strollers walk leaders will try a Ramblers "shorter walk" to gain an insight of how Ramblers walks are run.

Events

Since our last meeting

Fungi Foray - Sunday 3rd November had attracted a number of new participants, some of whom had heard about the event via Justin's web site, some through FOTH web site, and others from the newsletter. Several people had mistaken the starting point of the Foray, though there had never been a problem before. After some discussion it was suggested that such events should in future start from the Summerhill Terrace entrance, being more easily found than the gate at Malvern Road and now that a tarmac path exists to avoid walking over a boggy Troopers Hill Field in wet weather.

Before our next meeting

The Avon Valley History Walk had been arranged for Sunday 8th December. About eight people had booked so far but extra last-minute bookings expected. Rob had obtained permission to visit the Bath House and the walk would also explore the site of the former Conham copper works.

Action: Chair to e-mail Friends of Avon Valley woodlands re the forthcoming walk.

Susan invited everyone to attend the anniversary of St George Library on Friday morning.

AGM

Rob was compiling a 10-year retrospective. Kit reminded Friends that cakes would be welcome.

Dates for next year set so far

- Chair reported that the events planning meeting had decided on work parties on the first Saturday of every month, and two evening work parties on 23 July and 20 August. The meeting dates were amended to 30 January, 27 March, 29 May, 24 July, 11 September, 6 November and the 2014 AGM on 4 December. The next events planning meeting would be on 30 October 2014. The events dates had been set to avoid any clash with the centenary of Bristol East Allotments (17 August 2014).

- Dates for stargazing on early evenings in January and February would be set nearer to the time and communicated with 24 hours' notice to a list of interested people. The Bristol Astronomical Society would be in the lead and had suggested an age restriction (no children younger than 6).

- A Dawn Chorus walk on 6 April was among the five walks planned for next year, including a Plants walk in May, Fungi Foray already booked for 2 November and a History Walk (to be arranged)
- FOTH expected to support the Good Friday service as usual and the St Aidan's Community Fair.
- The Ambling Band had been asked to consider 3 possible dates for Music on the Hill 2014 (one in August, and two in June).

- Kit had proposed an educational event using birds of prey to demonstrate the food chain, probably on Sunday 5 or Sunday 12 October, it was recognised that risk assessment and permit issues remained to be addressed.

Actions: Chair to seek advice from Ray Barnett about holding a moth night in July (depending on the phase of the moon). Rob to approach Rupert Higgins. Kit to speak to Norman about possible funding, and apply to Tesco for a grant.

More material from Mr George Elliott

Mr Elliott had donated a further batch of photographs (including some duplicates) and documents.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

Rob told the meeting that the number of Twitter followers had reached 176 and Facebook friends numbered 376, the numbers were still steadily increasing. A spate of new followers had been generated following publicity for the proposed traffic changes on Crews Hole and Beaufort Roads.

Newsletter

The Christmas newsletter would be published around the middle of December after the AGM and would recognise the 10-year anniversary of FOTH.

Action: Rob and Kit to discuss layout.