



Note of meeting on Thursday 15 November, 2007

Present:

Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO) Val (Treasurer) Kit (Membership Sec) Fabian Breckels (Cllr) Roy, Jude, Maureen, Phyll, Vernon, Gillian, Pauline, John, Sue (Bristol Parks) Fiona (landscape architect) Helen (minutes)

Apologies

Sally (BCC), John T (BCC), Anne, Ivan.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved. Any outstanding actions to be addressed under the relevant agenda item.

Proposals for Greendown and Crews Hole/Troopers Hill Rd entrances

Fiona, a landscape architect with experience working on designs for other local nature reserves, presented and explained her outline designs and requested comments and other ideas.

Greendown entrance

Brief: to improve, enhance and make the entrances more attractive, incorporating better pedestrian and pushchair safety aspects, using planting to discourage alternative routes down to the road junction

Fiona explained that the improvements might include, for instance, relocating the (new) waste bin and introducing new steps. Her design might cost roughly in the region of £7000 to complete, including excavation and materials. Surfacing was discussed. There was praise for the material that had been used for the access path. The likelihood of the entrance being obscured in future by parked cars was contemplated and it was concluded that the proposed repositioned entrance could be safer. It was noted that space would be needed for a redesigned information board and optionally two more. There was some discussion about the balance of providing information boards with the smallest practicable visual intrusion on the Hill. Friends were asked to consider how far up Greendown the new fence should extend.

Entrance at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Crews Hole Road

The design was intended to move the entrance away from the Grade II listed chimney stack, enhancing its setting, reducing visual clutter and creating a space around the chimney with hard standing and room for an interpretation board. It would include measures to prevent erosion of the bank. The need to protect the stack from vandalism was emphasised.

It was noted that both designs incorporated metal estate fencing and it might be desirable to use the same materials for both entrances. The meeting debated the use of natural wood vs metal fencing, and the issues discussed included appearance, cost, durability, formality, expense of replacement, maintenance issues and the long term legacy effects. There was no clear consensus. It was mentioned that introduction of changes to these two entrances would be out of context with the style of the other entrances. A phased approach to replacing them was proposed.

The Chair offered the opportunity for anyone interested to examine the plans in context immediately following the next work party on Saturday 1 December 2007.

Plans for winter works

John Threadgold forecast that all the winter vegetation and tree work would be completed, weather permitting, by the end of January 2008. The works would include clearing trees in the gully, and trees west of the west-facing bench. Broom encroaching into grass area would be controlled at an early stage of growth. Rob circulated photographs of areas for the proposed work.

Timber works would proceed as Julian could fit it in. Julian was also carrying out restoration work to the path parallel to Troopers Hill Road, with the construction of a custom-built 4m steel and timber faced bridge, having a non-slip surface.

It was recognised that not everyone agreed with removing all the trees from certain areas. There followed a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of cutting down trees within the heathland/grassland zone of the hill, during which a range of views were expressed. The importance of preserving the heathland of the hill from the successive stages of broom, bramble, scrub and eventually woodland was emphasised and agreed, as it was important to conserve the rare insects that inhabit the nature reserve.

Notices had been posted on the Hill explaining the work and that it was the Council's responsibility.

Any issues on Troopers Hill to be passed to John

The location and appearance of the new bin was discussed, and it was accepted that there had been certain reasons for placing it where it is. There was a request for it to be sprayed green.

Action: John T to consider whether the bin can be painted green.

Next Events

Work Party on 1 December, 10.00am followed by viewing of the proposals for the new entrances in situ. Afternoon Social at Kit and Helen's house (American style pot-luck). This was also be the closing date for the photographic competition, and the trophies were displayed at the meeting.

The FOTH AGM will take place on Tuesday 11 December, all welcome.

Events for 2008

Susan circulated a summary of the planning meeting held earlier in the month. No-one at the meeting foresaw any problems with the proposed meeting dates. Kit confirmed the date for the autumn Dog Show.

It was announced that there would be four newsletters next year, one during each of the four seasons. The meeting expressed praise for the current issue of the newsletter.

Networking

St George Neighbourhood Partnership was being revived. Susan had given a very good talk at their first meeting. The focus of the Partnership would be changing in order to provide positive assistance to the benefit of other community groups. It would meet three times a year and FOTH members were welcome to attend.

The remaining agenda items were dropped in view of time constraints.