



Note of FOTH meeting 24 July 2014 Methodist Church, Summerhill

Present: Susan (Chair) Rob (WPO) Kit (Memb Sec) Clare (Cttee - WFH) Jude (Cttee), Elaine, Keith, Rod, Roy, Steve, Helen (minutes)

Apologies: Bryan (Cttee), Margaret (Cttee) Fabian (Cllr), Steve P (Cllr).

The (amended) note of the March meeting and the note of the May meeting were agreed,

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

- Currently, in the absence of the Area Parks Manager, the issue of maintenance to address the progressive wear to the steps on Troopers Hill remained unresolved.

- It was noted that some of the wooden fences and kissing gates were nearing the end of their useful life. The Environment sub-group of the Neighbourhood Partnership had agreed in principle to add Troopers Hill to the list of applications for section 106 funds.

- -An appeal for help in maintaining the planting at the Greendown entrance had not resulted in any replies, and the meeting concluded that the bed would be maintained periodically at work parties.

- The majority of responses to the dog waste and behaviour survey favoured replacing and varying posters (including those designed by Beaver scouts- see below), providing free dog-poo bags, and training classes for dog owners. Susan proposed to apply for a grant for spray paint for another audit of the dog waste, and to offer dog owners a free 'taster' training session. FoTH members expressed some misgivings, but eventually agreed it might be worth trying. Kit suggested that progress should be made in co-operation with Friends of St George Park. Some discussion ensued of the mechanics of the grant application and the details of organising the session. Rob suggested that some other event should be held alongside as an additional attraction.

Action: Chair to submit grant application and liaise with Friends of St George Park.

- On the subject of It's your Neighbourhood and Country Park judging, the St George in Bloom entries had been judged. The judging for RHS Best Park or Country Park was awaited [note – occurred on 19 August]. The results of the judging were expected in September.

- Susan commented on replacing the illustrated metal plates on the Fun Learning Trails, where necessary, with laminate replicas. Suggestions included making them less visible to deter theft/vandalism, reducing them to fit, or painting the image directly onto the surface.

- It was noted that Julian (Community Park Keeper) was expected to leave his employment in September, and possibilities for marking the occasion were discussed.

- It was agreed that the recent flail cut had left the Greendown hedge looked severely shorn and concerns were expressed that the cut had occurred during the bird nesting

season. The residents had been told that the hedge would be cut at the end of the season. Susan described the e-mail correspondence that had ensued, and that the contractors would have to be reminded about working outside the bird nesting season. Steve explained that the best method for avoiding damage to a hedge is cutting by hand rather than a flail cut.

Action: Chair to ask the Conservation Officer about part flailing or alternatives to flailing and the right time of year for a hedge cut.

- The meeting agreed with Rob's proposal that in view of planned building work at the junction of Greendown with Troopers Hill Road, Saturday work parties from the beginning of 2015 should meet at the Troopers Hill Field entrance.

- There had been two recent reports of roe deer sightings.

Troopers Hill Field

- Susan had bought Hammerite paint for the slide. The meeting declined the suggestion of also painting the metal benches. The wooden bench at Little Elizabeth's view also needed maintenance.

Action: Susan to arrange a date and seek volunteers. WPO to investigate options for sanding/oiling the bench.

- A log from the Field had been rolled downhill to rest against the hedge by the Westleigh care home. It was suggested that replacing and securing the log might be a suitable task for corporate volunteers (Lloyds Bank – see below).

Work parties

- Since the last meeting: The morning of 7 June had begun wet, a small party had taken out saplings on the allotment side of the path between Greendown and the Field, and in Sally's Glade.

- The 5 July work party had attracted a good turn out in better weather. Participants had removed bracken and maintained the hedge at the the Greendown entrance.

On 23 July, a warm evening, a small number of volunteers removed saplings from the Gully area.

- Before the next meeting: 2 August (morning), 20 August (evening), 6 September (evening). Lloyds Bank have confirmed possible dates for a volunteer work party on either 1 October or 8 October 2014. A previous visit by Lloyds Bank resulted in a donation of £65. The Unum company had approached FOTH to arrange a corporate day, and had been directed to the relevant page on the web site. Rob reported that another two Community Payback sessions had been requested, to undertake gorse removal.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

- Clare reported that apart from during the hottest weather, the numbers of participants had not fallen, and new walkers were still joining in small numbers. The availability of one of the walk leaders had been limited by other commitments. A recently recruited walk leader had finished training. The Donations question more or less settled.

- A walk leader had visited Weavers Mill housing development on Blackswarth Rd. There were comments on the poor road safety and footway provision within the development. The Strollers had obtained permission to put Walking for Health posters on the housing association notice board, aiming to attract residents to explore the surrounding area, initially via one or two walks starting closely to Weavers Mill, and

perhaps one walk each season, the walkers' contributions being covered by the housing association. Keith and others discussed the links between the Macmillan charity and Walking for Health.

Events

Since our last meeting:

- Music on the Hill, featuring The Ambling Band on Saturday 21 June, was described as possibly FOTH's best concert so far. Rod queried the timing. Kit supported a view that the next event should start at least half an hour to an hour later. It was acknowledged that hearing the music prompts some people to attend. The event had attracted £120 in donations. The meeting debated the expense and availability of the band and while it was agreed that the Ambling Band could be asked to perform again, it would not be in 2015.

- Bookings for the night-time moth hunt on Friday 18 July had been disappointing, and only 10 attended. The event had run from 9.30pm to almost midnight. The weather had been favourable. The experts used a single light trap to identify 68 species of moth, some of which were nationally notable. The moths captured included the True Lovers Knot moth which feeds on heather. The numbers attending were less important than having the survey completed. It was agreed that the event should be repeated, not too soon, but before the elapse of another eight years.

- Chair thanked the volunteers Rob, Kit, Margaret and Helen, who had run the Eastwood Farm dog show on 13 July. It was acknowledged that numbers of participants had been affected by a lack of publicity. The contribution to FOTH funds of £700 from Beese's Bar and Tea Gardens was welcomed.

- Scouts Beavers and Cubs from the St Aidan's (159th Bristol) Troop visited the Hill on 9 July, the hosts were Rob, Susan, Kit, Steve and Chris. They made posters, tested the tree trail and installed bug and bird boxes, earning environmental credits. It was thought preferable, in future, to arrange separate events for each group.

Before our next meeting:

- Family Fun Picnic on Saturday 9 August. Volunteers were asked to attend from 3.30 onwards to put up gazebos and a table displaying insects etc already captured.

Action: Chair to count pots and ensure nets in good order

- Fungi foray (October) – all the possible replacements were fully booked and could not suggest anyone else, so the event would be cancelled. The fee would be donated to the trust set up in memory of Justin Smith.

Further ahead:

- Star Gazing: Chair had contacted the secretary of the Bristol Astronomical Society about suitable dates in February and March 2015. The application would be considered at the Society's September meeting. Rod indicated that the application would be looked on favourably. The Dark Skies application was still to be arranged. Rod explained the advantages of the Troopers Hill site for star gazing.

Networking

- The Green Capital Partnership had funds available and it was proposed to apply for money to produce a map illustrating the connections between green spaces in St George and possibly to pay for certain surveys.

- St George Neighbourhood Partnership Environment sub-group was responding to a city-wide decision that NPs should have greater influence in the management of parks.
- Funding from Beeses was £700
- Donations collected in Dig totalled £19.95
- Kingswood History Group had donated £30 donation after Rob gave an illustrated talk,
- Susan circulated greetings cards designed and made by a local artist, showing a view of Troopers Hill. The meeting agreed that FOTH could offer them for sale at £1.50 each at future events, including Redfest and the Community Fair. It was suggested that Modelmania, Dig In and Grounded might be willing to sell the cards on FOTH's behalf.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

The numbers of 'Facebook 'friends' and Twitter followers were still rising. One follower 'urban birding' had posted many photographs of butterflies taken on The Hill.

Newsletter

Thanks were expressed to Kit for the varied and interesting Summer news letter, It was proposed that the next issue (September) might contain an article about Julian and mention the availability of cards for sale.

Next Meeting

Thursday 11th September, 7.15pm in the back room at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd.