



Note of Meeting: Thursday 26 July 2013

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road, St George, Bristol

Present

Susan (Chair), Rob (Work Party Organiser), Kit (Memb Sec), Margaret (Cttee), Fabian (Cllr), Steve Pearce (Cllr) Denise (Bristol Council), Keith, Steve B, Stephen, Helen (minutes).

Apologies

Jude & Bryan, Norman, Elaine, Julian

Minutes of the previous meeting (May 2013)

The meeting note was accepted without amendments.

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

- Rob was awaiting a date to meet Jamie Roberts to discuss maintenance of steps on Troopers Hill.

- Keith asked about the prospects for waymarking the route of the steps up from Crews Hole Road through the woodland. Rob confirmed that the route established by Community Payback was a preliminary to further development of a path, possibly with the aid of a grant for steps improvement.

- Steve B mentioned that a dog fouling notice near the path by Greendown is being obscured by growth of hedge which should be cut back or the notice moved to the gate.

- The hay cut on the grass near Greendown had been postponed in light of the possible fire hazard from drying hay. Jules had left bracken uncut to providing creatures with a respite from the current heat.

- Recent fires had included a small fire by a bench on Troopers Hill Field close to the entrance from Troopers Hill Field, followed two days later by a bigger fire, and later still by another blaze on the Hill which spread down through broom towards Sally's Glade. The fire service had been responsive to reports of fires and smouldering. FOTH had created posters carrying a low key message, then on advice from the fire service, had introduced a larger fire prevention poster and provided disposal pouches for cigarette butts.. Copies of the posters were circulated at the meeting. The possible causes of fires were discussed, including cigarette ends, barbecues, and discarded glass. Whilst the fires would probably cause no long term harm to flora, fires that became out of control represented a potential risk to adjoining residential streets. Any wildlife killed in fires, particularly invertebrates, might not return because this important site is an island in an urban setting with no other nearby colonies of some species.

Denise thought it might be worth proposing a press release about fire risk for local nature reserves in general.

Action: Denise to find out whether parks in Bristol would be closed in the event of the Natural England Fire Severity Index reaching level 5.

Action: Rob to respond to the current consultation on byelaws with a proposal to prohibit barbecues and other open fires on local nature reserves.

- Steve P referred to the resource at Bristol Zoo Gardens for preserving rare/valuable plant species, the benefits for community outreach, and the possibility of funding for this type of conservation, suggesting that specimens from Troopers Hill might be collected for future propagation in case of loss by fire. It was recognised that the flora of Troopers Hill, though locally uncommon, was not, in general, nationally rare or threatened.

Action: Susan to consult experts on the value of this proposal.

- SB asked for a request to be passed to Jules (in anticipation of the award of a new annual Green Flag) to create a path through the tall grass to the flagpole before the next Work Party.

Action: Kit to bring spanners to the Work Party.

- Chair reported correspondence with Bristol Ramblers about stickers marking the South Bristol Way that had been placed on the woodland trail marker on Troopers Hill. The Ramblers had apologised. Rob suggested a more appropriate position for the Ramblers' waymarkers, and preferred permanent plates over stickers. It was agreed that FOTH and Ramblers might visit the site together to discuss waymarking options.

- Rob reported that the date of the Mayor's visit (postponed from July) had been confirmed for 8 August. The Mayor would tour St George, spending half an hour at Troopers Hill. It would be preferable if he was escorted from Greendown to Malvern Road, and those attending would need to recognise that timings were likely to be flexible.

- Susan briefly reported on the incident of 18 June that had resulted in a visit from emergency services (Air Ambulance, all terrain ambulance, and fire and rescue). There followed a short discussion about access for emergency services.

Action: Steve B to hold a key to the contractors' gate at Greendown.

Troopers Hill Field

- Erosion of the grass surface at the football goals had not yet been addressed.

Action: Susan/Rob to contact Dave Cambridge about including it in the current works programme.

- No paint had yet been obtained for renovating the slide possibly during an evening work party.

Denise suggested contacting Dulux for sponsored paint but quantities are small and will need to be of the Hammerite type so the Friends will use their own funds.

The Chimneys

- Repair work to the lower stack was said to be almost complete, with one more element remaining to be done. The metal street name plates had been removed for renovation and were due to be replaced soon.

- The condition of the top chimney was still being monitored. It was intended that the results of the monitoring would contribute to a plan of work, and a grant application might be necessary to pay for renovations.

Green Dog Walkers Scheme

- South Gloucestershire Council have introduced a scheme in which dog walkers commit to clear up after their dogs, wear an indicator of their involvement, and carry spare bags to offer to others. The St George Neighbourhood Partnership Environment Sub-group was due to discuss a similar proposal, for an area wider than just Troopers Hill. Publicity material would be available from Falkirk Council on payment of a licence fee.

Action: Rob to initiate discussions with other neighbourhood groups.

Denise mentioned the current city-wide approach to a dog fouling campaign. Thanks were expressed to Denise for supply of a poop scoop. The meeting discussed issues of personal safety and confrontation when challenging dog owners.

Progress on the "Stepping Forward" grant

A web page for the Tree Trail was shortly to be constructed. The Fun Learning Trail had been completed and FOTH were encouraging Scouts to use it. Kit was waiting to hear from Rupert Higgins about recording a contribution to the Audio Trail, other contributors' recordings had been completed. He was aiming to finish the project by September.

It's Your Neighbourhood

The meeting thanked Norman and Clare for supporting at the It's Your Neighbourhood visit. Gratitude was also expressed to Denise for assisting the judge. Troopers Hill had been entered for a best website award, also for competitions for the best Local Nature Reserve and best Nature Conservation. The results would be announced in Truro on 19 September 2013. Rob received praise for the excellence of the Troopers Hill website. An announcement of the results of this year's Green Flag awards was expected in the week ahead.

Recent work parties

- 1st June – work in Sally's Glade included clearing bramble and saplings.
- 6th July - Sally's Glade: volunteers cut back brambles and saplings but effort was limited by the exceptionally hot weather.
- 17th July - The evening work party attracted a low turnout on a very hot evening. Work concentrated on removing saplings growing amongst heather in the Gully.

Work parties before the next FOTH meeting

- The 3rd August work party would coincide with the date for Red Fest and the activities would include bracken removal.
- An evening work party is planned for Wednesday 14th August.
- 7th September – to be arranged. Kit would supervise.

Volunteering

A volunteers' information page had been created on the Troopers Hill web site for reference by individual and corporate volunteers. Kit and Chris Steele had kindly offered to host a visit from Badminton School pupils in September. The school had agreed to a £100 donation.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

- Susan reported the good news that an additional walk leader had been recruited recently. The group had over 90 people on its mailing list and up to a maximum of 36 had attended individual walks, in an age range up to the eighties. The Strollers were currently charging participants £2 per walk with the aim of covering running costs (for example, walk leaders' expenses, room hire and publicity) that are not normally eligible for grant funding. Sources of grant were discussed, including the

Neighbourhood Partnership. Denise mentioned a possible charity application linked to the NHS Trust.

Action: Denise to provide Susan with contact details.

Events – Since the last meeting

- Music on the Hill - Saturday 22nd June. The Ambling Band had been cancelled because of a poor weather forecast (strong winds and rain) but had not charged a fee.
- Hanham Natural History Group: Rob had led a guided walk. The route had included the historic bath house. The garden above the bath house had changed ownership since the last visit. The HNHG made a donation of £25.

Events - Future

- Family Fun Picnic - Saturday 10th August. A Craft leader and Rupert Higgins had been booked. A Toilet tent had been ordered to be delivered and picked up on the same evening.
- Rob outlined the route for the Avon Valley walk on 8 December which will take in the Bath House. It was emphasised that booking would be essential.

Donation of Historical Research

Mr George Elliott had donated further documents including an interesting photograph of the lagoon being created at Eastwood Farm (circulated for viewing). Steve P commented on the origins of the farm, dating from the 16th Century. He contributed suggestions for conservation and further distribution of the material. Steve B commented on his relationship to persons named in a recently donated newspaper article.

Action: Rob to give prints to Steve B for scanning (front and back to capture annotations). Margaret's kind offer to transcribe notes was noted.

The meeting discussed and approved Norman's suggestion that FOTH might apply to have the Bull Inn designated as a Community Asset, which would confer a six-months' notice period in advance of sale, in which to develop a bid. The meeting also commented on the transfer of anti-social behaviour to the riverside.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

Rob reported that the total of Facebook friends had reached 272, and Twitter followers numbered 128.

Newsletter

It was noted that a recent newsletter had contained an excellent article on fire and regeneration issues. It was suggested that another fires article might appear in the next newsletter. Other ideas for articles included: Plant Survey, Audio Trail, and George Elliott's further donation of historic documents.