

**Note of Meeting****Thursday, 31 May 2012****Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road, Bristol.****Present**

Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Kit (Memb Sec) Clare (Walking), Jules (BCC) Roy, Russell, Chris, Elaine, Helen (minutes).

Apologies

Jude & Bryan, Margaret, Denise, Fabian, Jackie

Approve previous minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were approved without amendment

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

Jules had been strimming the edges of paths above the lower chimney stack without making the site look like a park. The recent lush growth of vegetation had helped. There was discussion about the extent of clearing bramble. Clearing nettles at the sides of DOE path was not regarded as a high priority. Clare asked about Japanese knotweed control. This is addressed by spot treatment by Jules and the Parks team address larger areas of infestation.

In Denise's absence there was no progress to report on the leylandii at Mama Bear's Nursery.

Susan asked for her action to speak to a flail driver about the Greendown hedge maintenance to be carried forward. Chris suggested a contact (Rob Stevens) for further thoughts about hedge maintenance.

Roy reported breakage to one of the information displays.

The Green Flag judging would take place on 18 June. The judges would be escorted by Susan, Kit and Jules, aiming to demonstrate continuous improvement. Rob advised that the contractors intended to finish the steps before the Green Flag judging.

Two trees had fallen in high winds at Troopers Hill Field. Contractors had damaged the access gate at Malvern Road, and the repairs had rendered it difficult for wheelchair users to operate (photographs were circulated) and possibly facilitated motor cycle access. The problem had been reported to the Council it was hoped that a remedy would be found in time for the Green Flag judging, in the meantime installation of the new sign at that location would be postponed.

Trees that were planted on Troopers Hill Field in 2011 have been mulched and straps re-adjusted (maintenance).

Jules confirmed that the rubbish on hillside seen above Mama Bear's nursery would not be there for the Green Flag judging.

The meeting thanked Chris for taking away litter from the Hill on many recent occasions. She reported that 'parties' on the Hill on Friday and Saturday nights left large amounts to be cleared up on the following mornings. It was suggested that PCSOs might include this in their rounds on Friday and Saturday nights.

Action: Susan to make request to police.

There were indications that fires had been lit on important grassland in several places, and options for deterrent signs were discussed.

Progress on the "Stepping Forward" grant

Rob reported that some of the fine stone laying had begun and the contractors were expected to continue next week. The budget was approximately on track taking into account Community Payback costs offset by the ecologist's report charging less than anticipated. A contingency remained to be spent on another scheme (£2600) maybe for re-designing an interpretation board.

Review of Troopers Hill Field interpretation board

Rob circulated a draft for the THF interpretation board showing the new woodland walks, he invited comments by the end of the following week. Kit said Lamb Hill should be identified and there was support for identifying the Local Nature Reserve separately. Further discussion ensued which included the merits of installing a litter bin near the lower stack, and whether the contingency fund would cover it. Roy emphasised that the map should be made simple so that newcomers would understand it. The design style was much appreciated by all present. Rob thanked Chris for providing the textual amendments,

Jules identified a potential conflict between Green Flag pre-judging posters and 'next event' publicity notices. The meeting discussed ways of integrating the information.

Sustainability grant - Meetings with teachers from Air Balloon Hill and Summerhill schools.

An application was under way for £3500 of sustainability grant. Schools had been inexact about what they wanted. One teacher wanted to be trained as a Forest Schools Leader but a different source of funding had been identified. Resources for teachers had been volunteered by Isobel (Forest Schools Leader). Orienteering stencil designs for the steps was one possibility. The meeting discussed options for leaflets, including a different leaflet with a new map done, one to cover Troopers Hill Field and the walking amenities through the woodland; alternatively a leaflet offering activities e.g. insect and tree identification were discussed and the disadvantages identified. A downloadable audio guide was considered preferable. The meeting decided that an internet address should be included on the interpretation board in advance of the audio guide becoming available.

Action: Rob to approach the Neighbourhood Partnership for funding to re-print existing leaflets.

Work parties

Activities completed since the last meeting included a work party on Saturday, 7 April (continued the work started by Community Payback at the west end of 'Sally's Glade') and another on Saturday, 5 May (clearing bramble in 'Sally's Glade'). In addition, independent litter picking had been undertaken by some Friends (especially Chris). On Monday 16 April, Defra Biodiversity team members had participated in a volunteering day, clearing tree saplings from grassland and heathland. Gratitude was expressed to Kit and David Read for accompanying the Defra participants.

Volunteers at the Parks Forum Park Clean Up Day on Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 May had filled nine black bags with litter from the River Avon Trail, St Anne's Woods and Nightingale Valley.

Before the next meeting, work parties were proposed as follows

Saturday, 2 June - to clear bracken from the top of the steps at entrance E.

Saturday, 7 July a leader would be needed.

David and Kit and Chris volunteered to accompany a work party of pupils from Badminton School on a weekday afternoon in September.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update.

Clare expressed her delight at reaching the first anniversary of the group, celebrated on Monday 23 May after an enjoyable walk attended by 36 people (including leaders). Ed Drewitt had led a walk with natural history comments and additional observations. A meeting afterwards had discussed plans for next year. It emerged that walkers would be prepared to contribute £2 per person per walk to cover basic costs in the absence of grant funding. Russ said that commentary from the local St George walk leaders were found more interesting than other walk leaders. Many of the walks had been so popular that walkers had voted for repeat walks.

Funding

Susan reported on the application for St George West Community First Funding for the next year which had passed the first hurdle. A Government scheme was available to help deprived neighbourhoods, the amounts being just over £5000 for the previous year and £8000 for the current year, as long as volunteer involvement can be proved. The value of volunteer hours enabled an application for £1800 including Walking for Health for another year (the Quartet funding having ended) and a Family Fun dog show. The Walking for Health funding covers special walks, replacing display boards, cost of leaflets &c. A recommendation had been passed to the Community Development Foundation for approval. Jules queried the funds spent on publicity as mailings are done for some groups by the council Sports Development Officer. It was explained that St George Strollers prefer to put out a colour version of their programme so will print their own programme. The Sports Development Officer will then mail it. The St George Strollers have reviewed the mailing list so that only people without access to email will receive hard copies from now on. People who do not attend walks will be removed from the circulation list,

after 6 months. Posters advertising the walk are on display in at least 20 locations in St George, including doctors' surgeries and the walks are advertised on our website.

Clare said she was grateful to Margaret for all the help with the Walking for Health database and to others, for all the assistance willingly lent.

Events

Since our last meeting

The Good Friday service took place on Friday 6 April, perhaps less well attended than in previous years.

Family "Walk"shops were held on Sunday 8 April (Easter Sunday) to prompt and gather waymarking design ideas for the Stepping Forward trails.

The Dawn Chorus Walk on Saturday 14 April was led by Ed Drewitt.

On 17 May Rob gave a talk to the Fountain Ladies' group at the Summerhill club, and received a donation of £20. One or two of the group had recalled fond memories of Troopers Hill and mentioned that they would welcome new members
A Tree Gazing Walk on Sunday 20 May was led by Tony Titchen.

Before our next meeting

On 1 June , 600 pupils from Air Balloon Hill Primary School would visit Troopers Hill in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The procession would start at 10.30 am and it was envisaged that some traffic congestion could result. Jules, Susan, Rob and Kit would attend the event.

Music on the Hill on Saturday 16th June. The band (SoGYJO – South Gloucestershire Youth Jazz Orchestra) was booked between 6:00pm and 8:00. Volunteers would be needed to set up gazebos. The meeting debated Chris's request to canvass for the Avon Wildlife Trust at the event, and it was agreed that the forthcoming Dog Show would provide a better opportunity.

Rob would be leading a Sunset Stroll on Wednesday 11th July at 7.00pm

Facebook/website update

The Troopers Hill Facebook page had achieved 115 'likes'. Rob invited suggestions for any changes and additions. Jules suggested either that the link to the website forum should be highlighted or that the forum might be transferred to the Facebook page. Others commented on the permanence of forum posts versus the transience of comments on Facebook.

Newsletter

Susan had obtained £72 worth of stamps for mailing newsletters, before the recent rise in price. The next newsletter would be issued before 16 June to publicise Music on the Hill. Chris volunteered an article on litter picking, Rob would provide Green Flag and Stepping Forward items, Clare would write on the Birthday Walk and Jules said he would compose a Diary item.

Any Other Business

Susan had been approached about another memorial bench. The meeting discussed the problems (vandalism, inappropriate planting and disrespect of flowers) of putting identifiable memorials on the Hill. Additional trees on the Field would be preferable. It was suggested that the riverside path could benefit from more benches. The final decision on memorials would be for Bristol Parks.

Next Meeting

Thursday 4th October, 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd.