



**Friends of
Troopers Hill**

Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve

Design Brief for Entrance Improvements September 2007

Introduction

Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve is in St George, East Bristol overlooking the River Avon. It is one of only two sites in Bristol to have been awarded a Green Flag for 2007/8. Extensive information on the site and directions are available on the Friends of Troopers Hill website at www.troopers-hill.org.uk The site is owned by Bristol City Council.

Friends of Troopers Hill are seeking funding to improve two of the entrances to the reserve from Troopers Hill Road. An initial application for grant funding of £1,800.00 has been made to fund the necessary design work. A further application will be made later in the year for the cost of carrying out the works. It may be necessary to apply for this funding as a budget figure prior to the design being completed. A figure of £18,000 has been suggested. Investigation of improvements to the entrances is objective 7.2.10.6 in the Site Management Plan.

Friends of Troopers Hill wish to be involved in the design process and will ensure that local residents are consulted. It is envisaged that a public meeting will be held to discuss the design; plans and drawings will be posted on the Friends of Troopers Hill website and comments will be invited via the 'Friends Forum'. One member of Friends of Troopers Hill will be appointed as the point of contact between the group and the designer. The final design will also need approval by Bristol Parks who have responsibility for maintenance and for safety on the site, communication will be via John Threadgold (CPM) and Sally Oldfield (LNRO).

There are seven entrances to Troopers Hill LNR, for ease of reference the Management Plan for the site refers to these as entrances A to G. The site features plan shows the locations of the entrances, it can be downloaded from <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/Map%203%20Site%20Features.pdf>

Entrances C & F are the subject of this brief. Entrance C is at the corner of Greendown (a cul de sac) and Troopers Hill Road. It is the second most used entrance and the proposed location for the flag pole from which the Green Flag will be flown. Entrance F is near to the corner of Troopers Hill Road and Crews Hole Road. It is adjacent to an early nineteenth century chimney which is Grade 2 listed and was part of an engine house for Troopers Hill Colliery.

There is no car parking provided at Troopers Hill LNR. The majority of users are local and arrive on foot. Visitors arriving by car park on adjacent roads – there is no intention to provide car parking spaces. The possible provision of cycle racks should be considered as part of the design. Due to the topography of the site there is no prospect of the paths leading from the entrances being made suitable for wheelchair users. Use by wheelchair users does not therefore have to be incorporated into the design.

The extent to which adjacent fences are replaced will be dependent of the final design, the new fencing should either tie into the existing fence or run into scrub areas where this is sufficient to prevent motorcycle access.

Current Condition

Both entrances currently have wooden kissing-gates with wooden post and rail fences. The gates and fences were installed as part of a Bristol Development Corporation project in 1991. The primary purpose of the fencing was to prevent access for motorcycles; prior to 1991 the hill was open to Troopers Hill Road with unrestricted access possible at any point.

The fence and gates are life expired. Many of the fence posts are rotten at ground level and are only held upright by the fence rails and adjacent posts. There has been selective replacement of rotten and broken fence rails over the past three years. The gate at Entrance C has had temporary repairs and a new gate post has been installed at Entrance F. Part of the fence adjacent to Entrance F has been removed since bramble that has grown behind the fence now provides sufficient barrier to motorcycles. A natural hedge (mainly hawthorn & blackthorn) was planted behind the fence running along Greendown in January 2005; it is intended that this will replace the fence in the long term.

Both entrances open directly on to the road, there is no footpath. Troopers Hill Road has a 30 mph speed limit and a 5T weight limit (except for access) both of these limits are frequently ignored by drivers. With increased use of the site following recent improvements and the award of the Green Flag the safety of pedestrians using the entrances is a major concern.

Photographs of Entrance C can be seen here: <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/entranceC07.htm>

Photographs of Entrance F can be seen here: <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/entranceF07.htm>

Requirements at Entrance C

The main criteria for the design of Entrance C are that it should:

- ◆ Provide a welcoming and attractive entrance to the site;
- ◆ Be visible from Troopers Hill Road to attract visitors;
- ◆ Prevent access by motorcycles and horses;
- ◆ Allow safe access for pedestrians to or from Troopers Hill Road;
- ◆ Allow access for people with child buggies;
- ◆ Have an appearance that is appropriate for a Local Nature Reserve;
- ◆ Provide a suitable setting for future site interpretation boards;

Two paths lead away from this entrance; the first heads north-west and towards the top of the hill. This path has steps but is the least steep route to the top of the hill from Troopers Hill Road. It is occasionally used by people with young children in child buggies. Currently the buggies have to be lifted over the gate or fence. Since the gate is close to the edge of the road the need to take children out of the buggy creates a safety issue.

The second path leads to the south-west parallel to Troopers Hill Road, there are steep steps further down this path. Both paths are also used as part of circular routes around the hill, any design should ensure that people using this route do not have to pass through any gates.

Provision of cycle racks outside the fence should be considered but is not essential. The use of cycles on the site is not prohibited but is discouraged, currently there is nowhere that people arriving by bike can securely leave their machines.

There is currently an information board fixed to the fence with an A4 clip frame. It is intended that this should be replaced with a similar but larger sign that would be of a free standing pedestal type. Up to three further interpretation boards may be installed in the future. Ideally visitors should be able to read at least the first sign from a position away from the road but prior to passing through a gate. The design should aim to make it obvious to people driving down Troopers Hill Road that this is an entrance to a public open space and encourage them to visit. It is intended that the flag pole will be located inside the site some 20m behind the current location of the gate.

The design should take account of the long term aim to remove the Greendown fence once the hedge has grown to form an adequate barrier.

Requirements at Entrance F

The main criteria for the design of Entrance C are that it should:

- ◆ Provide a welcoming and attractive entrance to the site;
- ◆ Prevent access by motorcycles and horses;
- ◆ Allow safe access for pedestrians to or from Troopers Hill Road;
- ◆ Have an appearance that is appropriate for a Local Nature Reserve;
- ◆ Provide an attractive and appropriate setting for the Grade 2 listed chimney;
- ◆ Provide a suitable setting for future site interpretation boards;

The path leading from this entrance is via a steep set of steps, there is no requirement for access with child buggies.

The main concern at the moment is the danger to users from traffic on Troopers Hill Road. Bristol City Council Highways have indicated to the local Councilor that some minor works funds may be available to provide a short length of footway to improve safety. The designer would need to liaise with the Highway Dept on this issue.

Many pedestrians using this entrance walk from Crews Hole Road. Currently there is a 'short cut' onto Troopers Hill Road adjacent to the chestnut palings around the chimney. This route is particularly dangerous and the design should ensure this is prevented.

As with Entrance C the information board currently fixed to the fence is due for replacement with a larger sign. At least one interpretation board giving historical information about the chimney is also likely to be installed.

An improvement to the setting of the Grade 2 listed chimney is one of the main aims of the project. As well as the chimney itself there are the remains of the walls of the building still visible. Work is currently in hand to carry out repairs to prevent further deterioration of the structure. Access to cut bramble and scrub that grows around the chimney is difficult because of its location on a steep slope adjacent to the road. Measures to prevent this growth should be considered. The layout of the fencing around the chimney needs to be carefully considered. Ideally we would like some indication on the ground of the line the walls of the building used to follow.

The mine shaft that was associated with the engine house was behind the building in the area covered in hawthorn bushes and should not impact on any work at the entrance.