

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday, 7th May, 2026 7:15pm
Wesley Memorial Church Hall

Present: Susan (Chair), Neil, Fran, Jill, Rob, Olivia, Elaine, William and Margaret
(minutes)

Apologies: Rod, Rosie

1. Approve minutes of 5th March meeting

The minutes of 5th March meeting were approved.

2. Nature Conservation work on Troopers Hill

Nature conservation work parties:

- Recent: Rob reported on the work parties since the last meeting: on 7th March work was done in Sally's Glade; on 19th March brambles and saplings were removed below the chimney; on 28th March brambles and saplings were removed in area above 2nd entrance on Troopers Hill Road, on 11th April saplings were cleared in gully and on 25th April an area of gorse was cleared, uncovering heather, and brambles were cleared in the area where Himalayan Balsam occurs. This illustrated the way that the work parties work in different areas of the hill, in accordance with the management plan. There have been very good turn outs at all the work parties.
- Upcoming: Susan explained that the bracken season was coming and so at the next work party on 9th May work would be done pulling bracken in the area above the second entrance, while another group would work in the bowl-shaped area that had been cleared near the lower dump. On 28th May the party will work on pulling bracken in gully from the Greendown end, plus the patch on the slope on the right, and if time then saplings to be removed. Also, the area that gives access to the Himalayan Balsam needs to be checked and cleared. Other areas to worked on in June are the broom and gorse in the bare patch, and saplings in the gully. Susan will write this up and send to leaders. She asked that leaders update each other on the work that has been done, take photographs and send with an update to Rob and Susan to put on the website, and also so that Susan can send a thank you email to attendees.
ACTION: Susan to send work party plans to leaders
- Photo Survey 2026: Rob explained that, since 1994, Rupert Higgins has done a photo survey of Troopers Hill, at first every 2 years and now every 5 years. The survey consists of 36 photographs taken from different points on the hill (36 because that used to be the number of exposures on a roll of film). As well as taking the photographs, Rupert gives management advice based on the results. Initially this survey was paid for by Bristol City Council but they can no longer fund this and more recently Friends of Troopers Hill has raised the funds needed. Rob recommended that it would be good to have another survey done now, as the last 10 year management plan was done in 2019 and

it would be useful to check how well the management is working. Rupert's charge for this would be £845+VAT. This covers 2 days work: one taking the photographs and one to write up the results and advice. Rupert would also include a walk around the hill with the work party leaders to talk through the issues. Margaret confirmed that there are sufficient funds in the account to pay for this (General Fund currently £2475). It was agreed that the survey should be done.

ACTION: Rob to contact Rupert.

3. Funds/Projects

- Information board for Troopers Hill Woods by layby entrance: Susan said that the board is nearly ready. A local resident had pointed out that the line of Lamb Hill on the map was incorrect and could lead people to walk up a private drive so Susan asked the designer to amend the line of Lamb Hill and show the private drive. Susan circulated the two versions of the map. It was agreed that the second version did show the line of Lamb Hill correctly. There was no need for the words 'private residence' and it was suggested that the path be shown in yellow and the dotted line removed. This was agreed. Rob pointed out that the board had cost less than originally budgeted for as they had decided to have only 2 clip frames, not 4, so there is an underspend of £285.75.

Susan then said that, unfortunately, there had been some vandalism to the two boards by the chimney. There is a spare board for the geology one, but not for the coal and bee mining one (the spare was put in about a year ago), so we would need to order a new one of those. It will save money if we can get the 2 new boards installed at the same time as the woodland one. The new boards and installation will cost £622.82 but if the spare money from the woodland board is deducted then that just means a spend of £337.07. It was agreed that we should go ahead with this.

ACTION: Susan to contact the designer.

- Funding winter works 2026/27: Susan hopes to make a grant application to Suez Community Trust for this. The application has to come from Bristol City Council as they are the landowner, in principle they are willing to work with us on this application. Susan has checked with Suez who have confirmed that the sort of work we are requesting funds for would be appropriate for the grant. Susan will work with Fran and Neil, who have offered to take on applying for grants in future, to write the grant, involve the Council and send it to them to submit. There will need to be some match funding but Susan is hoping the Council's Land Stewardship grant might cover this. Susan has obtained an estimate for Green Mantle for the work. Suez usually ask for 3 quotes but Susan is hoping to argue that Green Mantle have done good work on the hill several times before and are approved by the Council and we know they will do a good job. Rob added that Rupert's survey will be supportive of the need for this work.
- Funding repairs to steps in Woods: Susan had hoped to get a grant from the Active Travel Fund for these repairs but it was turned down. (However, we had had a grant from them recently). This work will cost £4,000, and Susan is

hoping to include this in the Suez application. This cost includes materials and the paid workers who manage the volunteers.

- Birch Collective, Woodland Management: Susan had hoped someone from Birch Collective would attend the meeting tonight but they sent their apologies as they are away at their annual residential camp. She will point out the Wessex Water grant that they may wish to apply for.

4. Maintenance and Projects – Hill, Field and Woods

- Items from meeting with BCC 24/02/26: Rob reported that the Council are yet to complete these items (repairs to steps on nature reserve, Greendown entrance, Malvern Road gate, saddle net in play area) but they are on their list. If they are not done later in the year then Rob will prompt them.
- Flag replacement: the flag has been replaced as the old one was shredded in places. Susan will try and repair the old one so that it can be a spare but she has also put out a request for donations for the £90 needed to buy 2 more. So far we have had one donation of £20 but Susan will mention it again in her next news update. If we are not able to raise the funds then, when the current flags have worn out, we would ask the Council to remove the flag pole.
- Tree planted on hill: someone had planted a tree on the hill, with a bit of compost and some stones at the base and a wire cage around it. The tree itself was already dead. Rob and Susan have removed it, but advised the Council first. The advice from the Council was that, if this happens again, we could put a sign on the wire saying that the tree would be removed within a week.

5. Future Events

- Bird walk with Duncan? Susan has not approached Duncan about this, and he will be leaving the area again soon so it is not appropriate now.
- History Walk – Sunday 10th May 10am – part of WalkFest: Rob will be leading this. All 30 places were booked very quickly but four have just cancelled. Susan has approached the people on the waiting list to offer those places.
- Drop in Gazebo Sunday 28th June: Elaine, Olivia, Neil and Margaret all volunteered to help with this
- Wildflowers Walk Sunday 5th July: Susan will be leading this and will set up Eventbrite so that tickets will be released about a month before. At the same time she will send out an update to publicise the event.
- Bugs and Beasties Saturday 8th August tbc: Rupert is not available to help with this event this year. Rob contacted another expert but they have not replied so it was agreed that we would not hold this event this time.
- Fungi Walk tbc: Susan will contact Nathan Orr who led the walk last year to ask if he can do it again and obtain a quote (the cost of the walk was £100 last year but free for us last year as it was funded by Lamplighters). It was suggested that the 'Children's Activities' money could be used for this as the event does attract families.

ACTION: Susan to contact Nathan Orr.

6. Networking

- University of Bristol Soil Sampling Project: Rob explained that every year students from the Geography department do a soil survey on the hill. This year they were studying the effects, if any, of gorse on the soil by comparing soil from an area of old gorse, with one of new gorse, and a medium one. Rob and Susan went to the results presentation where the students said they found no significant difference in the soils. They will write up the project and once it has been marked, they will send a copy to us. Rob and Susan are going to a celebration event on 8th May for all the groups involved in the project. A future study could be on grain size, rather than acidity. The spread of the gorse does not appear to be influenced by wind direction.
- CIL Funds / Community Meetings: Rob explained that CIL funds are available which local councillors decide how to spend. There is a meeting in St George Park on 12th July when people can talk to their councillors about this. Abi Finch, one of the councillors for St George Central, will shortly be Chair of the Environment Committee. Rob suggested that we could possibly apply to these funds for repairs to the Greendown entrance, where the upright timbers are rotting.
- History talks and walks: Rob did a talk for Hanham United Reform Church just before the last meeting which has led to a request for a talk at Magpie Court in July. They will donate £50 for this. Rob is also doing a guided walk for the Avon Local History and Archaeology Society in July. Rob and Susan also hosted a group of 60 Year 1 children from Summerhill School recently when they visited the hill. This went well.

7. Friends of Troopers Hill

- Posters – new style. Fay has taken over producing posters, which she is printing and laminating herself. Everyone liked the new style. Susan has asked Fay to think about the cost of the printer ink she is using as this could be reimbursed. Fran asked whether Fay will be doing posters while Susan and Rob are away.
ACTION: Susan to contact Fay.
- Website: Patrick, one of the new volunteers at the work parties, is a website developer and has talked to Rob about options for changing the FOTH website so that other people apart from Rob can add to it. At present Rob is doing it in HTML. There are options such as using WordPress but this may involve issues such as having to update it regularly. Patrick will do some sample pages.
- Committee roles from Jan 2027: Susan is stepping down as Chair at the next AGM and Margaret is stepping down as Treasurer. William has expressed an interest in taking over as Chair, subject to him staying in the area, and Jill as Treasurer, for a year or two.

- Susan sent out an email with a list of tasks to be allocated (copied below), and met with William to talk through which ones he would be keen to take on and which ones we would need other volunteers for. In response to Susan's email Katy replied to say that she has some spare capacity and would be interested in helping with welcoming school children and students to the hill, which William is also keen to do. Katy would also be happy to help with collating information from the Management Plan and reminding the Council of their tasks. Katy would also be prepared to physically go out and clean up after an incident, if appropriate.
Fay has volunteered to do posters, and Fran and Neil have offered to put posters up around the hill.
Arranging events, Facebook (and Instagram), and providing updates – William would like to share these tasks.
Entering Troopers Hill for awards: no volunteers for this.
Fielding enquires: William is happy to do this and is already being copied into Friends emails so that he can see the sort of issues that crop up. Fran asked if the list of tasks with people allocated could be included in the minutes – see appendix

- Work parties: Susan said that she was about to ask leaders to give her their dates for the next 3 months (July to September) when they could lead work parties so that she can set them up Eventbrite. Jill suggested that work party leaders could set them up themselves and also look at the report a few days beforehand to see who is booked on them, which would save Susan (or another volunteer) doing this. Rob commented that this would mean adding all the work party leaders to the Eventbrite address which would lead to them receiving a lot of emails (an email is generated every time someone books anything) but it was agreed that they should go ahead with doing this. Margaret will continue to pick up on any new volunteers for work parties and email them for their contact details and permission to take photographs. Susan will send out screenshots of the pages showing how to set up events.
ACTION: Susan to send screenshots to work party leaders and Margaret.
ACTION: Work party leaders to set up dates for their work parties over next 3 months on Eventbrite

- There was a discussion about how to encourage more people to attend our meetings and get involved in the various tasks. Elaine wondered about handing out a slip of paper to new volunteers. Olivia thought having a conversation with people during work parties was probably the best way.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Next meetings

Thursday 3rd September - 3rd December (AGM)

All meetings in person, on Thursdays at 7.15 pm, at Wesley Memorial Church Hall

Appendix

Possible future allocation of FoTH tasks include:

- putting up 9 posters around the Hill – **Fay, Fran and Neil**
- designing, printing and laminating the posters (this could be split across 3 people). You can see some of our past posters on www.troopers-hill.org.uk/posters - **Fay**
- welcoming schoolchildren and students to Troopers Hill and telling them about the wildlife, history and nature conservation work on the site. This is pitched at different levels as we have visits from Year 1 children, 'A' Level Geography students studying urban conservation, undergraduates and post-graduates. **William and Katy**
- arranging events from walks and talks to an activity like a Bugs and Beasties session for families **William and other volunteers**
- maintaining our Facebook page or Instagram site – **William and other volunteers**
- writing email updates for our followers – **William and other volunteers**
- collating information from the [conservation management plan](#) for the site and reminding Bristol City Council Parks department of the tasks for which their team is responsible each season **Katy (and Fran and Neil?)**
- identifying things that are needed for Troopers Hill from nature conservation work to replacement play equipment where there are no Bristol City Council funds for those purposes. Agree with Bristol City Council that these things are needed and find funds to pay for them. **Fran and Neil?**
- enter Troopers Hill for awards for its quality and management e.g. RHS South West in Bloom Pride in Parks, prepare supporting documentation and take judges round the site – **No-one**
- fielding enquiries from the public about Troopers Hill ranging from lost property to reports of wasp nests, if necessary passing the enquiry or the person to the right contact. – **William**
- physically going out and clearing up after an incident, for example a fire, to prevent copycat activity – **Possibly Katy**
- making videos of our activities - see www.troopers-hill.org.uk/video for past videos