

## **NOTE OF MEETING**

**Thursday, 9th February 2023, 7.15 – 9 pm**

**Online Zoom Meeting**

Attendees: Adam, Rob, Rosie, Susan, Margaret, Rod, Ruth, Freya, Elaine

### **1. Approve AGM Minutes**

The minutes are approved. Freya to be added as re-elected to the committee on the last AGM minutes.

### **2. Projects**

#### **a. Nature conservation**

Green Mantle have been on site to cut back gorse using £3K of the grant awarded last year. There was overspend of £300 which will be included in next year's charge from Green Mantle.

There has been an increase of visitors to the hill hoping to spot the Dartford Warbler which has been sighted and reported on local bird watching forums and groups. Some people have raised concerns about the increased number of people visiting to see the Dartford Warbler and Susan has briefed the nature conservation officer in case there are any issues.

#### **b. Art**

Last year, the group had some discussions about creating a piece of public art at the Troopers Hill Field entrance to the Local Nature Reserve to help people find the hill. Following feedback from the 2022 survey, the view is that people think leaving the area natural is important. The renewed paths are helping people finding their way from the field. Some ideas were shared about creating an artistic combination of a notice board and interpretation boards as a better idea.

#### **c. Paper Newsletters**

Until 2015, a paper newsletter was issued by Friends of Troopers Hill and shared with over 100 people. Susan has been talking with Ruth about recreating the newsletter as she thinks it would be well received by people without internet access and useful for handing out in the library and the pop-up gazebo events. Friends of Troopers Hill used to regularly contribute articles to the St George and Redfield Voice newspapers which no longer exist.

Ruth is happy to take the role as the editor and help with social media promotion. It was agreed a trial should be run, which Susan and Ruth will follow up on.

#### **d. Troopers hill survey – 20 years on**

Rob showed word clouds comparing answers to the question “2 things you like about Troopers Hill” between the 2002 and 2022 survey results. “View” was the most dominant word on both. In the 2022 results, the word is more equally balanced and not dominating compared to 2002.

There were fewer dislikes shared in 2002 compared 2022. Litter and Dog issues still the main items raised. ‘Vandalism’ and ‘overgrown’ was large in 2002, but less so in 2022.

Suggested changes still featured Play area in 2022, with some people wanting it enlarged. Coffee & Café makes an appearance in 2022 which never was mentioned in 2002.

### **3. Nature Conservation work on Troopers Hill**

#### **a. Nature conservation work parties**

One work party was cancelled in January due to heavy rain.

A corporate work party of 12 people from Defra was completed at the end of January who cleared paths leading from the bottom chimney.

in 2022, a total of 309 hours were logged by volunteers attending working parties (excluding corporate work parties).

The booking system introduced during the pandemic is still working well and resulting in a higher number of attendees and working hours.

#### **b. Winter works**

As well as Green Mantle completing cutting back of Gorse, Bristol City Council have completed their maintenance and works which Susan requested last year based on the Troopers Hill Conservation Management Plan.

#### **c. Street Goat**

Susan and Rob have been in discussions with Street Goat, exploring whether it could be possible to have goats on the hill or make access easier to supply cuttings as food to the goats in the milking parlour located in the adjacent allotments.

An option could be to put a gate between the allotments and the hill which could also enable work parties to deliver some of the cuttings as feed for the goats. Rob and Susan are talking with a representatives from Street Goat and the allotments about

this option.

Having goats on the hill is more challenging as fences cannot be erected and adult goats cannot be put onto leads. Kid goats on leads might be feasible which will be researched.

#### **4. Maintenance**

##### **a. The chimney**

Everyone is very pleased with the response from the council in dealing with the graffiti damage to the chimney. The third-party specialist has completed the clean-up and applied a layer of wax to help protect against any further incidents.

Unfortunately, the vandals have not been identified and the police have no suspects.

##### **b. The field noticeboard**

The noticeboard at the Malvern Road entrance needs refurbishing. It was discussed that a better option could be to replace it with a combined interpretation board and notice board – see also notes above under (2b Art). Susan to look at options.

##### **c. Painting furniture**

Several benches and posts need painting around the hill. Susan will look for volunteers and see whether a risk assessment needs to be completed.

##### **d. Crews Hole Rd “layby” and access issues**

Last year, Rob created drawings showing our preferred options to improve the layby in Crews Hole Road for parking and access to the woods. There have been a few updates where the Council are creating new drawings and there have been recently reports of incidents where Motorbikes are using layby for access to the woods. Fly-tipping remains an issue.

#### **5. Events**

##### **Past Events**

##### **a. Bird Walk – 4<sup>th</sup> February**

The bird walk was fully booked and a great success. Around the main discussion about the birds, Rob supported with information about the history of the hill and Susan about conservation.

The group were able to see the Dartford Warbler and wondered if there was perhaps two as it seemed to be moving very quickly within the gorse.

## **Future**

### **b. Looking at Lichen – Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March 10.30am**

With Dr David Hill. Places have been booked quickly and 4 places remain of the 16.

### **c. Star gazing – March**

20 people have expressed interest so far and more expected when shared via social media. Total places will be restricted to 20 people for the 4 telescopes provided by the Bristol Astronomical Society.

### **d. Drop in Gazebo – Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April**

When closer to the time, Susan will ask for volunteers to help setup the Gazebo and support on the day.

### **e. Sensory Walk - July**

Susan was planning a wildflower walk in July which will now be held as a sensory walk. When run in St Georges Park, some thought it was for people who are visual impaired which Susan will make clear this time is not the case.

## **6. Networking**

### **a. Memorial benches**

Susan has been helping Bristol City Council improve its process for people wanting to purchase or sponsor a memorial bench. Having managed the installation of memorial benches on Troopers Hill, Susan is regarded as an expert and was asked to help.

There is currently no officer to deal with memorial benches in parks meaning it can take a long time for arrange and recently took 2 years for someone to donate a bench for Avon View cemetery.

Susan's recommendation is to use a similar process which is in-place for sponsoring a tree online.

### **b. Bristol City Council budget proposals**

The proposed £1.5M budget cuts to Bristol City Parks Department has been removed from the budget discussions. Almost 500 people submitted feedback about their concerns and impact of the cuts to local parks which helped make parks one of the highest topics for discussion.

**c. Bristol City Council local plan review**

The local plan is used to guide planning decisions. The review has been created, and if it goes through, there will be more protection awarded to the hill, local parks and green spaces against building plans.

**d. Hartlebury Common**

A group representing Hartlebury Common contacted Friends of Troopers Hill for advice about interpretation boards. The group, including local council officers, visited the hill for a tour with Susan and Rob to find out more.

Hartlebury Common is a much larger space than Trooper Hill, with long horned cattle grazing, and have similar issues with encroaching birch trees.

**e. Horse and Jockey defibrillator**

The Horse and Jockey pub on Nags head hill needed advice about how to get a defibrillator and Susan has been helping by suggesting they use fundraising pages, contact the western ambulance service and publicising on the Friends of Troopers Hill channels.

**f. Troopers Hill Rd, historic find?**

Susan was contacted by a person on Troopers Hill Road concerned by mud that had been building up on the side of the road for a number of years. Susan investigated with a shovel and found that beneath the mud was a grate marked with Avonside engineering company which operated between 1860 and 1934. Susan has reported the drainage issue to Bristol City Council on 'Fix My Street'.

**7. Fundraising**

**a. The slide painting**

Susan is in talks with Parkside picture framers to put the slide picture in their window for £200. If it is not sold, Susan will talk to Butler House about loaning the painting to them for the residents lounge.

**b. Donations at events**

A total of £45 was donated at the bird walk event.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be from 7.15-9 pm on Thursday 27th April (at St Aidan's Church Hall, Fir Tree Lane).