

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday, 14th July, 2016 7.15pm

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Rod (Bristol Astron. Soc), Norman (Treasurer), Elaine, Judith, Keith, Kit, Mike (Avon Local History and Archaeology), Margaret (minutes)

Apologies: Chris, Fabian, Helen, Mary, Nicola

1. Approve May minutes

These were approved, with one spelling correction in item 7: Bridgewater should be Bridgwater. Susan reported that all actions had been completed except for one concerning Good Gym and one action under the Management plan update which would both be covered under the agenda items.

Action: Susan to amend minutes.

2. Issues and thank yous for Parks staff

- Winter works 2015/16: Susan reported that Parks had done as much as they could and would need to cover the area that was missed during winter 2016/17. They had done some excellent work near Greendown (not winter works).
- Preventing wear and tear on refurbished steps: Rob has been in touch with Tom Penn who has contacted the team who did the steps to see what can be done to deal with the erosion, caused mainly by the severe storms in June. Tom has not yet heard back from them. Kit asked if they could also look at the Greendown steps.

Action: Rob to ask the contractors, via Tom Penn, to include Greendown steps

Rod reported that he and Fiona had walked the hill to review the risk assessment for future stargazing events. He has not seen her report yet but she is going to recommend no change, as to move anywhere else on the hill would increase the risk of accidents. This will probably be confirmed at their next committee meeting on 5th August. Participants to Troopers Hill stargazing events should be briefed beforehand about the possible risks and Susan will include this in her email to participants. There was some discussion about whether red lights on the path or tape across the bumpy area would help, but it was agreed that probably keeping numbers small was the best way of keep it safe.

- Future maintenance and management: Rob has emailed Tom Penn to ask that the grass verge on Troopers Hill Road be cut back, and also to ask when the hedge is due to be cut. Tom will email the team who do this.
- Management Plan update: The 5 year Management Plan is due for review in March 2017 and the first step is a photographic survey which will be done this summer by Rupert Higgins. Becky Belfin is organising this and once this report

has been received Rob will talk to Becky about any changes needed and they will then draw up a new plan. Rob expects that there will not be a lot of change from the existing plan.

- Kit raised another issue: a lot of small trees have grown up in the gully, at the cliff face end. Rob said that this would be added to the winter works.
Action: Rob to request that this be included in winter works.

3. Troopers Hill Field

- Play area update: Susan reported that the tenders had been received and a design had been chosen by a team comprising herself, Chris (the lead parent), the Play Officer from the Council and the Project Manager. She circulated drawings showing the design and location. Both the selection team and the other parents were in unanimous agreement that this was the best design. They particularly liked the 'cross' arrangement of grassy areas and play surfaces in the enclosed play area for younger children and the design of the equipment in both that area and the activity trail for older children outside the enclosure. The only change they have requested is for surfacing under the activity trail. The specification had asked for plinths to be installed that we could later add benches to, but in fact the specification had included the benches themselves.

Keith asked about the slide: Susan confirmed that the slide and goal posts will stay where they are, as will the logs. Keith also asked if the activity trail can be used by adults, but Susan explained that it was only for children.

Kit suggested that it might be useful to install a noticeboard inside the play area. Susan explained that a question about this had been included in the consultation and the respondents had not wanted one, although she will check this again. Rob suggested putting up a clip-frame instead.

Action: Susan to confirm that a notice board is not wanted inside the play area.

Note – after the meeting Susan checked consultation notes – people has said that if there was a sign/interpretation board, it should be outside the play area and not inside it.

Susan has received a Finance Agreement from Veolia who, once the agreement has been signed and sent back, will give an upfront payment of £11,875. The invoices go to the Council who then invoice us. FOTH pays these and also receives the remaining money from Veolia. Susan has also successfully applied for a grant of £300 for a celebration event. She would like to arrange for a band of pipers to lead a procession starting from the chimney and going along the paths to the new play area. She has now found out the suppliers usually pay for a celebration event as well so they may be able to combine these.

- Football posts: One of the posts has now fallen over. Parks have taken away both posts now as they found sharp edges at the bottom where they had rusted. They have put soil and grass seed on the dip and Tom Penn is

arranging for the old posts from Dundridge Park to be installed in their place by the beginning of the summer holidays. Dundridge Park are trialling a new system of posts in sockets, and if this proves successful then we may put in for this type at a later date.

- Tree Planting 16th February and state of trees: Susan reported at the last meeting that the trees planted in 2011 were growing into their cages and she was going to ask Good Gym if they could come and remove the cages as the Tree team at the Council had said they would not be able to do this for some time. However, the Tree team have now come and removed the cages and posts so there is no need to ask Good Gym. One of the new saplings has lost its cage, which Susan will report.
Action: Susan to report missing cage
- Log Play equipment: Susan reported that the logs are starting to rot and three have been removed as reported at last meeting. There is no plan to replace this equipment at present but Parks check it every week, as they do all play equipment.
- Hole near the slide: Susan suggested that initially this be filled with soil and seeded over to see if this solves the problem. Tom Penn had suggested that the contractors use some of the soil from the play area to do this. If this does not work then it may need a land drain or pipe, but Rob pointed out that his suspicion is that the hole may be the result of a spring nearby but it may be hard to locate where that is.

4. Work parties and other works

Rob reported that the work party on 4th June had cleared saplings and bramble on steps above lower chimney. At the afternoon work party on Sunday 19th June they had just done a litter pick as the forecast was for rain, and on 2nd July a small work party cleared some bracken. There was some discussion about the possible reasons for the low turnout at recent work parties and whether a change of day would help, but it was agreed to carry on with the current pattern of Saturday mornings with some Sunday afternoons for now.

Work parties before the next meeting: Sunday 17th July (afternoon): this will focus on clearing bracken and saplings at top of Phil and Vernon's steps; Saturdays 6th August and 3rd September.

- Working with power tools: Susan reported that she and Norman had now done the training for this. The Council will deliver a strimmer, blower and/or hedge trimmer as needed for work parties. They need to be pre-booked and Susan needs to give Tom Penn a risk assessment 3 weeks ahead of the work party where they will be used. It was agreed they should be booked for the 6th August work party.
Action: Susan to book tools and send Tom Penn risk assessment for 6th August work party.

- Progress on steps to Crews Hole: Rob reported that Parkwork had now completed their work on the path and had installed a chicane entrance at the bottom, in the parking area near the old Lamb Inn. The money donated by Beeses covers the materials and Parkwork provided the labour for free. Parkwork have not yet invoiced FOTH for the materials and there may be enough left to pay for a finger post at the bottom. We need to get a quote for a post and if there is not enough money we could apply for funding from the Neighbourhood Partnership. Kit mentioned that Helen had used the path recently and had found it difficult to follow in places where there seemed to be more than one path. He suggested putting in some posts on the path where the route is unclear. Rob said that we could ask Community Payback to put these in.

Action: Rob to obtain quote for finger post and other posts once invoice for materials received.

- Little Elizabeth's Bench: Susan reported that we have received quite a bit of money now towards replacing the bench but there is still more needed. However, some people who have said they will donate have not yet done so; if they all give then this may help reach target.

5. Events

Avon Valley Walk – Sunday 22nd May: there was a good turnout for this walk led by Rob, which was also part of the Bristol Walk Fest programme.

Before next meeting:

- Bugs and Beasties: Saturday 13th August – 4pm. Susan requested volunteers and Margaret and Kit both said they could help. Volunteers need to attend at 2.30pm to help set up.

Drama in 2017: Susan had received an email from Tamsin Buckley-Bell following up on a conversation when Susan had mentioned she would like to hold a drama on Troopers Hill in 2017. Tamsin would be interested in pursuing this idea, devising a performance based on memories of Troopers Hill using local people. Susan had replied saying she liked the sound of this, but would need to speak to rest of group and asking for a rough idea of costs as we would need to raise funds. The estimate is between £2,000 and £3,000. As well as obtaining the funding, our role would be to promote, put Tamsin in touch with local groups and help carry things on the day. Obviously such an event is weather-dependent. Susan asked the meeting for views. All agreed that the idea should be pursued, and Kit suggested Tamsin be invited to the next meeting in September to talk about her ideas. Rob said that we would need to make a decision about going ahead by October/November.

Including the Geology Walk in Healthy City Week: Susan asked whether the meeting was happy for the Geology Walk to be included in the programme for Healthy City Week. All agreed.

6. Networking

- Street Goat: Rob reported that Street Goat now have goats on Troopers Hill allotments and have applied for Planning Permission to build a shelter and parlour. We have raised the possibility of the goats coming on to the hill to eat bramble.

- Rob has led two history walks: one for the Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society (BIAS) and one for the Avon Local History and Archaeology (ALHA). The £40 donated for these has been added to the fund to replace Little Elizabeth's bench. Mike said that many of those on the walk for Avon Local History Association had not been to Troopers Hill before and had commented on how interesting it was and also how lovely the site was. The walk had included a visit to the Bath House and Rob said how grateful we were to Crystal Watters and her partner for allowing us access over their garden to look at the Bath House.

Mike said that his group may have some money left over to donate later in the year and asked whether there was anything of historical interest on Troopers Hill that we would like him to put forward as a suggestion for funding. Susan explained about the historical background to Little Elizabeth's bench and Mike said he would put this forward.

Action: Susan to email Mike photographs and information about Elizabeth Emra and Little Elizabeth's bench.

7. Awards - judging

- It's Your Neighbourhood/St George in Bloom – Judging will take place for these on 15th July. Susan has written a report detailing achievements over past year and plans for next year. Judging of St George for the national In Bloom competition will take place on 5th August, and Troopers Hill will be visited then.
- Pride in Parks: Susan asked whether we wanted to enter for this award again this year, costing £20. The closing date has passed but an entry can probably still be made. After discussion it was agreed that we should put in for this again.

8. Facebook/Twitter/website Update

Rob reported that we now have 796 Likes on Facebook and 613 followers on Twitter, so numbers are gradually going up. Susan commented that when they put the play area survey on line quite a few people accessed this via Facebook.

9. Newsletter

Susan has contacted the volunteer who did the last newsletter to ask if they would be able to do one in time to give two weeks' notice of the Bugs and Beasties event. If not, Susan will try and put it together herself. Susan has come up with the following suggestions for items to be covered in the next edition: play area, It's Your Neighbourhood award, Little Elizabeth's bench, path through the woodland, drama in 2017, teaching Brownies compass skills, photographic survey, maybe Discover East Bristol walks, and plug forthcoming events.

Kit suggested adding an appeal for volunteers.

On the subject of volunteers, Judith suggested students studying environmental subjects, e.g. at UWE, may be a good source of volunteers. Susan said she has

failed to get involved in Fresher's Weeks before but will try if she has time. Shelley is planning to publicise FOTH once she is at UWE. Rob pointed out that travelling to Troopers Hill from the other side of Bristol may be a problem for students.

Next meeting

Thursday 29th September at 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road