



## NOTE OF MEETING

**Thursday, 26th April, 2018 7.15pm**

**Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd**

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Rod (Committee member), Judith, Keith, Elaine, Chris (Street Goat), Margaret (minutes)

Apologies: Fabian Breckles (Cllr), Richard

### **1. Approve February minutes**

The February minutes were approved. Susan added that she had done all the actions except the one concerning the new General Data Protection Regulation.

### **2. Troopers Hill Issues and news**

- 5 stars Pride in Parks award: Susan showed the meeting the plaque for Best Park 2017 which had been awarded to Troopers Hill, with 5 stars. This covered both the field and the hill. Susan will display the plaque at events.
- Byelaws notices and breaches: The two signs that had been vandalised have now been replaced. There was a breach of the byelaws last weekend when someone used a barbeque and also brought a motorbike onto the hill. Susan spoke to the people involved and rang the police. Rob added that there are some extra laminated signs being put up publicising 'no barbeques' on the hill. Keith asked whether drones were allowed as he had seen someone using one recently. Susan replied that drones are not allowed in Bristol parks, with a couple of exceptions, and suggested that it would be best to have a polite word first with anyone seen flying one on Troopers Hill as they may not realise it is against the law. If they persist then it should be reported to Parks or Police.
- Winter works: Susan reported that Parks have done a brilliant job this year with the winter works, and there were only a couple of small areas that were missed.
- Herbicide use: Parks have used herbicides this year in a few areas on Troopers Hill Field, including around the play area fence, and also along Greendown, under the hedge. Susan circulated some photographs showing the effects of this. It had been agreed in 2003 that no weedkillers should be used on Troopers Hill, except to treat Japanese Knotweed, but in 2015 a new team did use some by mistake and the same thing has now happened again. Susan has had an email exchange with Pete Stadden who apologised but asked Susan to confirm that FOTH would be happy with long grass under fences, notice boards, etc as the team do not have the capacity to trim around them. All agreed that it was better to leave the grass long and they agreed that herbicides should not be used except on hard standing, such as under the slide, and to treat Japanese Knotweed. Rob added that it was

important not to use herbicide under the benches as the ground then eroded. Rob will raise the issue at Parks Forum.

- Repairs by Fix It team to kissing gate entrances: About three weeks ago the fencing around the kissing gate at the bottom of the hill was broken up. Parks responded quickly and the fence has now been repaired temporarily using chestnut paling.
- New species recorded: a purse web spider, *Atypus affinis*, has been found on Troopers Hill. This was identified by Shelley, a student at UWE who regularly helps at work parties. This is the first one recorded on the Hill, although in 2007 a spider hunting wasp was recorded and these prey on the purse web spider. The acid heathland on the hill is the ideal habitat for the spider. Susan has written an article about this find for the May edition of the St George and Redfield Voice.
- Emergency contact with Parks: following the discovery of some syringes in the woods at the last work party Susan needed to contact Parks on their emergency number to arrange collection. For future reference the email address for reporting parks problems is <http://bristol.gov.uk/reportparkproblem> and this gives you the correct number for this type of urgent problem which is: 0117 922 3719.

### **3. Work parties and other works:**

Rob reported on the work parties since the last meeting, saying there had been some weather issues.

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February: ParkWork were unable to attend so Rob and Susan spent the session using a hedge cutter to cut down bramble. They found it rather awkward to use as the bramble needs to be cut at ground level. ParkWork have done an extra session since then, when they sorted out the Greendown entrance.

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March: this work party was cancelled due to snow.

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March: Rob and Susan joined ParkWork and spent the session taking out gorse amongst the heather at the top of Phil and Vernon's steps.

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April: as there had been rain that morning it was too wet to do the planned work on the hill so the group did a litter pick, which is when the syringes were found.

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April: this was a hot day. ParkWork did some work on the steps putting in more gravel, although it was a bit too hot for this. They also did a litter pick and replaced a cage around a Scots Pine tree on the field.

- Work parties before the next meeting:
  - Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May and 2<sup>nd</sup> June
  - Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May, 21<sup>st</sup> June (with ParkWork)

Rob reminded everyone that they would be welcome at the ParkWork work parties, which take place every 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, as well as at the normal 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month work parties.

Rob and Susan will be away for 5<sup>th</sup> May work party, and as there was no-one else available to lead this work party, Chris, who has recently completed the training, has offered to be the leader for this one. Richard has offered to use his car to bring the tools and will help. Richard has also offered to be trained as a leader. Susan expressed her thanks to both Chris and Richard.

#### 4. Projects

- Waymarking in woods: Rob updated the meeting on the waymarking to be done in the woods using the funding that Paula Spiers has been able to allocate as Avon and Frome Valley Officer. During the winter this funding enabled work to be done clearing the woods and opening up the diagonal path to the top of the hill. The next step is to provide some waymarking for both this path and the path that goes down through the woods to the layby on Crews Hole road. Rob circulated a map showing the suggested sites for the 13 posts, which have been designed to match the existing waymarkers. The posts have been ordered, they should be ready in May and installed in June. Rob added that there is an issue with paths on the hill, in that the routes of the existing rights of way as shown on the OS maps do not fit in with the actual paths. At some point the rights of way will need to be officially diverted.
- Bull Inn – Asset of Community Value – ends 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018: Rob explained that five years ago, when the Bull Inn closed, he obtained enough signatures to apply for the pub to be listed as an Asset of Community Value. This was done through FOTH as the application needed to be made by a community group. The pub has since reopened. The listing expires this year and Rob asked whether the meeting thought it should be applied for again. The advantage of having a building listed as an asset is that owners would then need to apply for planning permission for any change of use. Rob thought it should be renewed as otherwise it might send a message that it was no longer thought of as a community asset, and also to make people aware that the listing does only last for 5 years. Elaine wondered if it was possible to find out what the people who lived nearby thought and whether they valued it as an asset.  
Action: Rob will find out what the process is to renew it, and will also put something on Facebook to find out views.
- Protecting Nature: Susan updated the meeting on the progress with this application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). She has obtained all the letters of support needed and is just waiting for her contact at HLF to check her application before finally submitting it. Rob added that he has contacted Enover, a landfill operator, and confirmed that the paths project would meet their criteria for funding. The closing date for applications this year is 24 August. They would require some match funding so Rob has made a request to Councillors for some CIL money for the paths.
- RHS South West in Bloom – Pride in Parks: Susan asked whether she should apply for this again. The application costs £20, but as well as giving recognition of the work done on the hill, it is useful to have awards like this when applying for funding. All agreed that Susan apply.

- RHS South West in Bloom – It's Your Neighbourhood: it was also agreed that Susan should put in an application for this award.
- Defibrillator: Susan announced that fund raising for this is going well. There is £620 left to raise out of the total £2600 needed. Woodwise Academy are funding half of this. The St George Liberal Club have donated money they raised at their recent quiz night.
- Projects with students: Rob had proposed to UWE and University of Bristol that a useful project for students would be a study of the spread of scrub on Troopers Hill over the years. The lecturers he spoke to were keen on this idea, but none of the students have chosen it so far.
- Reptile survey: Susan reported that the person who suggested doing a reptile survey has not yet provided the Council with all the information requested so this has not yet taken place

## **5. Troopers Hill Field**

- Tree sponsorship: there is still one tree available for sponsorship although it is not showing on the map on the Council's website
- Tree maintenance: As reported above, ParkWork replaced the cage around a Scots Pine because the existing cage was too tight.
- Rough sleepers: Susan reported that there had been two rough sleepers living in three tents on the field near the Malvern Road entrance for about four weeks. The Council worked with the Police and St Mungo's in their efforts to rehouse them and eventually the tents were abandoned. The Council will keep the tents for a time and then, if not claimed, will pass them to St Mungo's. Susan commented that the issue had been handled very sensitively and carefully by all the agencies involved.

## **6. Events**

- Stargazing: This took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> February and was very successful. Susan thanked Rod for an excellent event. Rod pointed out it was lucky that the event had been able to go ahead as it was one of only two that the British Astronomical Society (BAS) had been able to hold, due to the poor weather conditions. There was a good turnout and people were generous with their donations. BAS provided 5 telescopes and numbers of attendees were limited to 25 which allowed for 5 around each one. Rod added that BAS will certainly put on the event next year, and are also booked to do solar observations at the Bugs and Beasties event in August.
- St George Community Fair – 3<sup>rd</sup> March: This was cancelled due to the snow.
- Dawn Chorus 5.30 am 24<sup>th</sup> March. This event led by Ed Drewett went well. 21 species of bird were recorded, including meadow pippits and greenfinch, and a

goose and heron were seen flying over. Again there was a good turnout with more younger people attending this time.

Next event:

Avon Valley Walk 27<sup>th</sup> May: this is now fully booked. Susan has set up Eventbrite to accept 8 onto a waiting list.

**7. Parks consultation £2.868 million cuts:** Rob was interviewed about this on the radio yesterday. He remarked that following the consultation the council has changed its views on a couple of issues, including the idea of advertising in parks, which met with a lot of criticism. This was probably prompted by a campaign by AdBlock, which opposed advertising in parks, but it had the benefit of encouraging a lot more people to complete the consultation than probably would have done otherwise. Parks Forum have asked the council to agree a protocol about advertising.

Susan asked the meeting what they thought about the idea of some time-limited advertising, for example on the fence on Troopers Hill Road, if all the money went to Troopers Hill and assuming it was nothing unsuitable. Chris suggested that FOTH could look at it as a chance to support concerns that we like, such as local businesses. There was general agreement to this idea.

## **8. Networking**

- Donations: Rob has given several talks recently which have raised donations totalling £125. These have included talks to Downend History Group, St George WI and recently a talk to the South Gloucestershire Mining Research Group. Rob had not charged for this latter talk as they supplied FOTH with maps showing the mines on Troopers Hill several years ago. However they voluntarily made a collection totalling £40. Rob added that he has just been contacted to give another talk next year by someone attending the Downend talk.
- Bristol Parks Forum meeting 28<sup>th</sup> April: Susan explained that FOTH is a member of Bristol Parks Forum and their next meeting is on 28<sup>th</sup> April in Summerhill Church. Rob is on the Committee. Susan is providing the refreshments with help from Margaret and Rich. Rob has offered to lead a walk on the hill afterwards.
- City Nature Challenge: Bristol and Bath are taking part in this worldwide competition to see how many species can be identified in a city over a given period. As part of this, a group are coming to the hill on 28<sup>th</sup> April to do a fungi and lichen survey. There is a link on the Facebook page inviting people to sign up for this.

**9. Impact of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on our mailing list:** This was covered under 2. 'Approve February Minutes'

## **10. Street Goat**

Chris reported that he is in ongoing talks with the council about taking the goats out onto the hill under supervision.

**Next meeting**

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June

at 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road