

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday 6th December 2018 7.15 – 9pm



Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (committee), Rod (committee), Jo (Secretary, minutes), Mali (committee & Natural Learners), Judith, Amy (Groundwork South).

Apologies: Fabian Breckels (Cllr), Margaret (Treasurer), Richard (committee), Norman (former Treasurer).

1. Approve October minutes

Rod noted that an amendment was needed to correct some details in section 8 which reported the cancellation of the last Bristol Astronomical Society event.

2. Troopers Hill issues and news

- Geology interpretation board: Susan announced that the Geology interpretation board has been beautifully refurbished with a plastic backing.
- New flags: Susan reported that the flag has been replaced with our last spare. The purchase of 2 new spare flags was funded by money donated from a visitor to the hill and subsequently a local resident who was keen to contribute the rest. The manufacturer informed us they also make flags from a more durable material which would last a lot longer but may need hanging differently due to its heavier weight. The spare flags will be sufficient for the time being, but this may be something to consider this option for the future.
- New bee: Rupert Higgins identified a species of bee on the hill in September that had never before been recorded on the site. He found Ivy bees (*Colletes hederæ*) were found near the top of the gully towards the Greendown side of the hill. This means there are a total of 78 different species of bee have been recorded on the Hill.

3. Conservation work on Troopers Hill

- Heritage Lottery Funded update to Conservation Management Plan: The Heritage lottery funding has been used to pay for the 2012 management plan to be updated. The management plan is reviewed each year but is now overdue for a full re-write.. Rupert Higgins has drawn up the initial draft in which he has listed regimes with maps. These have been discussed with Bristol City Council who need to approve the plan. The hill has been divided into 16 compartments which each need to be managed differently. Susan noted that the section of grass around the flag pole might also be regarded as a separate compartment. The plan sets out what task will be done by the Council and which by Friends of Troopers Hill at work parties etc. The Council remains responsible as landowners. Health and Safety issues and for the upkeep of the paths around the hill, etc.
- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) works: On Sunday 16th December a guided walk led by Rupert Higgins has been arranged to inform the public about the recommendations in the plan that will be carried out this winter. It will explain to the

public the work we do on the hill and the reasons for doing it. Susan explained that Rupert will go around the site and educate the group why each of the compartments need different care, for example the woodland at Sally's Glade will march into the grassland if the saplings and broom are not removed from the area. The walk will last for 2 hours and will start at 10.30am. Susan has advertised the walk via the FOTH mailing list, Twitter and Facebook and those wanting to book a place should do so as soon as possible as there is a maximum of 25 spaces. We hope this walk will ensure the public are happy and informed about the work we and Bristol City Council do on the hill.

- Winter conservation works: Rob reported that £6,000 of the HLF grant is to be spent on management work on the hill over the winter by contractors which specialise in environmental management. This will leave £4,000 to spend on work over the summer and next winter. Susan has had a meeting with Bristol City Council and has agreed the work which needs to be carried out by the contractors. Bristol City Council will also carry out their regular winter works tackling invasive scrub issue and will decide which areas the skag (cutting machine) is needed for.

4. Work parties and other works

Rob reported the outcome of the recent work parties. On Saturday 6th October it was wet and therefore turnout was low. At our work party on Thursday 18th October we were joined by Emma Britton from Radio Bristol who was amazed by the view from the chimney. She did us proud by doing 3 x 5 minute slots on her BBC Radio Bristol show which can be listened to via our website. There was a good turnout on Saturday 3rd November when 18 people came to help clear broom from the Sally's Glade area. Park Works came to do some work on 15th November. Turnout was lower than expected on Saturday 1st December with only 5 people turning up, perhaps due to the run up to Christmas and various events happening locally. Turnout on a Saturday is consistently higher than the weekday work parties. Rob handed around a graph he had compiled showing the number of work party hours given by volunteers and the average attendance at each work party since FOTH was established. It appears attendance was at its highest in 2006. Rob suggested that this might have been because the hill was a lot more overgrown than it is today and therefore the work that needed to be done was more obvious to the public than it is today. Mali informed us that she has recently completed training with Bristol City Council and is now able to lead work parties. The planned work parties before the next meeting are on Thursday 20th December, Saturday 5th January, Thursday 17th January and Saturday 2nd February.

5. Projects

- Progress on Access to nature (paths): Rob announced we have some new funding for this project. Enover Community Trust have awarded us £25,000 which the council have already agreed to match fund. Ibstock Enover have also awarded £15,000. This gives us a grand total of £62,500. It is slightly under what we had hoped for and so is dependent on the result of the tendering process we will think about either asking Bristol City Council for extra funding to make up the difference or think about reducing the plans we had.

- Wild play, Natural Learners and report to the Nineveh Charitable Trust: Mali was pleased to announce the Highlights of the 2018 Natural Learners programme as follows;

- 14 Wild Play sessions delivered for pre-school children and their parents/carers; a total of 49 families took part in these sessions, with an average of 10 children attending each week.
- 8 drop-in family events delivered during school holidays/weekends; an average of 19 families, including 32 children, attended each event.
- 3 school sessions delivered with a local primary school; a total of 84 local school children walked to the hill to learn about plants in the local environment.
- Partnership established with local Children's Centre.
- Recruitment of 1 local outdoor-learning volunteer.

Mali is happy for us to publish her report on our website. It is good to show people what is going on to get families involved. We have had lots of enquiries asking if the project will run next year. Mali and her team hope to continue facilitating the Bugs n Beasties event for the children which runs on the same day as the balloon festival bringing lots of people to the hill, as well as our visit from Bristol Astronomical Society. Susan suggested that we donate £300 to the project to show our appreciation and show the funders we are willing to contribute to the project as it benefits FOTH by raising our profile. Everyone at the meeting were happy with this idea.

Rob and Susan will be working with Mali to put together another funding application to continue the project. By experience they have found it is more difficult second time around as opposed to a new application and they may have to find ways to reinvent the project for a successful outcome. Susan thanked Mali and her volunteers for all her hard work. Mali will soon be hosting 4 visits from The Hive (a centre run by Mencap) which has already been funded using the money awarded by the Heritage Lottery. They were particularly interested in this work in our bid.

- Protecting Nature (fencing and more): The quote for the fencing along the side of Troopers Hill road has been quoted less than we expected. The work is hoped to be completed by next month. Rod pointed out that the timing of this work was perfect as less wildlife would be affected and it will also help clear some of the overgrown bramble.

- Defibrillator update: We already know that the funding is in place and arrangements are being made to install the defibrillator on the river path adjacent to Didac Ltd (Woodwise Academy). Didac had offered to donate half of the cost and the other half was met by the local community and local businesses in answer to FoTH's appeal for the remaining money. FOTH were particularly keen to support the project as it will benefit the local area and potentially (but hopefully not), could one day be needed to help someone participating in a work party.

- Bull Inn: As discussed at our last meeting, the group had decided to put in a new application to protect the building from a change of use. No action has been taken on this yet.

- Troopers Hill road traffic calming: Funding has been in place since 2012. Susan announced that the work will be starting next week (10th December). Signs notifying residents about the work have been put up. FOTH were not involved with this project but it will help improve safety and access to the hill and so we will look forward to the work being complete.

6. Troopers Hill Field

- Tree sponsorship: There will be a sponsored tree being planted in due course. Timing is dependant on how quickly a decision is made on which tree is to be put in.

- Tree maintenance: The council do not have the funding to maintain the new trees on Troopers Hill Field. Susan has enquired to the council about whether our volunteers could go on the training course they run to learn about tree maintenance so we are able to do this ourselves.

7. St George Strollers

Bristol City Council are unable to continue supporting the Walk for Health Bristol project. St George Strollers will be working with FOTH to set up public liability insurance. The group have their own funding for this but just need our support to make this possible.

8. Events

- Event planning meeting: Susan and Rob have invited members of the group to their house on Thursday 13th December to plan events for 2019. This event was originally planned for November but needed to be postponed.

- Conservation walk: As mentioned above this walk has been planned for Sunday 16th December and bookings are open.

- Events for 2019: Dawn Chorus has been booked for 5am Saturday 27th April. A video of a Dawn Chorus from a few years ago can be viewed on the website. Rod reported that the Bristol Astronomical Society are keen to continue their support at the Star Gazing events. The next events planned for February are yet to be finalised and are dependent on the weather. Arranging split dates has proved to be successful in the past. Volunteers from Bristol Astronomical Society come to the hill to lend their knowledge and telescopes and the event is free of charge as they are a charity and provide outreach to the city and the group are very enthusiastic to keep this event on our site going. Other events the group facilitate are at Chew Valley sailing Club, Dyrham Park and the Downs.

- Next meetings for 2019: Proposed dates are Thursdays 7.15 – 9pm on 7th February, 25th April, 27th June, 3rd October and 5th December. Susan has already checked availability of the room and everyone was happy with the venue and the planned dates. She noted that there is a gap from June to October as she and Rob

go away during the summer months. The group agreed that 6 meetings a year was enough anyway.

9. Networking

- Future Proof Parks: Amy from Groundwork South came along to give information about a new programme supported through the Heritage Lottery Fund to encourage the younger generation to get involved in volunteering for park groups. They will provide bespoke training for young people aged between 16 – 25 with the end goal being to train them to become 'Bristol Young Rangers' and ultimately run events. Amy asked the group on their thoughts and whether we would be happy for them to start recruiting young people for the project from next week. There will be 10 places available and they hope to finalise a list of recruits in the week commencing 10th January. Amy gave the group handouts which detailed the schedule of their activities, role description and training programme. At this stage it is still work in progress so our opinions would be useful. The training programme would consist of leadership skills, heritage and conservation walks, foraging and conservation skills, project management and campaigning skills, digital skills and vlogging, first aid and mental health awareness.

The group agreed it looked like an excellent idea and a positive move forward to encourage young people to get more involved whilst learning new skills. Susan pointed out that one of the byelaws on Troopers Hill is a restriction on foraging in order to protect wildlife, so this would need to be considered. Susan would be keen for one of the recruits to help to design posters as we find it difficult to find volunteers who can think up an eye catching design to attract visitors to the hill. This could then be used to help them develop their 'campaigning skills'. The group agreed it would also be great if the rangers were allocated one of the compartments of the hill to take responsibility for. Mali offered help promote the project and is keen to work with Amy to talk about how to further develop the project.

- Community Fair at St Aidans: The group is happy to support the fayre on Saturday 9th March 11am – 2pm. The last community fayre was held on the 6th October but volunteer attendance was low probably because we had a work party on the same day. This time Susan requested for the fayre to be planned for a date which would not clash with our work party. The fayre is a good networking opportunity and it would be ideal to have at least 3 willing volunteers so each person will only need to man the stall for a maximum of an hour.

- St George & Redfield Voice: Susan has recently submitted an article about conservation work on the hill which will appear in the next publication.

- Parks charity – Rob is on the steering group setting up a new Parks Foundation for all of Bristol's parks and green spaces which is due to launch in June 2019.

10. AGM

- Accounts for the year: Margaret had supplied the group with a handout of the accounts which confirms that there will be enough funds to contribute to the Natural Learners project as agreed.

- Elections: Everyone was in favour of the committee being re-elected for 2019, as follows, Susan (Chair), Rob (Committee), Margaret (Treasurer), Jo (Secretary), Rod (Committee), Mali (Committee), Richard (Committee)

11. The next meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday, 5th February, 7.15pm in the back room of Summerhill Methodist Church, 5, Air Balloon Rd, BS5 8LB.