



**Note of FoTH meeting Thursday, 30 January 2014
Summerhill Methodist Church**

Present:

Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Kit (Memb Sec), Margaret (Cttee), Denise (Bristol Council), Stephen, Helen (minutes)

Apologies:

Clare, Jude & Bryan, Elaine

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Issues and thanks for our Community Park Keeper, Area Parks Manager and Grounds Maintenance team

Rob reported a meeting with Jamie which covered a number of issues including maintaining the refurbished steps to preventing wear and tear, given the Council's commitment to their upkeep for five years. The work was in need of action and Denise mentioned that it was one of many jobs waiting to be done.

Action Denise to seek confirmation that the work was listed, with approximate dates, on the relevant budget.

The ground was currently too wet to allow a tractor to cut the Greendown hedge. The hedge cut, the bed outside the Greendown entrance, and the remainder of winter works were due to be addressed before the next bird nesting season. In response to an enquiry from Kit, it was established that the Council insurance would not cover trained volunteers using power tools.

The Green flag judges had paid a mystery shopping visit to the site at 15.30 on a November afternoon. Their comments were circulated and it was noted that the judge had apparently not noticed the wheelchair accessible path signage. It was acknowledged that vegetation encroaching on the path would need attention in future as the path was becoming narrower. The judges' report had complimented the construction of the wooden steps and the condition of the chimney. Litter and dog fouling (including litter from dog poo bags) had been observed throughout the LNR. The judges had commended the ambition and courage of the Friends' group and appreciated the site had considerable biodiversity potential.

It was hoped that works to steps and winter maintenance would be completed before the Green Flag judges' next visit (expected in March 2014).

Susan invited comments on a permanent sign quote from Wards, containing information on the Audio trail. Stove enamelled front and back would cost £125 + VAT or an A4 composite panel would be £66. The meeting preferred the former version and it was proposed to go ahead with the order.

Dog fouling and control of other behaviour.

John Atkinson, the neighbourhood working co-ordinator for Bristol Central and East, had volunteered to assist Friends to clear the Hill completely of dog fouling so that a pattern could be analysed on the following day. Anti dog-fouling posters would be immediately put up on all the entrances. It was proposed to change the designs from time to time to avoid the problem of acclimatisation and 'blind spots' developing. The posters would be replaced at the monthly work parties. On a date [to be arranged] in February, the Hill would be cleared and subsequent deposits marked with paint and surveyed. Denise mentioned that the Council had a stencil enforcement message for the purpose. The question of funding a 'dogs and owners' training event was discussed. It was suggested that activity should extend from the Community Fair in March until after the Balloon Fiesta. There would also be a new city-wide campaign and associated educational messages organised by Bristol City Council.

Susan circulated a draft questionnaire for capturing information about attitudes to dogs' behaviour. Committee members expressed reservations about the length and content of the questionnaire, and suggested amendments. It was agreed that copies of the questionnaire should not be delivered house to house. They should be handed directly to visitors to the Hill at events and at other times. Copies would be made available at the Community Fair in March. It was acknowledged that responses would differ depending on whether the respondent was a local resident or a visitor, and whether they owned a dog or not. Denise confirmed that the Council would provide a Freepost code for return of completed questionnaires.

It was agreed that the questionnaire would form the Friends of Troopers Hill 2014 campaign.

The meeting recognised that a campaign for keeping dogs on leads would be unpopular and would only take that approach as a last resort.

Action: Denise to provide 50 of each current design of poster and to forward a copy of the stencil. Also to enquire about use of the Council's Survey Monkey resource

Troopers Hill Field

It appeared that none of the requested works had been carried out to address the worn ground under the football goals, the hole near the slide and two unsupported trees.

Action: Denise to investigate progress of the request.

Work parties

November and December: volunteers had removed bramble etc from amongst the broom above the lower chimney stack. The January work party had been rained off and it was anticipated that weather would also prevent the February work party. Rob said that Sally's glade needed some tidying up and saplings needed to be cut in other areas. Kit suggested a short-notice work party if weather allowed. It was proposed that some drainage channels could be created to take standing water off paths.

Rob, Susan, Kit and Norman were up-to-date with work party leader training.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

In Clare's absence, Susan reported the enhancement of a page on the Troopers Hill web site <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/strollers/> giving more information about the St George Strollers.

Denise had been working with Severnside Community Rail who were encouraging groups to use the rail network. It was recognised that the length of journey plus the additional cost

might be off-putting for some of the Strollers. Conversation ensued about different rail routes and the availability of funding was discussed.

Action: Denise to liaise between the Strollers and Severnside Community Rail.

Events

Since our last meeting

Annual General Meeting on Thursday 5th December had been well attended.

Avon Valley History Walk - Sunday 8th December

Action: Susan to write to Bath House owners to thank them for permitting access

Before our next meeting

Star Gazing, early February

The prospective event had attracted 35 expressions of interest and it seemed likely that more dates would be proposed for the month of March. Bristol Astronomical Society would be willing to facilitate an event in March or April.

The meeting agreed that the FOTH Wild Plants walk would be suitable for inclusion in the programme of the forthcoming Bristol Walking Festival (during May).

Margaret was thanked for updating the VOSCUR site with FOTH event information.

Networking

- St George in Bloom

It was explained that this was a competition for residents of St George, having two strands, as for the 'It's your Neighbourhood' concept. Denise advised that Troopers Hill was on the judging route and discretionary awards were available. A new South West in Bloom quality Kite Mark (in the form of a plaque or flag) had been introduced. Given that such awards lend weight to grant applications, and the RHS could be a possible source of funds, the meeting agreed that it would be appropriate to enter the competition.

- Green Capital Partnership

FOTH had become members of the Nature and Open Spaces sub-group of the Green Capital Partnership 2015, which presented potential funding opportunities for the future.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

Rob reported the totals of 211 Twitter followers and 342 'likes' on the Troopers Hill Facebook page.

Newsletter

The next issue was due to be produced in March, before for the Community Fair.

Kit was contemplating two issues a year in future in light of the resource involved coupled with the absence of feedback received.