

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday 8th March 2007 7.15pm
Wesley Memorial Church, Bryants Hill



Present Susan (Chair) John (BCC) Rob, Val, Peter, Kit, Helen, Liz, Alan, Roger, Carol, Ben, Jenny, Anne, Gillian, Roy, Maureen, Pauline, Chris Windows.

Apologies Judith, Sally (BCC)

The minutes of the previous meetings were approved and there were no actions outstanding.

Update on Green Flag application

Chair expressed thanks to the Council and contractors for the recent improvements resulting from the noticeable activity on the Hill.

Rob drew attention to the new edition of the Management Plan revised in partnership with the Council, containing input from FOTH and a foreword from Simon Cooke. For management purposes the LNR was divided into 11 compartments each having a separate management regime. Management would be planned on a five-year rolling programme of activities to be completed each year, and a lead officer nominated for each task. John said the Plan would count towards the initial (documentation) stage of the Green Flag application. While planned maintenance expenditure for the LNR was currently £1960, in order to meet the plan £14,000 per year would need to be spent on Troopers Hill.

The application would be judged during the summer and the results would be announced in late summer.

(Ffi www.greenflagaward.org.uk)

John updated the meeting on the route of the wheelchair access path and seating plan for the top chimney area. The route would be marked out on Tuesday 13 March and constructed using 'Fibredek'. It would extend to just beyond the chimney following the route of the existing path. The way across Troopers Hill Field to the gate would be improved also. In response to Roy's concern about the steep drop at the edge of the prospective path, JT agreed to look at the safety hazard aspect. The gradient was Disability Discrimination Act compliant. A seat would be put at one end of the path and another part way along. He said the seats would probably be supplied by a well-known street furniture supplier. Rob confirmed that they ought to be the same type as the red benches in the Field but black. The vandalised benches were to be replaced with black metal wood-topped seats. The bench overlooking Bristol could perhaps be replaced rather than repaired. John complimented FOTH on "The Story of the Bench" video.

A six-month work plan was discussed. There were no detailed decisions on the order of work so far, though John was impressed by the amount of volunteer work. He suggested that FOTH might consider cutting some drainage ditches between the Field and the Hill, keep down the new growth of bramble and bracken, seed the newly cleared areas with ling and bell heather, take out some small trees, and explain the developments to passers-by.

Action: Rob to seek Nick Hudson's advice about mechanism for re-seeding with heather.

John explained that composting of cleared material on-site would contribute to meeting E-mass (environmental audit management schemes) criteria, save on the transport in removing it, and invited FOTH to identify potential composting locations, the compost could potentially be used later e.g. as mulch.

It was mentioned that the latest bags of cleared bramble had not yet collected. John to contact BCS. After the meeting the bags were removed.

Pauline reminded the meeting that trees had been planted to prevent landslip of material tipped and there were two springs. John confirmed that Crews Hole Woodland is not formally part of the Field or the LNR and would not generally be affected by plans to cut trees.

Fence repairs – arrangements were to be made for wood to be taken to Rob and Susan's house for treatment and storage.

Litter Bins and extra dog bin – consideration would be given to providing a litter bin near the entrance from Troopers Hill Field. The Field dog bin would be moved nearer to Malvern Road, and Kit asked for the dog bin just inside the LNR from the Field entrance to be moved further away from the path to a less prominent spot.

John reported that cleanliness a key criterion for Green Flag so the Council was open to suggestions for dealing with dog mess. The meeting discussed the problem of bins appearing full when they are not.

Disposable barbecues can scorch the grass, so John advised resting the barbecue on empty drinks tins down to save the grass.

Broken Glass – anyone finding broken glass or other hazardous waste can report it on 9223719

Tools and machinery – The Council would obtain a professional strimmer (with harness) and brush cutter for the group, and would pay for the training of persons to be accredited for using them. Rob and Susan said their garage could be used for training. The persons concerned would need personal protective equipment and the work areas would have to be cordoned off from the public.

Six interested Friends volunteered, progress would depend on costs.

Action: John to confirm training details

The Friends accepted John's offer of a graffiti removal kit for signs and benches.

Rob raised the question of whether an overall risk assessment could be put in place to cover ad hoc short-notice work parties instead of the current written advance agreement.

Action: John agreed to look again at the requirements for notice.

Other issues for John

John had no progress to report on repairs to the lower stack. Work there would probably require temporary traffic lights and a cherry picker. Rob said it had been three years since the need for the work was identified. Measures to stop the gates to the Field being made "motorbike-accessible" by contractors would be high on the list for next financial year.

In response to a question about the muddiness around the next-to-lowest gate on Troopers Hill Road, Rob explained that the Hill was being visited more, and in the recent wet weather mud had been inevitable. It would be difficult to address without altering the character of the LNR.

Work parties

To fit with the availability of trained persons the April work party would be on 14th April rather than 7th.

Leaflet Design

Rob circulated the latest draft showing progress so far, and took comments. Most present opposed any change to the FOTH logo but a few individuals expressed differences of opinion. The illustrations were not yet finalised.

Action: All – to pass any comments on the leaflet to Rob to give to the artist.

Feedback on events

The recent Quiz Night had attracted over 70 people, mainly from other conservation groups and council parks and nature officers. Three Brooks group won the quiz but

the results were close, and the raffle had raised some funds. Chair thanked the organisers and noted there had been requests for a similar event next year. Rob had led a Through the Seasons Walk for 10 people on Friday 2 March. The event had been organised by Sally and raised £18 in donations.

Next Events

Barton Hill History Group Exhibition 24 March 2007. Chair collected names of FOTH volunteers to take care of the FOTH will have a stand.

Barton Hill Skittles night 21st April 2007. Liz collected names and entry fees
Action: any Friends wishing to participate need to let Liz know and pay in advance.

Good Friday Service 6 April 2007: Volunteers were identified to put up the new gazebo, maintain a presence, and distribute leaflets.

Action: Kit to ensure Malvern Road gate to Field is open on time.

Tree Gazing Walk 24 May 2007: Friends – contact Sally to book places.

Festival of Nature The meeting decided it was not a worthwhile use of resources to have a FOTH stand (last year's event had been time-consuming for little apparent reward) but by that time Troopers Hill leaflets would be available on the Bristol Parks stand

Rob drew the attention of the meeting to Breathing Places publicity and Tourist board website publicity.

Membership numbers

Kit reported that following an invitation for newsletter recipients to say whether they wished to continue receiving it, the membership had fallen from 350 to 93. The advantage is that FOTH now has a core membership who have expressed real interest in the group, a more condensed database, smaller numbers for faster consultation and shorter delivery rounds for the paper newsletters. The exercise generated donations in the form of cheques and stamps, and attracted some nice comments.

The meeting decided against a mass delivery of events leaflets, which could be given out on Good Friday and at other events.

Newsletter

There was favourable feedback to report on the most recent edition of the newsletter, in particular, compliments on Gillian's memories article.

Kit reported he was still awaiting responses to requests for content of the next newsletter, including one from Phil Williamson explaining the tree cutting. Ben and Jenny offered contributions. It was suggested that the newsletter might run a poetry competition.

Networking

- **CABE event** (conference of parks managers from throughout the country). A number of delegates visited Troopers Hill to learn more about the LNR and the activities. The participants had been generally impressed by the site and the work done, and with the newsletter. Sally Oldfield and Richard Fletcher had been involved and the event had raised Troopers Hill's profile amongst Bristol Parks as well as nationally.

- **Parks Forum:** Chair reported an appeal from Forum members to increase the budget for the parks department as a result of which £150k had been added to the budget, mainly to pay for trees. Equally the Forum had made a less successful bid for street trees. Chris pointed out that the money was not likely to be ring-fenced and pressure should be exerted to prevent its being allocated elsewhere if not spent.

- **Procurement Review Workshop** – The event sought ideas from parks groups on the criteria for awarding parks management procurement contracts. There had been a consensus that the visual appearance of park entrances was crucial and set the tone for behaviour within the park. It was recognised that the management of local nature reserves requires a different approach from parks

- Reciprocal visit with **Cock Road Ridge** group later in the year

Action: Kit to take forward

- **Avon Valley Woodlands:** FOTH representatives had attended the first meeting of the Avon Valley Woodlands' prospective Friends group and had offered advice and assistance.

The Bath House

Rob briefly described the location, appearance and history. Bristol Industrial Buildings Trust have determined quite a bit of the structure of the garden and identified the potential for restoring a historic garden on the site. They would be writing to English Heritage to try and obtain a Grade II* listing for the bathhouse, including the garden, which would increase the potential for obtaining grant funding. Roy and Pauline gave accounts of how the bath house may have been used.

The Lamb Inn

Susan had written to the planning department (though not on behalf of FOTH) but had not heard anything in return

Financial situation

Rob reported that £1165 of the Breathing Places money had been spent on a new gazebo, meeting rooms, tools etc. The invoice for the badger survey was expected shortly. £4000 bill for leaflets was also expected soon.

BRERC would be running some plant ID evenings, to be arranged before the next meeting.

Other calls on our funds included the forthcoming concert at the end of June.

Recent donations and the proceeds of the quiz night had contributed to funds.

Farewell to Jenny and Ben

The meeting expressed thanks to Jenny and Ben for their enthusiastic participation over the last year or so. They were leaving Bristol for new work in Cambridge. Friends were sorry to see them go, they will be missed.