

NOTE OF MEETING

Wednesday 22 August 2007



Present: Susan (Chair) Rob, Sally (Bristol Council), Julian (Bristol Contract Services) Debbie, Pauline, Maureen, Vernon, Phyll, Anne, Jude, Val, Roy, Helen (minutes)

Apologies: Kit, Roger, Cllr Fabian Breckels

Outstanding actions from the previous minutes: Cllr Breckels had posted an article on the Friends' internet forum on the subject of the impact of the bus service improvements on Troopers Hill Road. The meeting recognised that some roads and streets in Bristol would be at higher risk and likely to take a higher priority for safety-related expenditure by the Council. Concern was expressed about the speed and amount of traffic on Troopers Hill Road and, lately, some incidents of access by heavy vehicles.

Richard Fletcher was investigating whether it would be appropriate to seek an annual events license for the site and was expected to report back.

The minutes of the previous meeting were **approved**.

Rob **introduced** Julian Thomas of Bristol Contract Services, responsible for conservation and maintenance at Troopers Hill, Eastwood Farm and Callington Road. The meeting agreed that since Julian had begun work on the Hill, the improvements had been noticeable. Julian's working schedule would average at two days per week on the Hill, but he would not necessarily be present every week as work on the other sites had to be factored in. It would be possible for him to plan work around events on the Hill to help display it at its best. He hoped to stage the work evenly over the next year. Julian confirmed that his remit included work on the path between the Field and Lamb Hill. He would try to keep the grass at the edges of the path between Green Down and the lower chimney cut wider and shorter as it is a common dog walk route and short grass encourages dog owners to clean up after their dogs.

Julian asked whether keys were available for access by motorised wheelchairs and mobility scooters via the gate between Malvern Road and Troopers Hill Field. Chair confirmed the arrangements for obtaining keys from the Council, by contacting her or by requesting one from Bristol Parks. The contact details were displayed on the notice board at the Malvern Road gate.

Issues on Troopers Hill to be passed to John

Chair reported that John had raised an order for work on the lower chimney and was awaiting a detailed breakdown of the requirements, he would forward information to FOTH when it became available.

Julian confirmed that work was in hand on the replacement of steps including the rotting one on steps up from lowest entrance and the missing one at Greendown.

John had agreed a timber supply list with Julian for the repair of the fence at Greendown.

- **Bramble growth on cleared areas:** it was agreed that cut, clear and spray would be appropriate measures as the only way of keeping the bramble in check. There was a seasonal requirement to allow other flowering plants to grow and seed. It was observed that putting a large gate in the section of fence at the second lowest Troopers Hill Road entrance would facilitate removal of cut material from the Hill where it was difficult to lift heavy loads over the fence.

- **Location of composting sites:** Several sites were suggested, to reduce the burden of carrying the bulky cut material. Roy emphasised the difficulty of turning the brambles and other woody prunings into a decent grade of compost. Ways of containing the material and disguising the heaps were discussed. The disadvantages of burning were generally agreed.

Action: Friends to investigate suitable sites at next work party.

Green Flag

The Chair and Work Party Organiser had collected the flag at a ceremony in Leeds. Rob circulated photographs of the Mayor and others with the flag on Troopers Hill. Roy circulated photos of Friends' informal celebration on The Hill.

- **Publicity** had been really good and included a double page spread in the weekend edition of the Evening Post.

- **Feedback from the Green Flag judges:** Rob circulated copies and read out some highlights. There was some discussion of the need for warning signs to be posted to advise of narrow paths at certain points pending eventual remedial work.. The practicability and timing of works to the paths were considered.

- **Location of the Green Flag and poster :** The A3 certificate was currently displayed on the Troopers Hill Field Malvern Road entrance notice board. It was reported that John was looking for a suitable flagpole in the Council stores. Because the chimney is a listed structure flying the Green Flag from the chimney was inadvisable. FOTH agreed that it needs to be near the road so it is continually observed and seen by those driving past. Two options emerged: at Green Down well into the site; or the entrance second up from Crews Hole Road giving an attractive background view. The ecological importance of the flat area immediately behind the kissing gate was discussed. Roy raised the safety implications of the pole possibly falling over. He suggested a site where in the event it would not fall on a path or the road. The implications for nesting birds were also discussed. The necessity for flying the flag at all on a nature reserve was questioned. In this context ease of access from Green Down was discussed as one of the potential improvements for next year's Green Flag. This would be addressed in a prospective grant application to pay for the design of improved gates at the entrances to the Hill [see also minutes of 12 July: Financial Position and 7 November 2006 : Issues for Bristol Parks].

It was decided that a flagpole would be best situated on Green Down well away from any path or road.

Work parties

Since the last meeting: an evening work party and a Saturday work party had cleared bramble re-growth. In view of the diminishing daylight, there would be no more evening work parties in 2007. Rob proposed to fix next year's evening work party dates in advance and give them better publicity in the hope of attracting more volunteers. Chair commented that the work party

sites looked improved, but not very much trampled on, at the end of recent work parties.

The new leaflets

Rob reported the progress on the production of the history and geology leaflets. He circulated the finished designs, which were currently at the printers. The new leaflets would be available for the Discovery day and forthcoming events. They could be distributed along the same lines as the general leaflets. It was suggested that the general leaflets could be distributed via local supermarkets.

Feedback on events

- **BRERC workshops** – pond life and invertebrates. The workshops were very much appreciated by the participants.

- **Family Fun Picnic/Raffle/Bugs and Beasties**. Friends had done very well and raised over £400. Rob circulated photographs. It was recognised that the people who attended had enjoyed a good time. Special thanks were expressed to those who had worked in the craft tents, sold drinks and other duties.

- **The Troopers Hill History stand** at Wesley Memorial Church Flower Festival on 18 August had attracted visitors, particularly at the start and end of the day. Visitors included the great-granddaughter of a previous owner of Troopers Hill who had sold it because it was overrun with rabbits.

- Sally had conducted a “**walking the way to health**” walk during the morning of 22 August.

Next Events

- **BRERC workshops** – heathland and birds – 23 and 29 August respectively, meeting at the earlier time of 6.30pm by the Chimney.

- **Aero-Bat-ics** – 30 August 8pm – this would be one of Sally’s “Nature in the City” events. 30 people were already booked to attend.

- **Through the Seasons Walk** – 10.30 am on Friday 7 September, to be led by Rob - another “Nature in the City event”

- **Avon Valley Walk** planned for Sunday 9 September. This would be an all-day walk starting at 10.00 at Conham and visiting Troopers Hill, Crews Hole Woodland, through St Annes Wood to the top of Eastwood Farm and back via Beeses Ferry to Conham. The party would stop for lunch by the well in St Anne’s Woods, there would be a meeting point in Somerfield car park at 2.00. Susan asked for volunteers to marshal the walk.

Action: Rob to confirm timings of the stages of the walk.

- **Troopers Hill Discovery Day** – Saturday 22 September

Volunteers were required to put up tents and gazebos on Troopers Hill Field, organise events, be present at the stands and displays.

- **Fungi Foray** – 10.30 Sunday 7th October: a “Nature in the City” event.

- **Kite Flying** – Sunday 14th October

Action: Chair to contact Roger and speak to Richard Fletcher regarding the licence for music.

- **Invasive Weeds**: The Chair drew attention to an invitation for a representative from FOTH to participate in a daytime workshop at the CREATE centre (lunch provided) concerned with setting up and managing a prospective Invasive Weed Forum.

Action: Anyone interested in representing Troopers Hill to contact Chair for further details.

- St Aidan's **Promises auction:** The church was holding an auction, with afternoon teas available, in aid of the church heating, on Saturday 8 September 2007. FOTH had agreed to provide a guided walk on The Hill for up to 20 people as one of the Auction items.
- **Beer Festival at Beeses:** the meeting was reminded that the dates were 14th to 16th September and that Beeses had kindly offered to donate the proceeds of ticket sales to Friends of Eastwood Farm and FOTH.

Newsletter

It was proposed that the next Newsletter be issued in early September. The editor was keen to commission an article on the recent family fun picnic. Roy agreed to consider (since provided).

Green Spaces Strategy (GSS)

The Chair and Work Party Organiser had discussed the Strategy with Bristol Council Parks officers. It was being proposed that land sales in the Council area might finance £36 million of investment in parks. The Strategy would set a standard for the amount of space in an area. The proposed standard would be set at 36% less green space than currently available to inhabitants of St George. It had not been decided how the proceeds of sales would be allocated and what share of the funds raised would be dedicated to parks. There was no indication of the source of revenue for maintaining the standard, once it had been set and achieved. The proposals indicated that Sally's post would be made permanent, given an assistant, and that additional nature reserves would be established. Allotments were excluded from the terms of the Green Spaces strategy. There was discussion of land values in Bristol. The meeting recognised the the quality and clarity of the Strategy document and acknowledged it was a genuine attempt to capture feedback. It was easy to fill in online and all FOTH members were encouraged to respond to it. Rob provided copies and a CD with the electronic files, and copies of questionnaire for FOTH members.

Action: All to provide feedback to Bristol Council on the GSS.

Action: Anyone interested in attending the Parks Forum Conference on Saturday 15 September 2007 (for a discussion of the GSS) to let Chair know.