

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday October 3rd 7.15 – 9pm

Summerhill Methodist Church

Attendees: Rob, Susan, Adam, Rod, Tyler, Amy, Skye, Luke, Elaine, Judith, Freya, Mali

Apologies: None

1. Approve June Minutes

The June minutes were approved. The group introduced themselves to Adam who has newly taken the role as secretary for FOTH.

2. Projects

a. Progress on Access to Nature (Paths)

Rob provided an update on the planned works by Bristol Parks to tracks and paths in Troopers Hill field. Unfortunately, due to staff shortages and sickness, work has not yet started. Rob is waiting to hear of a new start date and is hopeful work will start this year depending on the weather.

b. ParkWork woodland paths

New steps from Crews Hole Road to Troopers Hill are now complete. Final works included removing brambles. ParkWork need to invoice Friends of Troopers Hill for the work.

c. Wild Play

Susan reported the grant requested for Wild Play was not successful this time, and considerations are being made whether to apply for a grant to the John James foundation. Mali now works 2 days a week in Bath and is deciding whether she has the capacity to continue Wild Play.

d. The Hive

Outdoor learning about fungi will be the 4th and final event of 2019 organised by FOTH for The Hive. Activities arranged by FOTH for the Hive have been very successful. Susan will ask the Hive for feedback on this year's activities and this is good will ask if they want to jointly seek more funding so similar activities this can continue next year.

e. Protecting Nature

Money was saved on new fences projects by using a local contractor who was able to use their own local compound for storage. Susan asked the National Lottery Heritage Fund whether the project end date could be extended to

use the left-over money – they responded no (which was expected). However Susan has agreed some extra work to be done within the project end date and is seeking the go-ahead to spend an extra £2,000 on conservation work.

Some of the savings allowed the removal of old and rotten wooden fencing along Troopers Hill Rd. This will make it a lot easier for the verge and overgrowth to be cut by a tractor with a flail.

A new welcome sign has been installed at the entrance opposite 87 Troopers Hill Rd and a new Fungi interpretation board at the entrance opposite 111 Troopers Hill Rd.

f. Celebration event for protecting nature

It had been hoped that the celebration event for the Protecting Nature project could be held at the same time as Fungi Foray. A senior representative from Bristol parks is required at the event to formally sign off the conservation management plan that was written with funding for the project. Susan had not received a reply to her invitation, which is probably simply due to an over heavy workload. She will make efforts to establish contact and agree a date.

3. Conservation work on Troopers Hill

a. Heritage Fund - Funded update to Conservation Management Plan

Susan collated changes, received from Parks staff and including her own suggestions and passed them to Rupert Higgins of Wessex Ecological Consultancy, the author of the new conservation management plan. Rupert has applied those changes and the documents are back with Susan and Rob for final reviews and passing to Parks staff for their sign-off.

b. Heritage Fund - Works for summer and the coming winter

Initially it had been thought there would be priority conservation work to do in summer, however when reviewing the new conservation management plan and seeing what growth had happened in the areas worked on last winter, it was decided the following work would be arranged for this winter
1) cutting back young gorse back and new growth in the areas work on last winter
2) removing scrub from the highest priority areas that had not been cut the previous year.

c. Heritage Fund - Invertebrates survey

David Gibbs has been carrying out the invertebrate survey and is currently carrying out identification of some of the specimens he collected on his visits. In April he found 2 moths that have not been found on Troopers Hill before, one of which had not been found in Bristol before *Mompha sturnipennella* and the other, *Heliozela hammoniella*, has not been recorded in the Bristol area since 2008. Jude asked whether another Moth night will be arranged, and it was recommended this be discussed during the 2020 events planning meeting.

d. Volunteer conservation work parties and other works

Saturdays - 6th July, 3rd August, 7th September

Thursdays - 18th July, 15th August, 19th September

Rob reported that excellent progress has been made clearing broom and young saplings from areas of heather on south-facing slopes. There has been an extra push on this, and an additional work party day arranged by the Young Ranges really helped.

Attendance at work parties has been good. There have been new faces, good weather and no cancelations.

During the 7th September work parties, some Heather Colletes (*Colletes succinctus*) bees were found. The identification was confirmed by Steven Falk, author of the "Field Guide to Bees of Great Britain and Ireland". These are solitary bees who make their nests in aggregations and prefer heather as a source of pollen. These bees have been recorded on Troopers Hill in the past.

A corporate work party for the Environment Agency is planned on October 15th. A job they may be able to help with is filling steps with aggregate. Rob is planning with Bristol Parks whether a delivery of aggregate can be arranged, and Susan is looking for a storage location in somebody's property close to Troopers Hill that can be used for wheelbarrows.

A health and Safety training course by Bristol parks will be taking place at St George Community centre on Saturday October 5th. Adam and Neil are planning to attend which will mean they are then able to lead the work party groups in the event Rob or Susan are unable to. Other people who are able to do this include Mali, and Chris from Street Goat.

e. Next work parties before the next meeting

Saturdays - 5th October 2nd November

Thursdays - 17th October 14th November

4. Troopers Hill Young Rangers (Future Proof Parks) – Ideas

a. Art Trail

Skye from Young Rangers told the group about an Art trail the Young Rangers would like to hold next year to celebrate rare species, invertebrates and nature found at Troopers Hill.

The plan is to open an art competition in January 2020 allowing the public and school children to submit drawings and paintings for up to 8 categories. The winning artwork from each category would be displayed on Troopers Hill in June using boards, murals, signs and placing where the nature can most often be found.

The display in June coincides with the 25th anniversary of Troopers Hill be nature reserve, and this would be an excellent way to support the celebration.

Voting is proposed to take place via social media, though other consideration needs to be also given to people who do-not use social media.

Further discussion and details need to be agreed for the event. Amy will calculate costs for stands and send to Susan. Skye and YRs will define locations for art placement, categories for entries, advertising, and how to vote and enter.

b. Forest School

Luke from Young Rangers told the group about an idea called Forest School – an alternative youth club for 16 to 19 year olds to learn more about the woodland area beside Troopers Hill.

The idea of the school is for young people to learn more about the woodland, the plants, the wildlife and learn skills such as basic bush craft.

There may be an opportunity to work with the John Muir Trust, Rob mentioned he has a contact who may be able to help.

Rob said the woods are not officially an area that FOTH is responsible for, however a lot of work has been completed in the woods to make them more

accessible, and this is a very good idea to give more people access and education.

Susan said there could be opportunities to run work parties in the woodlands and there are areas that need clearing such as Elizabeth's Bench.

Some discussion was had about whether it would be possible to have fires in the woodlands. The group recognized that it could be difficult to arrange and there are lots of considerations needed. Mali said she could help with Fire risk assessment having recently completed one.

Luke and Amy to keep the group up to date with information on this idea as it evolves.

c. Instagram

The Young Rangers have created an official Instagram account for FOTH.

5. Other Troopers Hill issues and news

It was announced that Adam has taken on the role of secretary for FOTH. Formal registration will be included in the AGM on December 5th.

An arboriculture officer (tree officer) from Bristol City Council visited Troopers Hill after having carried out an initial visit to assess a fire-damaged goat willow and initiating a work order for part of the tree to be taken down

Whilst walking around the hill, the officer spoke with Susan about ash die back and drew attention to ash trees in Troopers Hill Field that were likely to be affected in the future. The office suggested planting 4 walnut trees between the ash trees to take their place when they die. The officer said there would be a low chance of seeding from the walnut trees.

Rob suggested a "sponsor a tree" scheme could be a good way of funding the walnut tree planting. It typically costs £280 to sponsor a tree which includes care, maintenance and watering of the tree for the first two years.

All present thought the walnut trees would be a good idea with a suggestion from Rob that they be planted higher up from the ash trees, out of their main shadow, so that if they did survive, the walnut tree could continue to thrive.

Rob gave updates from the South West in Bloom submissions. He will hear back about “It’s Your Neighbourhood” this month (October), and will hear about “Pride in Parks” next February.

A group of 6th form A-Level students from a Bradley Stoke school are visiting Troopers Hill on Monday 7th October. Susan will lead a walking tour about succession and conservation management.

6. Events

“Walk for Meetup”, an organisation arranging meetups for people to meet and do activities, visited Troopers Hill on Saturday 6th July and was led by Susan who did a plants talk. The group donated £50 to FOTH.

The Bugs and Beasties event on August 10th was unfortunately cancelled due to bad weather. It was also cancelled last year because of poor weather as well.

A new event, “star storytelling and gazing” was held for the first time on September 7th. The event was in two parts, first story telling by Cassandra, followed by an astrophysicist tour of the night sky. The children enjoyed the first story, though some started to lose interest after a while. The event was an experiment and Susan has given feedback.

Fungi Foray is scheduled for November 9th. Susan will shortly be sending information by email for registration followed by social media posts.

A local resident has approached FOTH to offer free session using his mobile inflatable planetarium. The group had some discussion about whether this would be something people may be interested in and agreed there may be potential based on the success of the other stargazing events.

An event using an inflatable planetarium would need to be hosted in a space like Summerhill Methodist church where there would be enough room for the planetarium. Susan will gather more details for discussion in the 2020 event planning.

A meeting to discuss 2020 events has been arranged on Tuesday 24th October at Rob and Susan’s house. Ideas put forward included re-running the moth night and stargazing events. Rod will find out who the contact is for the Bristol astronomical society since Fiona has now stepped down.

7. Networking

Susan continues to provide articles in the St George and Redfield Voice. The articles are included in the print copies but the full version of the paper is no longer made available online. As Susan's street is not in the distribution area it makes it more difficult to use the articles as evidence of publicity for the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Susan has asked for the paper to go online once more and for physical copies of the paper to be posted to her in the interim.

Rob has three talks booked for the Wesley Wives, Avon wildlife group in Keynsham and another in South Bristol next year. All three are giving donations to FOTH.

Bristol University has asked FOTH whether they would like any soil or water samples to be taken by a student who is studying a geography course. Rod suggested reviewing samples that have been previously taken to as a comparison to measure any changes. Susan suggested testing the lying surface water that culminates on Troopers Hill field every winter.

Susan will return ideas to the university and student to see whether they are interested.

Rob has updated the FOTH website to move the navigation from the side to the top of the screen which should make the website easier to use and navigate when viewed on a mobile phone. Links to the new Instagram account have also been added.

8. Next meeting

The next meeting is the AGM on Thursday, 5th December, 7.15pm-9pm, in the back room of Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd, BS5 8LB.