

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday December 3rd 7.15 – 9pm

Online Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Rob, Susan, Margaret, Elaine, Fabian, Rosie, Rod

Apologies: Mali

1. Approve October Minutes

The October minutes were approved.

2. Projects

a. Progress on Access to Nature

The project is now complete. The plaque was unveiled by Lizzie Horn during a small ceremony. The invoices have been passed onto Enover from Bristol City Council. Everyone is happy and an article has been published in 'The Week In' local free newspaper.

Susan said it's great to see so many people using the new paths. Lots of people out of the blue saying it's a perfect time for the paths because of the lying water in the Field.

At the opening ceremony Angela (from Enover) had a very good conversation about replacing the red slide with Susan, Rob and Susie, Bristol City Council's Landscape manager. Angela would be supportive of Friends of Troopers Hill putting in a grant application.

Conversations with Richard Fletcher and Teija of Bristol Parks are on-going about getting the path from the field to the chimney re-surfaced.

b. Troopers Hill Red Slide

Susan explained the fundraising money has been gradually increasing. We were very lucky to get a £500 donation from Jo Webster-Green, owner of the Little Treasures toy shop on church road.

Some events were planned to fundraise for the slide however that has all been put on hold because of Covid19 and lockdown.

As it stands, over £1,000 of donations have been received. We will keep asking for donations regardless of asking for a grant. If we get too much donation money, it will be spent on children's activities.

We have received letters of support from Summerhill Infant school, Councillor Fabian Breckels and local MP Kerry McCarthy. We now have everything needed to submit a grant application. It will be considered towards end of Feb and we hope to find out in March

The initial location for the slide was between the mounds and fence of the play area. When Susan did the first measuring up with Aaron from Bristol City Council's Landscapes team, it was found the area is too close to the poplar trees and the safety surface would encroach on the Field if it was moved away from the trees. Instead, the slide will be positioned beside the existing fenced play area and the climbing structure. The safety surface of the existing climbing equipment will be extended to the slide.

Aaron has been able to get a revised, lower quote for the slide from the supplier which means the grant application will be for less than £10,000.

3. Conservation work on Troopers Hill

a. Bristol Parks winter works and hedge cut by Greendown

The hedge cut by the Greendown boundary has been completed. Susan will send a list of works to Bristol Parks on winter works we would like to have done.

b. Winter works funded by Friends of Troopers Hill

At the last meeting, we agreed to put some of our money towards winter works and specifically for Green Mantle to cut the gorse. We are hoping the council will place the order and then invoice us.

Rob and Susan walked around the site with Becky Belfin, Nature Conservation Officer from Bristol City Council who is very pleased with the work that we are doing.

Becky talked through the changes to conservation management needed in the area where the oak tree near the Greendown boundary collapsed last year. The conservation management plan has been updated accordingly.

c. Winter works planned for volunteers

Winter works had stopped because of lockdown, however we have heard from Ella we are able to go back to the groups of 6 and we hope to do one session before Christmas.

d. Volunteer conservation group work parties and individual working

People can carry on litter picking and solo volunteering. Bill has done a bit on his own at Sally's Glade. Rob has done a bit near the "sacrificial stone". Susan in the Gulley. Fran and Neil on the area above Sally's glade. Elaine and others are doing litter picking.

We are hoping next year we can return to normal format where people are able to turn up on the day, however the pre-booked sessions have worked very well from an organisational perspective so we may consider doing a mixture of both.

ParkWork have been able to complete one session where they planted crocus bulbs by the entrance by Summerhill Terrace.

Details of all past work parties are on the Friends of Troopers Hill website www.troopers-hill.org.uk/workp.htm

4. Troopers Hill Field

a. Walnut trees

Planting of the 4 walnut trees will be completed with Section 106 money allocated for tree planting in St George Park, Dundry Park and Troopers Hill Field.

Trees will be planted in the 2nd tranche of winter planning which is around late January and early February.

5. Troopers Hill Woods

a. Fallen trees

While Rob and Susan were away, Freya reported a fallen tree in the woodland area. The contractors were slow to respond. Susan has been in contact with Bristol City Council's tree officer and the contractors have been to clear the tree and done a great job.

6. Positive results from anti-social behaviour of the night of 4th November

On the night of Friday 4th Nov, anti-social behaviour was reported, and graffiti was sprayed on the paths, bins, and a bench on the Hill. Graffiti was also sprayed on garden walls and on a way marker in the Troopers Hill woodlands.

Rob and Susan attempted to clean up some of the paths. The parks team painted over the bench and bin. In discussion with Bristol waste about the graffiti on the garden walls.

Susan spoke to Didac about the way marker who offered to make a new post if the old one could not be restored or removed to be cleaned. Susan spoke to Bristol Parks Fix It team who recommended we take it to Didac.

Rob was able to remove the post from its position despite it being concreted in place and took it too Didac who have been able to an amazing job of cleaning the graffiti and painted the carved writing with black which now looks better then when it was first installed.

The Fix It team have been back and put the way marker in a better and more visible position than it was before.

Susan has been having good conversations with the police who have a good idea of who's involved. They won't be pursuing a formal process but will be having conversations with the individuals which Susan might get involved with.

7. Events

Because of Covid19 and lockdowns, we have been very limited on what we have been able to do.

a. Virtual fungi tour

Susan took photos of fungi on the hill and recorded positions with "What 3 Words" which people could then use to find the fungi themselves.

b. Other virtual events

We did plan to have a meeting to discuss virtual events, but this did not happen, and the group agreed to pause any further action on this.

Councillor Nicola Beech did a very good video on twitter of Troopers hill in the mist. Bristol City Councillors John Wellington and Helen Godwin visited because of the video and tweeted their admiration of Troopers Hill.

Rod explained that the Bristol Astronomical Society has no physical outreach planned before Easter. However, they have started online events with the Failand observatory where they have installed a router with a 4G mobile connection. Members have joined their Zoom meetings from the observatory, so they are going to try and do something with the observatory online to continue the outreach.

St George Strollers celebrates their 10th anniversary next year. Later in 2021, the founder also celebrates their 80th birthday. The Strollers would love to get back to

walking which has been stopped while lockdown has been in effect. Susan is meeting with the St George strollers next Wednesday to discuss when they might be able to start walking again. The feeling is not to do anything while still in tier 3 particularly as a high proportion of walkers and walk leaders are in vulnerable older groups.

8. Networking

a. The Week In

'The week In' is the only local paper which has remained printing since the pandemic started. St George and Red field voice stopped because of lockdown. 'The Week In' publicises themselves as an east Bristol newspaper and has been very co-operative on writing about the opening paths, fundraising for the slide etc.

b. Social media

Numbers are increasing on Twitter and Facebook. Susan posts as an individual on Next Door to promote Troopers Hill.

c. Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation

Rob is the Chair for the Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation and explained that since lockdown, the charity has been finding it difficult to do any fundraising. A thank you event for parks groups is being organized for Dec 19th as 1 hour Zoom meeting.

On Saturday, the charity has organized bulb planting at Netham Park for family groups.

d. RHS South West in Bloom

At our last meeting, Susan explained that she had found the RHS website promoting the use of Glyphosate to control weeds in lawns. Bristol has declared an ecological emergency and a pledge from the City Council is to reduce the use of Glyphosate by a considerable amount.

Susan has been in contact with Jon Wheatley, the chair of South West in Bloom and chair of the South West Committee, asking for the information to be removed. John has been responsive to messages, however there is no progress or commitments to remove or change the information.

Susan asked in last meeting should we disassociate with an organisation that promotes old-fashioned pesticide gardening. She asked if she does not get a satisfactory response by next Feb, would we be happy to not participate in the Pride in Parks and It's Your Neighbourhood schemes supported by RHS South West in Bloom.

Rosie who is a member of the RHS said she was absolutely appalled to hear that the RHS were promoting the use of Glyphosate and that the RHS were also not being responsive to requests for this to be changed.

Fabian queried Friends of Troopers Hill's support for glyphosate in the control of Japanese knotweed. Susan replied that Japanese knotweed presented a real threat to biodiversity and the Friends supported Bristol City Council's careful use of glyphosate to control Japanese knotweed on Troopers Hill. Currently, where a large area of land is concerned, it seems to be the only option. Thanks to targeted treatments more than 2 acres of land has been restored. Treatments are now applied to a very small area where Japanese knotweed persists but is reducing.

The group had some discussion on this topic and agreed unanimously to support Susan's recommendation of disassociating from the RHS if no action were taken by February.

Susan will discuss further with Jon Wheatley and update the group at the next committee meeting in February.

9. AGM

a. Accounts for the year

Margaret has done a fine job of putting the accounts together for the year. It's been a quieter year than normal. Over the year, there has been some money returned from cancelled events. Everybody reviewed the accounts and agreed they were all ok.

b. Elections

Jo Terry will be stepping down from the committee to focus on work and family commitments. Susan shared her thanks to Jo for undertaking the secretary role when Margaret moved to look after the accounts. Jo is hoping to come back to the committee in the future.

Susan Acton-Campbell confirmed she was happy to remain as Chair and was unanimously re-elected.

Rob Acton-Campbell, Rod Davis, Mali Kedward, Freya Longden and Richard Evans have all agreed they are happy to remain as part of the Committee.

Adam Jenkin is happy to continue as Secretary and Margaret Watson as Treasurer.

The committee as listed above was duly re-elected.

c. Budget for 2021

The group reviewed the budget for next year. We are aiming to do some events in the summer if the lockdown restrictions are reduced.

Budget has been included for the gorse cut. The slide budget has reduced by £100 since the cold pour is no longer needed.

The group approved the budget.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held from 7.15pm-9pm on Thursday 4th February 2021.