



Note of Meeting

Thursday, 4 October 2012

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road, St George

Present

Susan (Chair), Rob (Cttee,WPO) Kit (Cttee, Memb Sec), Clare (Cttee, Walking) Bryan (Cttee) Jude (Cttee) Denise (BCC) Jules (BCC), Keith, Steve, Roy, Helen (Minutes)

Apologies

Margaret (Cttee) Fabian (Cllr)

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved unanimously.

2. Issues and thank yous for our Community Park Keeper, Area Parks Manager and Grounds Maintenance team

Chair noted the continuing excellent standard of maintenance on the Hill, including a repair to the Malvern Rd kissing gate which had been completed in the preceding week.

The meeting recorded a vote of thanks to Jules for his long and commendable 25(+) years' service, recognised by the issue of a certificate, together with best wishes for his recent birthday. Susan gave Jules a special FOTH certificate marking the occasion.

Denise reported that plans had been agreed for Bristol Parks Department to arrange felling and removing the leylandii trees close to the boundary of Mama Bear's Day Nursery, probably by the end of October. Susan checked that no further action was needed from FOTH and confirmed that leylandii, once felled, will not regenerate from the stumps. The felling and removal need not happen on the same day. The meeting discussed options for disposing of the trunks, which (for ecological reasons) could not be left in place - including moving them into the woodland. A collection of rubbish from the upper slopes was planned at the same time as the felling.

Greendown hedge maintenance

Susan reported on the information she had obtained about maintaining the Greendown hedge, which had grown too large (3m – 4m high) to be managed by FOTH volunteers. While an agricultural cut would be the ideal shape, this was prevented by the estate fencing. Jules explained that the hedge maintenance was covered by the existing contract and would normally occur towards end of the grass cutting season. He recommended a flailed cut, as close as practicable to the top rail of the fence. The contractor could be asked to deal with the clump of bramble at the top of Greendown at the same time. Jules said he would make the hedge look presentable after the flail cut and trim the 'road' side of the hedge with a view to allowing the railings to become embedded in the hedge.

Steve mentioned that contractors sometimes found difficulty getting tractors through the gate on Greendown.

It was confirmed that in future Bristol Parks would manage the hedge.

Action: Susan to draft a letter to Greendown residents explaining the hedge management [completed]

Jules suggested that this year's winter works should include clearing bramble to the side of the Greendown memorial bench from where a ditch extended to the other end of the allotment fence. Opening up the space under the trees would discourage litter from informal gatherings at that location and leave the (allegedly historic) ditch open to view, whilst a barrier of bramble could be left between the ditch and the allotments. Kit mentioned the possible adverse effect on the seasonal availability of blackberries

Action: Rob to check the Management Plan for references to bramble control in the relevant compartment/s

A damaged tree support on Troopers Hill Field had been fixed. A new hornbeam was being overshadowed by a poplar and needed reporting to Tree Bristol. Jules advised that in well-established trees, it was not necessary to remove epicormic shoots other than for safety reasons. This related to the hornbeam tree with a mass of shoots at its base on Troopers Hill Field close to the entrance to Troopers Hill.

Heritage structures workers had removed the buddleia and repaired the stonework on top of the lower (square) chimney stack.

3. Progress on the "Stepping Forward" grant

Rob stated that the interpretation board by the lower stack had been put in since July, as well as the interpretation board on Troopers Hill Field and the waymarking posts. The interpretation board by the upper chimney had been replaced.

Work was under way to clear a trial pathway through the woodland between the Lamb Inn and the lower of the waymarked paths off Lamb Hill, to encourage dog walkers to park off Crew's Hole Road and walk up to Troopers Hill. Community Payback was taking the project forward. To complete the funded work, the gateways between the woodland and Lamb Hill remained to be finished, including replacing the kissing gate. The celebration on 20 October would include story-telling along the newly marked trails, crafts and refreshments. Sally Oldfield had been invited to open the improvements.

4. Funding

An application had been granted for a Sustainability grant valued at £3,500 in respect of a 12-month project.

News on the prospect of a Co-Operative Membership Community Fund grant was currently awaited.

Re-modelling of the entrance by the lower chimney stack is planned as part of a future project. It was suggested that improvements to the appearance and surroundings of the lower stack might be funded via a grant application to the Heritage Lottery.

Rob enumerated other sources of grants as follows

- Community First (St George West only) – is contributing to costs of this year's Dog Show.
- St George Neighbourhood Partnership Wellbeing Fund
- Section 106 funding - some has already been allocated for dog bins, seats and direction signs along the river Avon trail

The scope for a path alongside the hedge on Troopers Hill field was discussed as a possible future project. Another proposal included the suggestion of more benches on Troopers Hill Field, perhaps adjacent to the care home as there were none on that side of the Field. Painting the Malvern Road gate black to match estate fencing elsewhere on the site) was also suggested.

It was agreed that Section 106 funding would be sought from the St George Neighbourhood Partnership to fund a path alongside the hedge of Westleigh Nursing Home, linking Summerhill Terrace and Malvern Rd. This request would include a bench close to the existing apple tree.

Action: Rob and Denise to work on costings for a path and make a proposal to the next Neighbourhood Partnership meeting [done].

Jules put forward a suggestion for a project linking Bristol's parks and local nature reserves by 'green routes' and shortcuts using minimal tarmac pathways.

5. Work parties

- completed since the last meeting

Wednesday, 25th July: An evening work party concluded with the sight of bats flying over the hill.

Saturday, 4th August: Removing saplings and bracken in the Gully.

Wednesday, 22nd August – Cutting bramble and saplings above Sally's Glade.

Saturday, 1st September, Continued cutting bramble from in amongst broom at Sally's Glade and removing saplings from adjacent grassland.

Tuesday, 4th September A number of Badminton School pupils had visited the site and undertaken some conservation work.

- Next work parties before the next meeting:

Saturday 6th October to remove bits of gorse and bramble at edges of heather growth which were too small to have been tackled by Community Payback.

3rd November and 1st December (to be arranged)

6. Awards

- Green Flag

Troopers Hill had achieved a high mark (75 – 79). Bristol Parks would have to respond to the judges' feedback comments in next year's exercise. The feedback included a suggestion about broader promotion of the LNR beyond the immediate neighbourhood. The meeting expressed concern at keeping promotion consistent with ecological safeguards but did not rule out considering the suggestion.

A proposal that additional information boards should be provided at the remaining entrances was resisted on the grounds that it would add to visual clutter.

- It's Your Neighbourhood

Denise presented FOTH with a framed certificate for the Level 5 – Outstanding award. She remarked that a 'Best of Outstanding' class might be introduced to give groups a further goal to aim for. Congratulations were extended to everyone. The judges' comments included:

Lack of dog fouling, Panoramic views, Number and range of public events, High quality of the newsletter, Successful planning, and a model Friends' group.

Action: Kit to e-mail Denise a copy of the photograph

- Entente Florale

Bristol had earned a Gold award (representing Britain). The community event had made a difference to the judges' opinions. Thanks were expressed to Denise, also Kit and Rob who had put on a FoTH display at the M Shed. Jules elaborated on the scope of the judging.

7. St George Strollers Walking for Health update

Gratitude was expressed to Margaret and Keith, who had attended the Speedwell leisure centre to be present at the display stand. Clare commented that the Strollers had become embedded as a community resource, and had begun attracting extra interest from further afield. Walks were being held every fortnight, and there was no shortage of ideas for new walks. The walks were generally in the region of three miles and so far had not a great take up of the shorter options. The initiative received excellent feedback and events consistently attracted over 20 participants. A grant was available for special trips involving coach hire. She speculated whether the group was becoming too large. The group has 5 walk leaders and another in prospect.

8. Events

- Tai Chi on the Hill, Sunday 29th July – a rainy event, attended by five people. It also rained for the Avon Valley Walk on Sunday 23rd September, from a booked list of 25 people there were only a small number of cancellations. Participants gave positive feedback about the waymarking through the woodlands

- The Family Fun Dog Show had been arranged for Sunday 14th October. This year's theme would be 'control of your dog'. A quiz on this topic had been devised, the completed sheets would be entered into a prize draw. A dog trainer would be available to answer questions about dog control. Lucas vets were supplying prizes and prize bags and had offered to increase their participation in any future shows. The Dog warden had provided some Defra leaflets. Denise asked about representatives from the Dogs Home, and it was noted as a possibility for next year. Arrangements were made for collection and return of tables and chairs borrowed from Summerhill Methodist Church. The event required a full team of volunteers to put up at least four gazebos, starting at midday.

Steve mentioned that one of the dog fouling notices was missing - replaced the next day.

- Saturday 20th October, Stepping Forward Celebration 2pm - 4pm
FOFH were planning to put up three gazebos for the event on Troopers Hill Field, Martin Maudsley would lead a walking story and there would be opportunity to craft industrial musical instruments. A press release been drafted for local media coverage of the success story and maybe a press photographer.

- Sunday, 4th November, Fungi Foray 10.30am
Some bookings had been received for Justin Smith's session – to include a survey. Denise suggested engaging Steve England for a future date.

- Events Planning Meeting - Thursday 1st November - 7pm at 3 Corkers Hill
Proposals for 2012 events included a geology walk and the Ambling band. Funding was available for 4 seasonal walks from the sustainability grant. An invitation had been received from the Friends of Avon Valley Woodlands, and Rowan Matheson (Brislington Brook). Events would be planned, as far as possible, to avoid clashing dates with those at Eastwood Farm. A leaflet would be produced listing all the events.

Kit reminded FOTH members of the web-site online diary. Steve offered to provide feedback on the mobile phone version of the web site.

9. Facebook/website update

It had been observed that use of the FOTH facebook page seemed to be increasing daily, while the forum on the web site was no longer used by many people.

10. Newsletter

The meeting praised the most recent issue of the newsletter. Rob's article on the site's appearance had generated comments. Kit confirmed that the next newsletter would be a Christmas issue and invited contributions.

Chair sought views about proper use of the membership e-mail address database in addition to for sending newsletters. The ensuing discussion covered points about alternative sources of the same information and the opportunity to unsubscribe. It was eventually clarified that Friends thought it acceptable to issue occasional genuine reminders and encourage community participation, but not to use the e-mail list for breaking news, updates on projects or other purposes such as promoting local businesses.