



Note of Meeting Thursday 6 November 2014 Summerhill Methodist Church

Present: Susan (Chair); Rob (WPO); Norman (Treas); Kit (Memb Sec); Bryan (Cttee)
Clare (Cttee) Jude (Cttee) Margaret (Cttee) Fabian (Cllr) Stephen, Helen (Minutes)

Apologies: Rod.

The previous minutes were approved without amendment

Issues and thank yous for our Area Parks Manager and Grounds Maintenance team

- Since the last FOTH meeting Chair had responded at short notice to a proposal for a repeat cut of the hedge at Greendown, and had approached the Council for advice. Following a rapid consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer, the work had gone ahead. Rob circulated photographs showing the (predicted and actual) appearance of the hedge.

Uncertainty about winter works was likely to continue until the new post holder was in place. Rob was still seeking recognition of the Council's responsibility to maintain the recently refurbished steps.

Troopers Hill Field

- The grass had not yet been mown because the machine was awaiting a replacement part.

- Kerry McCarthy MP had forwarded an enquiry about play facilities on The Field. FOTH had responded that approaches from local residents to improve play areas would be welcomed and assistance offered as appropriate.

- Susan had passed an approach for a memorial tree to the Council's Trees team with a suggestion of which tree might be replaced and a note of which had died recently. She provided a plan and notes to the Trees team. A copy was shared with members at the meeting. It was possible that a new tree could be planted by the end of February, and the Trees team had committed to planting one more replacement.

- Jude passed on favourable comments appreciating the provision of the new bench.

Work parties

Since our last meeting

- Personnel from Lloyds Bank had visited Troopers Hill on 1 October. Twenty volunteers had worked hard, replacing and stabilising the play log that had been taken out of its place on the Field, removing a great deal of broom that had become too vigorous, and clearing vegetation from steps.

- The 4 October work party had been cancelled because of rain.

- On Saturday 1 November, volunteers cleared bramble and saplings from the area to the left of the path up from the lower chimney.

Community Payback had undertaken some valuable work on gorse removal. Photographs were circulated of the four days' work which had included creating a firebreak.

- Rob reported that the average numbers of work party volunteers had fallen to a historic low. 2014 had been the worst year for work parties cancelled because of weather. Margaret suggested that these facts should be mentioned in the next newsletter. The meeting discussed widening the pool of volunteers and attracting recruits. Rob reported applying for some Green Capital funding, through the Parks Forum, for a Council post which would co-ordinate habitat management volunteering on Local Nature Reserves across Bristol. Jude's suggestion of connecting with universities and colleges offering ecology courses had been included in Rob's grant application.

- Kit suggested that FOTH fundraising could pay Community Payback back to work on the Hill. . Rob explained that Community Payback work opportunities on the Hill were limited by the availability of a specific supervisor familiar with the Hill's particular management requirements.

- The list of emergency numbers for work party participants was due to be updated.

Work Parties : Before the next meeting:

- 6 December – the plan would be to continue managing vegetation in the compartment above the lower chimney.

- The January work party would be on the second Saturday (10 January 2015). From the start of 2015 the meeting point for work parties would change from the entrance to the Hill at Greendown, to the entrance between the Field and the Hill, near the slide.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

- Clare announced her intention, for various reasons, to stand down from the Strollers. She intended to remain a FOTH member and would continue as a Committee member for the immediate future. Susan thanked Clare on behalf of FOTH for founding the walking group and her work over the last four years. Rob described it as one of the best initiatives that FOTH had sponsored.

- Since the last Committee meeting the Strollers had guided four walks including one in the Chew Valley. The recent Hambrook to Frenchay walk was abandoned because of the high river level, so a replacement walk was substituted. This highlighted the necessity for leaders to reccie a walk close to the proposed date, especially in the event of bad weather. Susan reported that the St George Park loop walk aimed at attracting participants from Sovereign Housing had attracted no residents despite extensive publicity and preparation including house-to-house delivery of programmes.

- Funding from Sovereign is expected in the Friends of Troopers Hill account soon. It is to support walks aimed at Sovereign residents, sharing local knowledge about the area and its resources as well as providing a healthy activity. Bristol City Council had agreed to provide walk leaders with bus tickets. The last of the Neighbourhood Partnership special walks funding would pay for a coach to take walkers to Tyntesfield.

Events: Since our last meeting

- Falcons on the Field - Sunday 5th October

For grant-related reasons the event was held on the Field (in St George West) rather than on the Hill, in hindsight the site had provided an arena of suitable size. The budget costs/outgoings/match funding in volunteer hours had broken even. .Kit described the

radio and poster publicity. The event had proved very popular with residents in the neighbourhood, attendance numbers were estimated at around 300 including a considerable proportion of children from local primary schools. Kit had introduced a visitor's book at this event and collected many favourable comments. Donations of around £210 had been received and it was acknowledged that provision of free refreshments had been a good idea. Only one negative comment was received, namely, that because of crowding some people had been unable to get a close look at the birds.

- The history walk had attracted bookings from over 23 people.

- On the day of the cancelled Fungi Foray Susan had photographed Troopers Hill fungi for FOTH records, and created an album on Facebook. As previously agreed (meeting of 24 July) a cheque was given to Lucy Wallis Smith to add to the fund held in Justin Smith's memory by the Avon Wildlife Trust. John and Doreen Bailey will be leading our Fungi Foray in 2015.

Events: Before our next meeting

- The AGM and slide show review had been arranged for the evening of Thursday 4 December. Cake and drinks would be available at the end, after the slide show. Committee members would be re-elected.

Action: Rob/Susan to check whether the meeting would be held in the main church area or the usual meeting room, and confirm Norman's intentions regarding the post of treasurer.

Events 2015

- Susan circulated a note of the events planning meeting that had been held on the previous Thursday, and outlined the proposed events for the forthcoming year.

- Because of low turn-out this year, no evening work parties were planned for 2015 but it had been decided to trial two summer Sunday afternoon work parties instead.

- This year's Christmas social would be held on Friday 12 December.

Networking

- Fabian enquired about the prospects of a Green Flag application. Rob explained that the application process was bureaucratic and the omission of an application this year was a consequence of Council staffing arrangements rather than a reflection on Friends' groups.

- St George Neighbourhood Partnership Green Capital grant (see above, under work parties)

- The meeting agreed to apply for the Best Park/Country Park RHS award for community participation, and the It's Your Neighbourhood award. The Bristol Parks Forum supported these more than the Green Flag award as expressions of community participation.

- As part of a pre-application process FoTH had been contacted by Ian Walker of Riverstone Projects about a possible development in the woodland running from Strawberry Lane to Riversway Nursing Home. Susan had fed back her thoughts on the development to Bristol City Council and suggested to Mr Walker he might like to meet to discuss the future woodland management of the area. Bristol City Council advised Mr Walker that such an application would be unlikely to succeed. Mr Walker has been in contact since to arrange a meeting to talk about the future management of the area. No date has yet been set for a meeting.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

- The numbers showed a steady increase to 431 Facebook friends and 368 Twitter followers. An analysis of the Facebook friends' locations (where given) showed 405 in UK of whom 349 were in Bristol; 6 in USA; 3 each in Canada and Australia and 3 in Spain.

Newsletter

- The next issue would appear in December, between the AGM and Christmas.

Next meetings

The AGM will be held on Thursday, 4th December, at 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd. It will form part of a review of 2014 in film and photo.

The next meeting will be Thursday, 22nd January, at 7.15pm in the back room of Summerhill Methodist Church.