



Note of Friends of Troopers Hill meeting
Thursday 7 July 2011, Summerhill Methodist Church.

Present

Susan (Chair), Rob (Work Party & Cttee), Norman (Treas), Kit (Memb Sec), Bryan (Cttee), Clare (Cttee), Jude (Cttee), Jules (BCC), Fabian (Cllr), Elaine, Gwen, Russell, Jackie, Roy, Steve, Helen (minutes)

Apologies were received from Margaret (Cttee)

The minutes of the May meeting were unanimously approved.

Issues and thank yous for our Community Park Keeper, Community Parks Officer, Area Parks Manager, and Landscape team.

Susan expressed particular thanks, In addition to the continued excellent maintenance on the Hill, to Jules and Carol for controlling bracken and to Jules for committing additional time for the RHS judging on the following day (Friday 8 July – see below). In response to favourable comments about the appearance of the entrance at Greendown Jules explained how the poppies had been introduced.

Parks re-organisation

Rob detailed the latest events in the re-organisation which meant that John Williams would be moving to the Estates department. Jules provided further details including changes to the Area Managers land news that Gary Brentnall would be joining the Neighbourhood Engagement team. Jerry Cole had been identified to assist the Parks Manager.

Action: Susan to send a letter of thanks to John for his work in association with FOTH.

Green Flag judging

The results of the judging were not yet known, and an announcement was expected later in July.

RHS "It's Your Neighbourhood" judging

Susan sought and received retrospective approval to enter the Hill for the judging. Judges would visit the Hill on Friday 8 July at midday, to be accompanied by Jules, Susan, Rob and Kit. Susan explained the marking scheme – 40% community involvement, 30% environmental responsibility and 30% gardening achievement. The meeting thanked Susan for putting together the documentary evidence for the assessment.

Work parties

On Thursday 26 May participants had spent an hour in the evening cutting cherry and other saplings and bramble.

Members thanked Steve for running the work party on Saturday 4 June during which saplings and bramble had been cleared from Sally's Glade, bracken and bramble had been cut from the steps above Entrance E and barbecue litter had been picked up above Sally's Glade.

The work party on Saturday 2 July had removed more saplings, and addressed low growing bramble in Sally's Glade.

Next work parties before the next meeting

Saturday 6th August possibly to cut bracken and more low-lying bramble in Sally's glade

Area Green Space Plan update

Rob outlined the history of FOTH's involvement in the Area Green Space Plan. There would be four meetings for St George, including one at St Aidan's, to decide priorities for the area including Troopers Hill, the riverside area, woodland and Dundridge Park. It seemed likely that play areas would be a priority for this area. Rob had attended a meeting last week in connection with the priorities for disposal of s106 money. There was debate about the level of funding that would be available for St George. Fabian mentioned the replacement of s106 funding with the Community Infrastructure Levy. Jules gave further details of the eligibility of certain sites and the scope for working with suggestions already gathered during the consultation period. Rob expanded on the selection of projects for funding.

Actions: Rob to provide details of the meeting dates. Susan offered to send a link to the relevant St George Partnership minutes

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

Clare gave an update on the latest walks, including a resume of the funding of St George Strollers via FOTH. The second launch walk (Magpie Bottom) had attracted 18 people. Two further walks had taken place at Royate Hill and Willsbridge Mill. Kit had joined as a walk leader and another person from Eastville, made 4 walk leaders in total. Clare drew attention to the programme and Susan gave details of other forthcoming walks including the boat trip walk, of around 3 miles, on Wednesday 20 July coinciding with the River Festival. The walk would start from the Co-op at St Anne's. 40 boat spaces were available on the boat so booking would be required. For those not able to attempt the entire walk, it would be possible to take the boat trip only. A further walk was planned for Troopers Hill on 11 August.

Kit outlined the benefits of Walking for Health in general. It was emphasised that the walks usually offered a shorter alternative route, and LinkAge might be setting up walks for less active people who perhaps could not manage longer walks. The aspect of GP referral to Walking for Health was discussed.

Susan reported that she had paid for a half-year reprint of FOTH events leaflets to include the Walking for Health events, out of the publicity budget.

Steve suggested FOTH might consider setting additional geocaches on and around the Hill. Jules mentioned the Redcatch Park measured circuit. Clare agreed that it was an idea that WFH would consider for the future.

Russell explained how he had been using Troopers Hill for walking to build up his health and was in favour of the Stepping Forward proposals which would make the steps easier to use.

Events

Sunday 22nd May Avon Valley Walk: It was reported that Rob had led a most successful event.

Saturday 25th June: the Music on the Hill was described as most enjoyable, entertaining and well-attended, given the unsettled weather. Generous donations had amounted to over £80. Susan explained the sources of funding for the concert.

Forthcoming events:

Sunday 17th July Tai Chi on the Hill in Troopers Hill Field, to be followed by a picnic.
17th-28th July Wild River Festival. Programme details available at <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events/RiverFestival.pdf>
Friday 22nd July Purple Prowl, with Rupert Higgins commenting on flora and fauna

Wednesday 3rd and Thursday 4th August Forest School - to be run by a qualified teacher for a small number of primary school children. It was expected that Paula Spiers would be attending, also Susan and Kit had volunteered to assist.

Saturday 13th August Family fun Picnic with Storytelling and Juggling. The invoice from Circomedia was still outstanding.

Friday 2nd September Troopers Twilight Tour: to include a commentary on history of the hill and local area.

The meeting approved lending a gazebo and display materials to Shakespeare At The Tobacco Factory for hosting any local schools projects. Jules explained some of the details of the project, aimed at introducing primary school children to Shakespearean references in the natural world.

Funding

Progress on the "Stepping Forward" grant included consideration of minor revisions to the group's constitution in order to protect the funding arrangements. The meeting approved the proposed wording which would be formally adopted at the next AGM. Rob outlined the history of the consultation exercise and the results proving the application had community support. At a meeting in the previous week the application had been discussed further and next stages of the application were addressed. The application, together with drawings and tender prices provided by Bristol Council, would be submitted at the end of September and it was possible that the drawings could be available to view at the Family Fun Picnic on 13 August. A final decision would be expected 10 weeks from the end of September. The meeting discussed some of the current deficiencies with the steps and some remedial measures, including management of the water runoff. The community involvement would entail contributions to ideas for the design of waymarkers. Rob explained that the car park on Crews Hole road was not part of the Stepping Forward project but could form part of a future grant application or be a possible candidate for s106 funding.

Members offered applause and thanks to Rob and Susan for all the administrative work involved in the application.

Networking

Facebook

Jackie explained how she had set up two Facebook pages, one for Troopers Hill as a "place" and the other as a "person". She described the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. There were 30 Likes and 40-50 check-ins already, and the Person had attracted 22 Friends. Jackie's preference was to retain the "place" page and discontinue the "person" page (predominantly because of maintenance issues). This was agreed. Music on the Hill had attracted Facebook attention. FOTH members thanked Jackie for her work.

Pride of Place

The exhibition would include some views of Troopers Hill at the St George Neighbourhood Partnership, including some from sometime FOTH member Roger.

VOSCUR membership

Susan considered that £25 VOSCUR membership was perhaps not worthwhile, and it was agreed that she should instead offer a £10 contribution to the free membership bursary.

Newsletter

The previous issue attracted general praise and positive comments. With regard to the next issue, it was commented that it was the time of year for planning 2012 events and the newsletter should seek suggestions. Ideas discussed at the meeting included a film show in the Gully and Shakespeare on the Hill.

Kit drew attention to the audio version of the newsletter and was seeking indications whether anyone had listened to it. Jackie suggested a counter for 'hits' via the Facebook page. If the audio version became sufficiently popular, it might be worth producing it as a podcast.

Next meeting

Thursday 1st September, 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd (next door to the Air Balloon Tavern)