

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday October 8th 7.15 – 9pm

Online Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Rob, Susan, Rod, Margret, Mali, Adam

Apologies: Freya

1. Approve October Minutes

The June minutes were approved.

2. Projects

Progress on Access to Nature (paths)

Work is now completed on the paths in Troopers Hill field. Hoggin work has been completed, topsoil has been put back in place along the path edges and a bin has been relocated beside the track from Malvern Road. Work has also been completed to properly join the path from Troopers Hill Field to the existing wheelchair access path on Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve. Rob is in discussions with Bristol Parks about maintenance to that existing path.

We are waiting on the final invoice from Bristol City Council which the funders will pay directly.

Since the work took much longer than expected and the line of the path is not as originally planned, Rob had a meeting with Jon James (head of parks) and Richard Fletcher (head of park operations) to provide feedback. They both apologised for the delays and issues that had arisen.

To commemorate the completion of the project, a plaque will be erected to show the work was organised by Friends of Troopers Hill. There will not be a public event to unveil the plaque due to COVID-19 restrictions. Lizzy, a local wheelchair user will unveil the plaque and there will be a press release for publicity.

Margaret thanked and congratulated Rob for all his hard work on the project.

Susan shared feedback with the group about the new paths. Parents love it as children can learn to cycle their bikes on the new smooth surface easily. Lots of people are also using the path for running. A complete circuit of the path is 550 meters.

3. Busking

The group have been asked to support a harpist who plays on the hill by sharing posts on the Facebook page to advertise when she is playing. Given the COVID-19 restrictions, we have not done this.

Susan has done some research to better understand the rules of busking from a link on the Bristol City Council website. In summary – it's fine to busk in public spaces but you are not allowed to advertise. If advertising, it is not busking, it is an event where you need an events licence.

The Friends of St George Park chairperson has been having the same conversations as the harpist also plays there. They have spoken to Scarlett, the harpist, to let her know these details.

4. Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve

a. Bristol Parks conservation work - cut at Greendown – winter works

The main grass area has been cut as per plan.

Lottery money was used last year to have gorse cleared. From this £1050 was leftover which we agreed would be used for further conservation and for Green Mantle to trim gorse where it has regrown.

Since no events have been run this year, Rob suggested we put forward some additional money from the Friends of Troopers Hill accounts so that Green Mantle can do extra work while on site such as removing some big areas of buddleia. Rob proposes we match £1,000 (which leaves £1,700 in the account). This was approved.

b. Repairs to steps

The ParkWork team have resumed and will be fixing broken steps. Bristol Parks will buy the materials needed.

c. Paying for extra winter works

Susan is going to review the conservation management plan and create a prioritised list of what's needed to brief Bristol Parks. There are some items that were missed last year so these will be at the top of the list.

d. Volunteer conservation work parties – solo working and 6 person work parties

Since restarting work parties in June, we have been doing 2 a month. On average, 11 people a month have been attending which is more than before and is great as more work is getting done.

Quite a few people have contacted the group to ask if they join work parties but do not respond to follow up emails.

The process of mixing in 1 or 2 new volunteers into each work party has been working well. Adam is happy to do 1 work party a month so there is potential to increase to 3.

ParkWork are aiming to do 2 work parties a month as well as 2 a month in St George Park. With the COVID 19 restrictions, it is more difficult as Jo cannot bring people with him in his truck and volunteers need to meet him onsite.

ParkWork has now partnered with City of Bristol College so people with minor learning difficulties can join the park works activities that include fixing the steps and strimming.

Ella Hogg from Bristol City Council told us that while work parties could be legally increased to more than 6 people, Bristol Parks have decided to keep with 6 to make social distancing more manageable while restrictions are still in place. If restrictions become worse, we will have to revert back to solo volunteering.

5. Troopers Hill Field

a. Walnut trees

The walnut trees which had recently been made available for sponsorship have been paid for by section 106 money.

Section 106 money is contributed by developers to Bristol City Council to mitigate the impact of new buildings. Some of this money was specifically allocated for tree planting. Our local councillors are part of the Area 4 Committee that decides where this money is allocated. At the Area 4 Committee it was agreed that the 4 walnut trees that were available for sponsorship on Troopers Hill Field would be funded from this Section 106 "pot" and planted this winter. Dundry Park and St George Park will also have trees funded from this source.

b. Slide

Now that the paths work has finished, Susan will start publicising the slide fundraiser

again. Susan has started a scheme allowing people to donate money to the fundraiser in exchange for old Zambian pennies which has raised £40 so far.

The painting by Oliver Silverway is still available which Susan plans to list in November for sealed bids over £300.

Currently, just over £300 has been fundraised towards the target of £10,000.

6. Troopers Hill Woods

a. Fallen trees

A number of trees have fallen recently which is likely to continue.

Recently, a dead willow with lots of Ivy fell and blocked the path between Troopers Hill Field and Troopers Hill which is the only path without steps. Freya reported this via the emergency number on the Bristol City Council website. This tree has not yet been removed. The tree officer has chased the contractor.

7. Events

a. Past events

All events have been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

b. Meeting dates for 2021

Everyone is happy with Susan's proposal of Thursdays at 7.15pm on dates 4th February, 24th April, 24th June, 7th October and 2nd December for 2021. Everyone is happy to go back to the church if it opens again.

c. Events for 2021

Normally we have an event planning meeting in November, but everyone agreed to postpone this until there is more clarity on when COVID-19 restrictions will be alleviated.

d. Natural Learners

Natural Learners still have money in their account from Friends of Troopers Hill for the bugs and beasties event that was cancelled this year. Mali asked the group if we would like the money returned which we agreed was not needed. Mali has offered to run the event in 2021 for free when events can run again.

8. Canine control orders

There is currently a dog control order in place that applies to Bristol which stipulates that

dogs must be kept on leads at all time. There is a list of exceptions where dogs are allowed off lead (all Bristol parks except play areas) and Troopers Hill is one of those locations.

The control order is about to be renewed and Susan thinks there could be an element missing around how many dogs a professional dog walker or single person can have off lead. There have been no reported issues of too many dogs off lead on Troopers Hill, however there have been problems reported in other parks.

Susan has an opportunity provide feedback on the control order and asked the group two questions. Firstly, Do we agree with the order being renewed and do we have a view on whether a new rule should be introduced around the number of dogs allowed off lead per person.

The group had some discussion and agreed that the order should be renewed, but did not have a strong view about a new rule around the number of dogs as that's not a problem that affects Troopers Hill.

Susan will respond back that we are in favour of the control order being renewed.

9. Misc and networking

a. Website

Rob updates the website with work party reports after they have taken place, but we are still not advertising any work party dates to prevent people turning up who have not registered.

b. University of Bristol

The geography department have been in contact again asking if there is any work they can do. We will hear in time if there are any students who want to run studies on the hill.

c. Donations

A £50 donation has been received by a lady who lives near the hill who is very pleased with the conservation work.

d. Refund from the church

We received a refund from the church for not using the room for the meetings because of COVID-19 restrictions.

e. RHS South West in Bloom

On the RHS website, Susan found an 8 page list of pesticides, with details of where to obtain them, how to use them and on which native plants. Glyphosate was a frequent component of the pesticides described. There is a note on the list saying, "Inclusion of a product in this leaflet does not indicate a recommendation or endorsement by the RHS Gardening Advice." Bristol has declared an ecological emergency and a pledge from the City Council is to reduce the use of Glyphosate by a considerable amount.

Glyphosate is used only on the Hill to control Japanese Knotweed. It is very harmful to invertebrates, including bees and plants.

Susan believes the information about using glyphosate should be removed and has contacted John at the RHS to make him aware of Bristol's ecological emergency declaration and the pledges to reduce glyphosate usage. The approach of giving advice on removing native plants from lawns seems outdated and harmful to biodiversity.

No response has been received from the RHS and Susan asked the group if disassociating Troopers Hill from the RHS was an appropriate action if there was no commitment from the RHS to change the content of their website. The group had some discussion and agreed this is an appropriate action to take.

Susan has told John that if no response is received, the committee will discuss whether to disassociate from the RHS until the information is removed or updated.

Susan proposed that at the next AGM meeting, she would share an update (if there has been any) and we can make a formal decision on what to do.

10. Cover for committee members on lead

Rob and Susan have recently been away for 2 weeks and said the cover was excellent. Freya covered responses on Facebook, Margret responded to emails and Adam ran two work parties.

When going away next time, Susan will share a list of contacts she has with parks, the council and others who she talks to directly when things like fallen trees happen.

Next Meeting

The next meeting (AGM) will be held from 7.15pm-9pm on Thursday 3rd December as an online Zoom meeting.