



Note of Meeting

Thursday, 10 November 2011

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road,

Present:

Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Kit (Memb Sec), Bryan (Cttee), Jude (Cttee), Margaret (Cttee) Jules (BCC), Denise (BCC), Denis (BCC), Fabian (Cllr), Steve, Roy, Russ, Gwen, Keith, Elaine, James, Helen (Minutes)

Apologies:

Norman (Treas) Clare (Cttee), Jackie

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved unanimously

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

Chair thanked Jules for the all his hard work since the last meeting, and the continued excellent maintenance on the Hill. He had encountered a particular problem with dog fouling whilst strimming.

Susan sought and obtained Friends agreement to approach the council and Mama Bears pre-school to find out the purpose of the leylandii trees that had been planted at the rear of the nursery and perhaps suggest a more environmentally appropriate solution.

At the rear of Malvern Road, some occupiers had extended their gardens into the woodland (Council property) and it was established that Friends disapproved of such practices.

In the light of a suggestion about dispersing wild flower seeds on Troopers Hill, Susan and Denise explained the reasons for not introducing other species into the LNR (threats to the natural flora etc) and all agreed that any such proposals should be discouraged. The Council's Nature Conservation officer had confirmed that certain areas of the Troopers Hill woods were ancient woodland, and the whole area was of nature conservation interest.

RHS "It's Your Neighbourhood"

Susan reported that the Friends had been awarded a level 4 grading of "Thriving" under the Royal Horticultural Society "It's Your Neighbourhood" scheme. The judges' feedback had included advice on pruning blackthorn and respect for the bird nesting season. Over half the comments had been related to dog fouling. In that light the meeting embarked on an extensive discussion including

- the new dog fouling notices posted on the Troopers Hill Road entrances to the LNR
- the merits of bins additional to those already at the entrances – including one for the use of riverside dog walkers - and the propensity of bag dispensers to create a litter problem
- requiring dogs to be kept on leads (comparisons with Callington Road and Sneyd Park) and recognition of the unpopularity of such a measure.

- problems not confined to the Hill but extended to neighbouring pavements, and the existence of a response team for dealing with reports of fouling on highways.
- the benefits of wider education and publicity
- powers of Community Park Keepers and Police Community Support Officers to fine offending owners.

It was noted that new dog fouling notices had been posted on Troopers Hill Rd entrances and it was proposed that there should be a hard-hitting sign on every bin and at every entrance.

Denise proposed to initiate an 'Education – Encourage – Enforce' approach to the problem, to include a survey over a week or so, marking all instances with spray paint (different colours on different days) and so indicate 'hot spots' and peak times. A poster campaign could be followed by awareness education and subsequent enforcement by personnel not already known to local dog owners, aiming to issue and publicise at least one fixed penalty notice.

Action: Denise to consider next steps including liaison with Highways Colleagues.

Kit agreed to put a newsletter article telling the compliant dog owners what was happening but was sceptical about reaching the non-compliant owners.

Work parties

- completed since the last meeting

Volunteers on Saturday 3rd September and Saturday 1st October had undertaken more work clearing bramble in 'Sally's Glade'. On 5th November participants had worked in the area of the lower chimney stack where new broom was coming through. The cherry, bramble and oak regrowth had also been addressed.

- Next work parties before the next meeting

On Saturday, 6th December additional work would be carried out in the the lower stack area.

Management Plan update

Rob summarised his contribution mentioning specifically the seating plan (no further benches) and perhaps an additional dog bin. Steve thought that the wooden fencing along Troopers Hill Road should be replaced by metal estate fencing. Jules mentioned the difficulties associated with negotiating kissing gates while working. Rob circulated a set of photographs. He drew attention to the monitoring carried out by Rupert Higgins and reminded Friends that the report advocated removing broom where it had started encroaching on heathland. Jules was asked to maintain the status quo in the woodland and concentrate on eradicating scrub within the LNR boundary.

Denis wondered if the Plan needed to reflect the funding position via the Neighbourhood Partnership and that it complied with the proposed Green Space Investment Plan for St George..

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

In Clare's absence, Susan reported on the History walk in Hanham and the Brislington walk. Kit had led the Cock Road Ridge ramble. The group had visited Hengrove Mounds and led a brief walk in St George Park followed by a planning meeting at which it had emerged that the preferred route was 2 to 3 miles in countryside. Forthcoming events would include a Remembrance walk in Hencliffe woods and part of Hanham. The budget

was on target. For the future, Denise suggested Dundry slopes, Northern Slopes, Callington Road and Bramble Farm would provide suitable locations.

Events

- Since our last meeting

On 7th October, Jules Carole and Susan had hosted visits from three Year 3 classes from Summerhill school.. Jules noted differences in the classes' behaviour and the childrens' abilities to negotiate uneven ground. The visits had been preceded by a slide show to familiarise children with the features of the Hill. Children made notes and drew pictures of their experience.

On Sunday 9th October FOTH had held a Family Fun Dog Show to show FOTH's support for dog walkers who complied with requests to clean up after their pets and to reinforce the message. No dog wardens had been able to attend. It was agreed that next year an earlier start would allow a registration period before judging began.

The Forest School led by Isabel on 26th-27th October in the Troopers Hill woodland had provided 1¾ hours of activities for eight children aged between 7 and 9. In future it would be advisable to alert parents during the previous week to remind them of the forthcoming event. Denise expressed appreciation of the experience on behalf of her granddaughter and would attend future forest schools so that insurance was secured. Jules suggested a contact at St Anne's who run forest events every Thursday afternoon also Denis suggested a link at The Limes (Easton).

The Fungi Foray on Sunday 30th October was fully booked and extremely successful, a fungus had been found that rarely occurs outside Scandinavia.

The 2012 Events Planning Meeting had taken place on 3rd November. Susan summarised the outcome and listed events to appear in the 2012 leaflet, to include 5 FOTH meetings plus the AGM (see leaflet for details). It was proposed to supplement the monthly (morning) work parties with two evening work parties in July and August. The 2012 AGM had been arranged for 8 December – to be preceded by a slide show and review of the year.

Funding

Rob described the success of the "Stepping Forward" grant and outlined the timetable for implementing the works.

The- Community Festival and Events Fund had also contributed to FOTH events. Beeses had generously donated £250 from the proceeds of their Beer Festival in September. The production company of the *Skins* TV programme had donated £100 (in addition to the Council fee). In all, the expected funding would probably cover the costs of all FOTH's planned activities in 2012.

Next Meeting

AGM on Thursday 8th December.