

## NOTE OF MEETING

**Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2016 7.15pm**

**Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd**

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Rod (Committee), Norman (Treasurer), Fabian, Helen, Kit, Richard, Margaret (minutes), Mary, Les, Nicola (from 8pm)

Apologies: Chris

### **1. Approve February minutes**

These were approved.

Susan welcomed Mary and Les to the meeting. Susan proposed that item 3 be taken later in the agenda when the new Councillor for St George Central, Nicola Beech, would be present.

### **2. Issues and thank yous for Parks staff**

- Winter works 2015/16: Susan reported that generally Parks have done a very good job, and have only missed a couple of areas: the area around the birch tree (the one with the bench underneath) has not been cut back, and also an area along the gully. Kit commented that he assumed they would leave the cutting back now to avoid disturbing nesting birds.
- Preventing wear and tear on refurbished steps: Rob still needs to meet with Tom Penn from the Council to discuss actions.
- Management plan update: Susan explained that the five year management plan is reviewed every year and will be reviewed for this year soon, but more importantly a new five year plan is due next year. A new photographic survey needs to be done this summer in preparation for this. This is a set of 36 photographs. Kit asked whether FOTH need to pay for these: Rob is in discussion with Becky Belfin at the Council. Susan added that she was pleased to report that some of the old photos that had disappeared have now been found. Richard asked whether aerial photographs were needed as he could arrange this but Rob replied that the Council already have these.
- Future maintenance and management: Rob reported that there is still some repointing to be done on the chimney and that scaffolding will need to be erected for this as there is a crack that needs to be examined first. It is hoped this can be done this summer. Kit asked whether a cherry picker had been considered, but Rob explained that it really needed to be scaffolding from a safety point of view due to the crack.

Susan reported that 'Little Elizabeth's Bench', the wooden bench at the top of the steps on the woodland path, needs replacing. The ideal replacement would be a metal bench with a wooden seat. She has received a quote from the company used by the Council (David Ogilvie Engineering) of £421.20 for the metal bench, and she has asked Touchwood Enterprises for a quote for

the wooden top. The total cost will probably be about £700. Susan has received an email from Warwick Fortescue offering to make the legs and top using recycled metal, and Richard mentioned that Tyntesfield make wooden benches for about £75. Both these suggestions were discussed but due to risks of vandalism/arson it was decided it would be best to proceed with the company used by the Council. Mary offered to talk to dog walkers about making donations or helping with a collection at an event.  
Action: Susan to thank Warwick for his offer but decline.  
(This action has been completed)

### **3. Troopers Hill Field** (this item was taken after item 5)

- Play area update: Susan reported that the Council have put the work on the play area out to tender; tenders will be in and evaluated on 25 May. Chris and Susan will be attending the evaluation. They have also been sent details of play areas provided by different suppliers to go and look at. Nicola asked whether the detailed design was done by the contractors. Susan said it was, but they have been given strong parameters following consultation.  
Action: Susan to email Nicola details of the specification.
  
- Football posts: Susan reported that she had been approached by a teacher at Air Balloon School supported by Chris Deane asking whether it would be possible to replace the existing football posts with posts with long extensions so that they could be used for rugby as well. Rob pointed out that nobody manufactures small posts like this. Concern was raised that children already use the posts as gym equipment and if there were high extensions then they might also try and climb these. It was agreed we want to keep football posts with the existing dimensions and it was queried how easy it would be to kick a ball through a narrower rugby post. It was decided that Susan should reply explaining that FOTH does not support this suggestion, but adding that Chris and the teacher could pursue this themselves by finding out the cost of having posts made and raising funds. Fabian queried whether there would be room on the field for another set of posts.  
Action: Susan to contact Chris Deane and teacher with this decision  
(This action has now been completed).
  
- Tree Planting 16<sup>th</sup> February and state of trees: Susan reported that the tree planting went well and the trees are all thriving. The trees planted in 2011 do not need supports any longer and she has asked the tree team at the Council to remove them, as in places the branches are growing through the wire. The Council have said they will do this in July or August. Susan suggested asking Good Gym if they could remove the cages and posts and pile them up at Westleigh Nursing Home for Council to collect later.  
Action: Susan to contact Good Gym
  
- Log Play equipment: Three of the logs from the spiral log staircase have been separated from the rest and moved around field. Susan has asked the Council to remove them. Mary thought they may have removed logs from the allotment path in error.

Action: Susan to check logs (This action now completed: correct logs removed).

#### **4. Work parties and other works**

Rob reported that the last three work parties, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2<sup>nd</sup> April and 7<sup>th</sup> May, had all been held in Sally's Glade, and was pleased to report that there had been some new volunteers at these.

Work parties before the next meeting: Saturdays 4<sup>th</sup> June and 2<sup>nd</sup> July, Sundays 19<sup>th</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> July (just after next meeting). At least some of these will probably focus on cutting down saplings.

- Working with power tools: the Council are going to provide training so that some of the work of cutting back can be done by volunteers using a strimmer. This training will probably take place during the summer. Rob and Susan will both volunteer for this, and Kit and Norman both said they would be happy to be trained. Susan will ask for further volunteers once the training has been set up.
- Progress on steps to Crews Hole: Rob reported that there are just a few steps left to do near the bottom. Parkwork have cleared an area next to the new gate and will put in a chicane-type entrance. Mary said that the resident of Rose Cottage had expressed concern about the deer in the woods being disturbed by these works. Susan explained that there will not be any ongoing work being done in the woods once the steps have been completed.
- Dogwalkers doing a litter pick: Mary had approached Susan with an offer to arrange a litter pick by dog walkers. Mary explained that dogwalkers on the hill feel a bit 'picked on', with things being done like the spraying of the dog poo. Most of the dog walkers do pick up their dog poo, and sometimes clear up others as well, and they also do other things beneficial to the hill such as pick up litter on a Monday morning. Mary's idea was to bring them together to do a litter pick as a way of working with FOTH, possibly after an event.

Susan replied that FOTH do put up posters saying thank you to the dog walkers who pick up and that this message also appears on Facebook, Twitter and in newsletters. She added that there are some dog walkers who probably won't ever change their behaviour, but there are others who probably think they are good at picking up poo, but allow their dogs to run ahead and don't always notice when they have done one, or who don't bring enough bags out with them. FOTH have always acknowledged that the dog walkers do help considerably with control of litter and also provide security.

Kit added that the problem with dog poo is not unique to Troopers Hill. He was very pleased that Mary had attended the meeting tonight but said that FOTH have tried to engage dog walkers in the past and they have not responded or attended meetings.

Susan said that Mary's suggestion was a great idea. She suggested they could either suggest a general day/time and Susan could fix a date, or the dog walkers themselves could fix a date and we could advertise it and arrange for the Council to pick up the rubbish and provide equipment. Rob thought that doing a litter pick after an event would probably not be a good idea as FOTH volunteers would be busy packing up. Susan said that she will need at least 3 weeks' notice of the date for the Council. Rob added that the Council only need to be involved from a Health and Safety point of view for advertised work parties. Individuals or a small group could pick up litter themselves informally without the requirement to inform the Council.

Action: Mary to talk to dog walkers and come back to Susan with day/time or date if it is to be an advertised litter pick. Alternatively Mary will discuss with dog walkers the option of a few of them doing an informal litter pick themselves.

## **5. Events**

Dawn Chorus – 23<sup>rd</sup> April: Susan reported that this had been very successful. It had been fully booked, with only one person not turning up on the day. They had enjoyed going to a local café for breakfast after the event.

Avon Valley Walk – Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May: Rob will be leading this walk which is also part of the Bristol Walk Fest programme.

Stargazing: Rod (who is also a committee member of the Bristol Astronomical Society) gave an update on the situation. The Bristol Astronomical Society has been providing telescopes and experts for stargazing parties on Troopers Hill since 2014. A risk assessment for the hill was done in 2014, but recently there had been a problem at a stargazing party held at The Wild Place when one of the volunteers slipped due to problems with the site. It has been decided therefore that another risk assessment is needed for Troopers Hill as it is not a level site. Fiona and Rod will do this shortly, looking in particular at whether they are using the best site on the hill for the telescopes. Susan added that she was aware that there are a couple of potholes on the wheelchair path and she has asked that refurbishment of the wheelchair access path and improvement of the track beside the Field be added to the St George Neighbourhood Priorities.

## **6. St George Strollers – update on volunteers and funding**

Susan reported that there are now 6 volunteer walk leaders, 3 of whom are new, so they should be able to increase the number of walks offered again. The financial situation is good so they have stopped asking walkers for donations. It was agreed at the recent walkers' meeting that some of the money will be spent on special walks. Hopefully there will not be any need to ask for donations over the next 3 or 4 years.

## **7. Networking**

- Bristol Walking Festival: Susan reported that we have volunteered at least 4 walks for this: 2 for St George Strollers, 1 to promote the Discover East Bristol map, and Rob's Avon Valley Walk.

- St George NP representative: Rob is currently the FOTH rep on the St George Neighbourhood Partnership. Everyone agreed Rob should be nominated to stand again at the AGM on 22 June.
- Street Goat: Susan explained that this is an initiative to look after goats on an allotment site. Schools and public were invited to talk about the idea. A site has now been found and the initiative will be starting soon.
- Susan reported that FOTH had been approached by the Brownies to give a talk. She suggested they come and do a learning trail. This will be happening on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June and Susan would welcome support.
- Susan had received an email from the tree team about a German Postgraduate student carrying out a study of Troopers Hill.
- There has been another visit to the site by a school in Bridgewater, as a result of Troopers Hill featuring in an A Level Geography text book as a good example of involvement of a community in a local nature reserve.

### **8. Awards**

- It's Your Neighbourhood/St George in Bloom
- Pride in Parks

We are entering for these awards as agreed at the last meeting. Susan will write up 2 sides of A4 to show our achievements over the last year.

### **9. Facebook/Twitter/website Update**

Rob reported that these are all doing well.

### **10. Newsletter**

An electronic version of the newsletter has been issued as well as a double-sided paper version. The cost for printing 200 newsletters was £46 and it will probably come out 3 or 4 times a year. The committee were happy to agree this cost.

Susan added that the electronic delivery now goes through MailChimp which allows you to check how many people open the email: over 50% opened it and looked at the articles. There is no charge for using MailChimp.

Rod pointed out that there had been an error in the last newsletter: 'Astrological' was typed instead of 'Astronomical' and offered to proof read future editions.

Susan asked for suggestions for content for next newsletter which will come out before the Bugs and Beasties event in August and will also be used to publicise the play area.

### **Any other business**

Mary said that there appeared to be a lot of adults and young people smoking weed on the hill. Susan asked Mary if she had informed the police and recommended that she give the information to the Neighbourhood Team.

### **Next meeting**

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July at 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road